

Diasporan Community Leaders Issue Statement on Church-State Conflict

This week a group of diasporan leaders issued a statement in support of the Armenian Church and the Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II.

Noubar Afeyan, Anthony Barsamian, Lord Ara Darzi of Denham, Eric Esrailian, Vahe Gabrache, Vatche Manoukian, Joseph Oughourlian, and Berge Setrakian, descendants of Armenian Genocide survivors and members of the global Armenian Church, issued the following statement concerning the current conflict between the Armenian government and the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Armenians are one of the oldest peoples in the world, historically inhabiting our ancestral lands in the South Caucasus. We also practice one of the oldest Christian denominations in the world, dating to A.D. 301 when Armenia became the first state to adopt Christianity as its national religion. Since then, a vast majority — today nearly 97% — of Armenians are members of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

At the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Armenians were driven from our native lands and slaughtered in a horrific genocide. Those who were not massacred were forced to flee, collectively becoming the Armenian diaspora. As Armenians scattered throughout the world, we turned to our Church as a source of comfort and connection to our homeland. Wherever we lived, Armenian communities became known for building churches and schools to preserve the faith and ethnic heritage that our persecutors had tried to stamp out.

Later, when the Soviet Union fell and a new independent Republic of Armenia began to emerge, the diaspora provided substantial support for the Church to resuscitate itself after decades of Soviet oppression. Today, Armenian Apostolic churches throughout the world — including the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia in Lebanon and Patriarchates in Jerusalem and Constantinople — are interconnected, united, and recognize His Holiness Karekin II as the global leader of the church, based in Armenia at the Mother See of Echmiadzin. An estimated 3 million Armenians live within the Republic of Armenia while the vast majority of the estimated 10 million Armenians live in the diaspora, with over one million living in the US.

Recently, persistent political discord in Armenia — including increasing conflict between leaders of the Armenian Government and the Armenian Apostolic Church — has reached a boiling point with government-led demands to oust the leader of the Church, despite his due election by the regulations of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Assembly. Several Archbishops have been imprisoned while accused of making political statements, and a prominent Russian-Armenian philanthropist and businessman has been imprisoned for publicly stating support for the church’s position.

Persistent attacks on the Church leadership, and the threatened forcible or mandated removal of its leader, pose direct threats to all Armenians around the world who rely on the Church for spiritual sustenance.

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Armenian Church Head Indicted After Pashinyan’s Threats

By Naira Bulghadarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Law-enforcement authorities indicted Catholicos Karekin II on Saturday, February 14, one day after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan implicitly pledged to prevent an upcoming meeting in Austria of the top clergy of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Karekin thus became the first supreme head of the church prosecuted in Armenia’s post-Soviet history. Even Soviet authorities had never formally prosecuted an Armenian Catholicos.

The accusations leveled against Karekin stem from his January 27 decision to defrock a bishop involved in Pashinyan’s controversial campaign to oust the Catholicos. The bishop, Gevorg Saroyan, was dismissed in January as head of the church’s Masyatsotn Diocese encompassing parts of Armenia’s southern Ararat province.

With Pashinyan’s encouragement, Saroyan refused to obey the decision and went on to challenge it in court.



Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II

In an unprecedented injunction, a district court ruled on January 16 that Saroyan must be reinstated pending its verdict on the lawsuit. Lawyers representing the church maintain that Armenian courts have no jurisdiction over internal church affairs.

The Investigative Committee opened the criminal case following Saroyan’s defrocking recommended

by the church’s Supreme Spiritual Council. It charged on January 31 six bishops sitting on the council with obstructing the execution of the judicial act. They were banned from leaving Armenia to attend a delayed emergency conference of bishops in the Austrian city of Sankt Polten scheduled for February 16-19.

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Vardanyan Given 20-Year Jail Sentence In Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Ruben Vardanyan, a prominent Armenian businessman and former Nagorno-Karabakh premier captured by Azerbaijan in 2023, was sentenced to 20 years in prison on



Ruben Vardanyan

Tuesday, February 17, at the end of a yearlong trial described by him as a “judicial farce.”

A military court in Baku found Vardanyan guilty of a long list of crimes, including “financing terrorism,” in what his family in Armenia called a “judgment against the Armenian people as a whole.”

“From the moment of his arbitrary detention 874 days ago, it became evident that the outcome of this process had been predetermined,” read a statement released by the family.

“Throughout this period, Ruben was denied fundamental guarantees of due process, including meaningful access to legal defense, contact with his international counsel, and the ability of independent media to attend the proceedings,” it said. “The hearings were held behind closed doors and in conditions incompatible with the standards of a fair trial under international law and even Azerbaijani laws.”

Vardanyan, who held the second-highest post in Karabakh’s leadership from November 2022 to February 2023, was arrested at an Azerbaijani checkpoint in the Lachin corridor in September 2023 as he fled the region along with its

practically entire ethnic Armenian population.

Seven other former Karabakh Armenian leaders were also arrested during the exodus that followed an

see VARDANYAN, page 5

Russian-Armenian Tycoon Karapetyan Declared Candidate For PM Despite Ineligibility

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

Detained Russian-Armenian tycoon Samvel Karapetyan, who faces multiple charges in Armenia, was named prime ministerial candidate of his newly formed Strong Armenia party on February 12. The announcement sparked controversy due to his ineligibility for the role according to current legislation.

see INELIGIBILITY, page 4

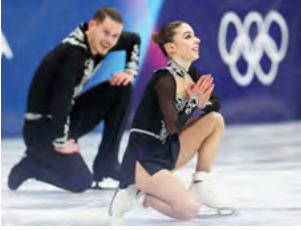
AUSTRALIA

Australian Armenians in Sydney Enjoy Musical Event Dedicated to Vahan Tekeyan



MILAN

Akopova and Rakhmanin Place 14th at Olympics in Figure Skating Pairs



WASHINGTON, D.C.

Painter Dulyan Connects People





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenia and Brazil Explore Cooperation in Social Protection

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Arsen Torosyan held a meeting with the Ambassador of Brazil to Armenia, Fabio Vaz Pitaluga this week, to discuss a number of matters of mutual interest in the social protection sector.

The minister and the ambassador explored opportunities for cooperation in the labor and employment sectors, as well as in social support.

Torosyan lauded the friendly relations between Armenia and Brazil, emphasizing the importance of the existing potential for expanding and developing sectoral cooperation.

Vagif Khachatryan Undergoes Second Surgery after Release

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Vagif Khachatryan, who recently returned from Azerbaijani captivity, has undergone another surgical procedure, according to his family.

Khachatryan was operated on again, his daughter Vera Khachatryan told "Pastinfo."

"My father has already been discharged from the hospital and is feeling relatively well," she said.

Khachatryan had been discharged from hospital at the end of January. After returning from captivity, he was hospitalized and underwent surgery.

Armenia Plans Next Phase of Space Program

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenia is preparing to acquire new satellites as part of the next stage of its national space program, Minister of High-Tech Industry Mkhitar Hayrapetyan has announced.

The state-owned ArmSat-1 satellite, which was launched in 2022, completed its mission by the end of 2025. The government is now considering the purchase of new remote-sensing and Earth-imaging satellites, which officials say are of strategic importance for the country.

Speaking to reporters on Monday, Hayrapetyan also highlighted the role of locally developed projects, particularly the Hayasat series of satellites, which are being designed and built by Armenian research teams. While the state satellite program is focused on functional needs, he said domestic initiatives are vital for strengthening national expertise and innovation capacity.

"Hayasat-type satellites are of exceptional importance for us. They represent invaluable value in terms of science, research and innovation, allowing Armenia to design and produce satellites with its own knowledge and capabilities," the minister said.

Armenian Church Head Indicted After Pashinyan's Threats

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The law-enforcement agency brought the same accusation against Karekin, according to Ara Zohrabyan, a lawyer representing the church. Zohrabyan said it banned him from leaving the country before attempting to interrogate him.

"This is a direct interference in the internal affairs of the church," Zohrabyan said, accusing the Armenian authorities of trying to scuttle the conference.

The church's Mother See in Echmiadzin echoed the accusation in a separate statement. It condemned the indictment as illegal and "disrespectful to millions of believers and to the centuries-old church."

Its statement said, "The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin strongly condemns and expresses deep indignation at the fact that the RA Prosecutor's Office has initiated criminal prosecution against His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, and has banned His Holiness from leaving Armenia."

These actions against the Patriarch of All Armenians are unfounded and illegal and are of a clearly political nature.

With this clearly unconstitutional and illegal stance of interfering in the internal life of the Church, the government is hindering the pontifical activities of His Holiness the Patriarch.

The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin calls for an immediate review of the illegal decisions made against the Armenian Patriarch, six bishops and the secretary of the Supreme Spiritual Council, which divides our society and belittles the reputation and authority of our homeland."

The statement did not say whether the Sankt Polten meeting will be canceled or held via video link.

The conference was originally scheduled to take place in Echmiadzin from December 10-12. Karekin postponed it because of what the Mother See described as "repressions against clergy." Critics say Pashinyan wants to prevent the rescheduled meeting because it would almost certainly demonstrate that the Catholicos continues to enjoy the top clergy's backing despite the Armenian premier's eight-month campaign to depose him.

Pashinyan indicated his intention to scuttle the conference on February 13, when he reacted furiously to a joint statement by eight prominent members of the Armenian communities in the United States and Europe condemning his "attacks" on the church. They also stressed the significance of the planned ecclesiastical meeting in Austria. (See statement on page 18.)

"The whole thing is about taking the Catholicos out of Armenia, and I will not allow that. If additional measures need to be taken for that, they will be taken," Pashinyan told reporters.

"I want to warn some representatives of the Diaspora that their involvement in this plot is seriously undermining Armenia's state security and the Republic of Armenia is not going to stand by and look on," he said. "There were going to be a very tough response."

Pashinyan's critics portrayed the threats as further proof that he is violating an Armenian constitutional provision guaranteeing the church's separation from the state and illegally directing the actions of law-enforcement authorities.

Three other archbishops and one bishop of the Armenian Church were arrested on various charges last year amid Pashinyan's efforts to depose Karekin. They all reject

the accusations as politically motivated. Two of them were moved to house arrest earlier this year. The Catholicos has refused to step down despite the crackdown that has also targeted some of his relatives.

Pashinyan began his campaign last May right after Karekin accused Azerbaijan of committing ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh, destroying the region's Armenian churches and illegally occupying Armenian border areas during an international conference in Switzerland. The premier's detractors say he wants to please Azerbaijan or neutralize a key source of opposition to his unilateral concessions to Armenia's arch-foe.

Pashinyan said until December that Karekin and other top clerics at odds with him must go because they had secret sexual relations in breach of their vows of celibacy. He has given different reasons for his campaign since then, accusing them of spying for a foreign country, presumably Russia. He has not offered any proof of the allegation publicly dismissed by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on January 20.

The premier appeared to have again changed the stated reason for his campaign in response to Thursday's statement by the eight prominent Diaspora Armenians based in the US and Europe. The signatories of the statement included four wealthy businessmen and philanthropists.

Another Diaspora benefactor, Russian-Armenian billionaire Samvel Karapetyan, was arrested in June right after condemning Pashinyan's drive to east Karekin and pledging to defend the church "in our way." Following his arrest Karapetyan set up an opposition group which is expected to be one of the main contenders in Armenia's upcoming parliamentary elections.

Armenian Prisoners in Baku to Appeal to ECHR Without Exhausting Azerbaijani Remedies, Lawyer Says

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenian prisoners sentenced in Azerbaijan plan to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) without exhausting all domestic legal remedies in Azerbaijan, lawyer Siranush Sahakyan said on Tuesday, February 17, arguing that local courts do not offer effective avenues for justice.

Her remarks came after Azerbaijani authorities sentenced former Artsakh State

and military leaders held in Baku as a matter ultimately dependent on political decisions.

Sahakyan, who represents Armenian prisoners of war and detainees before the European Court of Human Rights, said the issue, while primarily political, also has legal dimensions because "legal processes were misused for political purposes."

"In formal terms, they can apply to higher courts in Azerbaijan, but these are not effective mechanisms for achieving justice," Sahakyan told Panorama.am in an interview. She said Azerbaijan recognizes the jurisdiction of the Strasbourg-based court and that violations of the right to a fair trial could be effectively raised before it.

Sahakyan noted that Azerbaijani political prisoners, activists and journalists who have faced repression have previously secured redress through the ECHR. While United Nations mechanisms are also available, she says they exert mainly political and moral pressure, whereas ECHR judgments are le-

gally binding.

Under the European Convention on Human Rights, applicants are generally required to exhaust effective domestic remedies before applying to the court. However, Sahakyan argued that if remedies exist only in theory and cannot function effectively in practice, applicants may be exempt from that requirement.

"If the applicants do not exhaust higher domestic courts, they must justify why the theoretically existing mechanisms are ineffective," she said.

Sahakyan pointed to previous cases involving Armenians in Azerbaijan, including that of Gurgen Margaryan, in which a presidential pardon for Ramil Safarov was not challenged in domestic courts despite decrees being subject to judicial review. She also cited other cases involving Armenian detainees and property rights claims as evidence that Azerbaijani courts have not provided effective remedies for Armenians.

She said Vardanyan's legal team would soon issue a separate statement regarding plans to apply to the ECHR. As for other former political and military leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh held in Baku, Sahakyan said she was in consultations with their families and that further details would be made public later.

"Of course, these processes will have legal continuity," she said.



Attorney Siranush Sahakyan

Minister Ruben Vardanyan to 20 years in prison. Legal experts have repeatedly described the fate of former Artsakh political



ARMENIA

The Air Clears, the Problems Don't: Inside Yerevan's Pollution Crisis

By Raffi Elliott

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Denizens of Armenia's capital have been greeted with scenes reminiscent of the neo-noir sci-fi movie "Bladerunner" on and off for almost three months since temperatures began to drop in mid-November of last year. The cause, smog, is rapidly becoming a seasonal occurrence that Yerevan residents now expect as regularly as the regular water cuts, or Christmas, with potentially deadly consequences for those forced to live with various airborne pollutants for extended periods. Despite the uncertainty, however, there is little hope that this grey-brown veil will lift over the city any time soon. According to over a hundred air quality monitoring stations placed across Yerevan, fine particulate matter such as PM10 and PM2.5 levels have reached 2.4 times and 4.8x the recommended limit, raising the risk of long term health concerns such as heart disease and lung cancer.

While the meteorological and geographical conditions which set the stage for these phenomena are nothing new, the introduction of a byproduct of the city's recent prosperity in the form of construction dust and underregulated vehicle emissions is. With the smoke from several ongoing forest fires in the Armenian highland, this toxic combination has dragged down Yerevan's current air quality to one of the worst on record.

This situation and a slew of other mostly-environment-related issues plaguing the city has garnered mounting pub-

since the 1980s, as the fumes from massive Soviet-era industrial concerns, known for lax enforcement of environmental regulations, billowed day and night. Perhaps the most significant culprit, the infamous Nairit chemical plant, lingers in local memory long since the plant closed its doors for good almost twenty years ago, with longtime residents of the city claiming they can still remember the "taste" of the air every morning.

Yerevan's air quality saw a dramatic recovery in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and with it the continent-spanning common market, which demanded Armenian industrial goods. However, the positive environmental byproduct of rapid deindustrialization would soon be countermanded by new noxious gases in the skies above Yerevan.

Historical air pollution data show that while Armenia experienced a near-collapse of industrial pollutants, toxic particulates such as nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide, most commonly associated with car exhaust and wood-burning fires, have grown at an exponential rate since the mid-2000s, in line with the gradual (and later explosive) rise of car ownership rates. Ministry of the Environment data shows that air pollution in the country's capital has risen by up to 40 per cent in the past five years alone. Some 70% of that was caused directly by cars.

A decade ago, 483,600 registered motor



Cloud-shaped window-mounted air quality monitoring station developed by Russian industrial designer Kristina Loginova (used with permission)

vehicles were on the country's roads, with just under three million inhabitants.

By 2023, half a million cars were driving in the streets of Yerevan alone. Notably, a recent rise of EV sales has offset declining imports of ICE (internal combustion engine) cars in the past two years.

Critically, the vast majority of these cars are privately imported used vehicles, often shipped as "parts kits" rather than full cars. Despite stricter legislation on vehicle inspection and emission standards, many of them arrive without their catalytic converters installed, while others are stolen or removed by owners concerned with "performance."

Dust particles also found in the air over Yerevan have been attributed to the numerous construction sites across the city and to rock quarries outside the city. Man-made forest fires in Dilijan, as well as the practice of burning leaves in the city, have both been blamed for the higher rate of formaldehyde detected in the air.

Government (In)action

While experts have been raising the alarm on the mounting effects of car pollution for over a decade, authorities have been slow to enact legislation and even slower to enforce it. A recent study published by the International Energy Agency (IEA) and the European Union, which recommended a speedy and sustained electrification of Armenia's road networks, also specifically cited the re-export of used catalytic converters as a major factor contributing to excessive air pollution across Armenia. The report called for tougher vehicle inspections, stricter customs checks on imports, and meaningful fines for those who bring in non-compliant cars. It also recommended a "green inspection" system that could reduce urban particulate pollution by up to 40 percent within 10 years, and urged Armenia to align its fuel and emissions standards with EU norms.

The Yerevan municipality has already been mulling the introduction of bans on cars lacking catalytic converters since the beginning of last year. "We've started to talk

about this because we have the required equipment that has been showing significant deviations from the norm in winter months," Avinyan told reporters last April.

Despite the promises, critics continue to accuse City Hall and the Armenian Government of dragging their feet on enforcing clear measures to ease the pollution situation. Yerevan residents, reinforced by some of the more active among the tens of thousands of Russian émigrés living in the city, have been mobilizing on the grassroots level to advocate for change. An ad-hoc network of monitoring stations installed by private individuals across town has helped raise the alarm about the looming emergency while holding authorities accountable.

One concerned Russian transplant, industrial designer and hardware developer Kristina Loginova, went so far as to design and code her own air-quality monitoring device, fabricated from over-the-counter equipment ordered from AliExpress. To make the product easier to adopt, she drew on her design expertise and 3D-printed the box in the shape of a white cloud that adheres to a window. "The white cloud on your window doesn't obstruct your view, but reminds you to check the air quality," she explains. She has so far donated or sold over 80 units, mostly through word of mouth. These stations transmit data to the open-source database Armaqi.org.

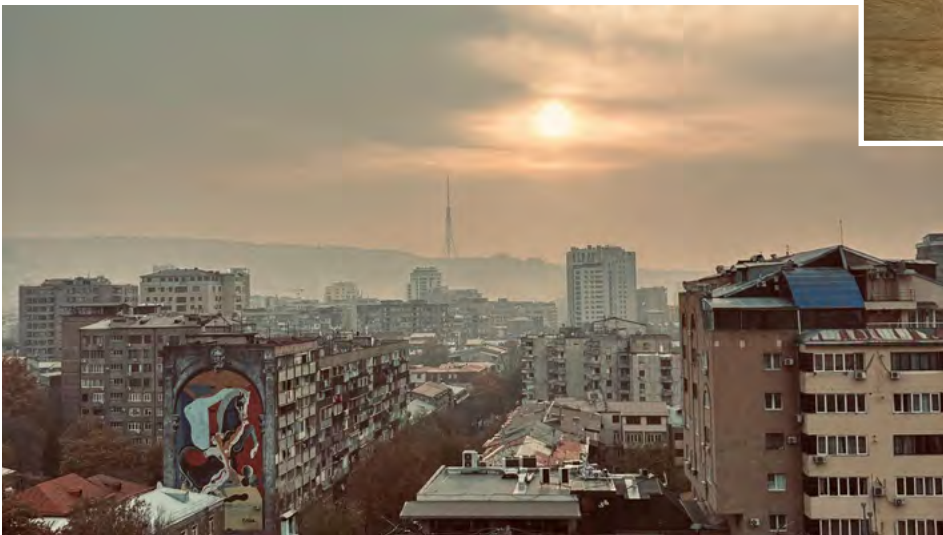
Arsen Petrosyan, a Russian-Armenian repatriate and owner of one of Loginova's cloud-shaped monitors, sees the air quality crisis as a catalyst for civic engagement. He observes that the air quality crisis has brought common cause between Armenian environmental activists and the tech-driven civic "maker culture" that Russian expats have introduced to the country. "Armenia still has a very nascent culture of providing feedback", says the IT project manager who repatriated from Moscow three years earlier, "there is a preference for complaining in private, which reduces the chance of anything getting done."

Petrosyan, who marched along with some two hundred activists, both Russian and Armenian, in late November to demand government action on the worsening air quality crisis, noted mixed attitudes from onlookers. While some told the Russians to go protest in their own country, others were genuinely curious about our complaints and our proposed solutions, he says. "Some local guys approached the protesters with camera phones, rudely heckling them until two Armenian-speaking girls among the protesters began addressing their questions and explained the situation. Their attitudes changed dramatically after that."

The uneasy relationship that many of the transplant Russian environmental activists seemingly cultivated with indignant locals, often incensed at what researcher Maria Gunko dubbed "the Moscow gaze," as in is the gaze of an arrogant subject, treads new ground in Yerevan's future-history of urbanism. Shushan Grigoryan, a research fellow at the Institute for Security Analysis specifically referenced the fight against Yerevan's air pollution in a study published on integration of Russian transplants into Armenian civic life. She described this form of civic participation as a "mode of political participation that occurred in less public settings but served as a means for them to disseminate their ideas and mobilize others."

Despite growing demand for action, the municipality remains evasive on solutions. Mayor Avinyan claimed, in a December press conference, that industrial air quality monitoring stations which he had ordered in the wake of a previous public outcry show that human activity is responsible for only a small portion of the rise in pollution.

Still, over the winter, dust-retaining nets have quietly been installed around high-rise construction sites in the city, increased fines for burning leaves have been announced, and a new round of investment in electrified public-transport solutions has been announced. A tender process is exploring options to replace the fire-prone Nubarashen landfill with a modern recycling facility. The national government also set up an "anti-pollution task-force." Yet, air monitoring websites for Yerevan continue to recommend avoiding outdoor exercise, wearing masks outside, closing windows, and running air purifiers. The march, which Petrosyan attended, was not met by any representative of the municipal government. Yerevan isn't the first municipality to face chronic smog issues, yet questions remain as to whether lessons learned elsewhere will be studied in the city older than Rome.



lic outcry for Mayor Tigran Avinyan to act decisively. Concerns over Yerevan's air quality have even topped the national government's agenda, with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announcing the formation of two separate task forces to address the issue. However, despite the mounting pressure, Mayor Avinyan's administration has done little to address the problem, claiming in a press statement that the smog plaguing the city is essentially a meteorological phenomenon that can't be addressed.

Environmental experts and city planners disagree with this conclusion, suggesting that the municipality has many more tools to tackle the worst of it immediately, as well as policy changes that would reduce the frequency and severity of smog-induced pollution in the city for the foreseeable future. The experiences of other global cities in solving similar chronic smog issues also point to alternative solutions which the City appears slow to consider.

Situated at the eastern corner of the Ararat plain, Yerevan is both one of the highest-altitude capital cities in the world and also one of the driest. Capped by Mount Ararat on the one side, the city itself is surrounded on the other three sides by mountain ranges, placing it in a sort of geological "bowl" often trapping warmer, stale air inside of it.

These conditions usually persist through November and December as the approaching winter brings a low-pressure front, with cold air pushing warmer air down and trapping it above. These conditions remain until relieved by more humid air, which causes precipitation and cycles the older air out of the aforementioned "bowl."

'Prosperity Paradox'

While climatic conditions are largely determined by local geography, the deadly cocktail produced by the introduction of nefarious particles serves as a paradoxical testament to the country's recent economic prosperity.

Yerevan's air quality issues have persisted in some form



ARMENIA

Ruben Vardanyan: A Dignified Man, A Farcical Trial

During a phone conversation with his family, Ruben Vardanyan conveyed the content of his final statement at his trial in Baku, on February 10.

Refusing to participate in an imitation of justice, Vardanyan spoke about dignity, responsibility, and about peace that is possible only between equals.

Below is the full version of his final statement, available in text format and as an audio recording with English subtitles.

“On the 10th, I delivered my final statement in court. I barred my lawyer from presenting any defense arguments, because I did not believe this was a real court, but rather a show trial. There was no genuine possibility of a fair judicial process. As a result, despite intense pressure from the judges, my lawyer remained silent and presented no arguments whatsoever. I myself spoke only briefly. I will not repeat what I said in December – I have already expressed my core views. However, I did read one important poem, which I would like to share with you. In fact, I read two poems. Now, I want to read one poem that relates even more to Armenia than to the place where I am now.

This poem was written in the early 16th century by the Azerbaijani poet Fuzuli.

A ruler of golden lands buys people with silver,

He raises armies to seize another country.

With countless schemes and cunning tricks he conquers it,

Yet even there, there is no peace, no joy.

And in that fatal hour, when fate takes its turn,

The ruler himself perishes – along with the country and millions of lives.

Look: here I stand – a ruler, a dervish, strong with armies of words.

The thunderous word is the source of my victory.

See: every word of mine is a giant, drawing strength from truth.

If a word so wills it, sea and land will submit.

Wherever I send it, a word knows neither honor nor riches;

A word that conquers a country imprisons no one.

No force in the universe can erase my word,

No treacherous wheel of fate can crush it.

Let the rulers of the world grant me no rewards –

I carry a crown in my head, modest and self-carved.

I am free in everything. Whoever you are, my listener,

Do not become a servant for a crust of perishable bread.*

And not even for trains filled with gasoline. What I said – and what I want to repeat – is this: we must understand that a long road toward peace lies ahead of us. It will be extremely difficult.

We will have to undergo a deep inner renewal and restore ourselves first and foremost. Because peace, I want to emphasize once again, is possible only when there are two equal neighbors.



If one side humiliates itself before the other, nothing will work. There will be no peace. I hope we come to realize that everything depends solely on us – on our ability to restore our being, reclaim our self-respect, and preserve our reason, while understanding that we truly need to live in this region in peace. In court, I said it three times, even as they tried to interrupt me: Artsakh was, Artsakh is, and Artsakh will be – existentially. It was, it is, and it will be.

And the issue is not one of legal form. It is about the fact that this cannot simply be erased by anyone. I believe this deeply. I said that I will do everything possible so that, within our lifetime — within my lifetime, I hope — the three leaders of the three sides involved in the conflict will lay flowers on the graves of those who died, regardless of nationality or religion, and apologize to all mothers for their fallen children. I hope that one day this will happen, and that it will be done with respect — for everyone, and for one another.

And I said that I am proud to represent the Armenian people here, in this court. I am not afraid of any punishment or decision and am ready to accept it calmly — because this is not a court, but a show trial.

Unfortunately, they did not take advantage of the opportunity to conduct a genuine judicial process that could have laid the foundation for long-term peace. Instead, they staged an incomprehensible and unprofessional spectacle that, regrettably, benefited no one — first and foremost, the Azerbaijani state itself. I am convinced of this.”

**Technical translation of the poem; a literary translation is available only in Russian.*

Russian-Armenian Tycoon Karapetyan Declared Candidate For PM Despite Ineligibility

INELIGIBILITY, from page 1

Under Armenia’s existing constitution, candidates for prime minister must exclusively hold Armenian citizenship and have resided in the country for the previous four years.

As someone holding multiple passports, Karapetyan does not meet these requirements. He has also not resided in Armenia for the last four years, making him not only ineligible to become prime minister but also to run for parliament in general.

Acknowledging Karapetyan’s ineligibility for the role in their statement on February 12 — featuring an AI-generated video message due to Karapetyan’s house arrest — his party announced plans to pursue constitutional changes that would allow him to assume office if they secure a majority in the June parliamentary elections.

“Twenty days after the elections, at the first session of the [parliament], we will introduce a legislative amendment that allows any person holding only Armenian citizenship to become the Prime Minister of Armenia. By that time, Samvel Karapetyan will be solely an Armenian citizen,” Narek Karapetyan, Samvel Karapetyan’s nephew, announced then.

Karapetyan’s team insisted that the

planned amendment would be lawful and would not require a referendum. They displayed opinions from several lawyers and constitutional experts who argued that the constitutional article setting eligibility criteria for MPs is not among the provisions that require a referendum to be amended.

As Karapetyan was recently transferred to house arrest following his pre-trial detention since June, he was unable to attend the party’s event in person. In his absence, his team described what they called an “unprecedented” solution, airing an AI-generated video message in his stead.

“We want to make Armenia a blessed home where people can live with dignity, work with dignity, and be fairly paid — not a poor shelter that everyone wants to escape from,” the AI-generated message said.

The video further criticized Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s government for their domestic and foreign failures, arguing that the negotiations had resulted in a “weak peace” with Azerbaijan.

“Peace without a strong state is called surrender,” the AI-generated Karapetyan said.

Karapetyan, who has built his fortune in Russia, suggested that under his rule, Armenia would not get “caught up in geopol-

itical scheming.” Instead, he claimed that Armenia would “engage with all neighbors and work with all global powers, with everyone.”

“We do not give a promise, we confirm, the occupied territories of [...] Armenia will be peacefully returned to us,” Narek Karapetyan said during the same event, apparently referring to Armenian territories occupied by Azerbaijan in 2021 and 2022.

He further vowed to bring back a sense of security to Armenia and “guaranteed and strong peace.”

Samvel Karapetyan is one of the richest people in Armenia — his estimated wealth of \$4.4 billion amounts to around half of the country’s entire public budget. For decades, Karapetyan has remained largely outside politics, instead gaining recognition for his business empire and as a benefactor who sponsored the renovation of the Etchmiadzin Cathedral, Armenia’s oldest and most important church.

Karapetyan was arrested after he showed support for the Armenian Apostolic Church during the ongoing government–Church confrontation, which escalated in May 2025.

“If the politicians fail, then we will participate in our own way in all of this,” Karapetyan said to News.am back in June.



Detained tycoon Samvel Karapetyan in an undated photo

Hours later, he was behind bars — charged with calling for a coup following a dramatic raid on his mansion in Yerevan. He was also later charged with money laundering.

Less than a month after his arrest, Karapetyan announced plans to create a “fundamentally new political f

(This article originally appeared on the website www.oc-media.org on February 13.)



INTERNATIONAL

Vance Meets Aliyev in Baku, Touts Partnership And Announces Delivery of US Patrol Boats

By Nate Ostiller

US Vice President JD Vance arrived in Azerbaijan on Tuesday, February 10, where he held high-level meetings with President Ilham Aliyev. Following the meeting, the two leaders signed a charter on a “strategic partnership” between the US and Azerbaijan. Vance also announced the US would “ship some new boats to Azerbaijan to help you all with your territorial waters protection”, which would mark the first time the US has provided Azerbaijan with military equipment.

There were no details on what kind of boats would be delivered or in what quantity.

Vance’s visit is the highest-level trip of an American official to Azerbaijan, and comes a day after he similarly made history when he landed in Armenia.

Following a reception and some closed-door meetings, Vance and Aliyev held a signing ceremony and a brief press conference. Unlike the previous day’s press conference between Vance and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, there were no questions from reporters, and the whole affair was wrapped up in 10 minutes.

The charter largely followed the framework of the memorandum signed at the

August 2025 trilateral summit in Washington between Aliyev, Pashinyan, and US President Donald Trump.

One key addition, however, was the clause that the US and Azerbaijan “intend to deepen civil nuclear cooperation”.

The previous day, Vance similarly promised there would be cooperation between Armenia and the US in nuclear energy, making a vaguely-worded pledge of some \$9 billion in US exports.

The bulk of the short press conference was dedicated to the ongoing peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the associated plans for the Trump Route to connect Azerbaijan to its exclave of Nakhichevan through Armenian territory.

Vance praised Aliyev and Pashinyan for their roles in helping move the peace process forward, saying that without them “we would not have gotten that peace agreement done”. In fact, the peace treaty remains unsigned — Aliyev and Pashinyan only initialed the document in Washington.

“Three people I think created historic peace. The president of this country, the prime minister of Armenia, and of course the president of the United States working together created peace where previously there was war, and I think in the future will create prosperity where once there was only fighting and conflict”, Vance said.

“That is an amazing testament to [Trump’s] leadership, but also to President Aliyev’s leadership as well.”

For his part, Aliyev also lavished both Vance and Trump with praise for their part in the peace process.

Vance ended the press conference with a mixture of personal compliments to Aliyev and what appeared to be an attempt to introduce a bit of levity.

“I was telling my staff before we landed that other than President Trump, the only leader in the world that has really good relations with both the Turks and the Israelis is President Aliyev, and so I said that one, that means the food is really good here, or two, he must be really charming. I can confirm that he’s very charming, and we’re going to find out in a little bit about the food, and I’m sure it will be great”, Vance quipped.

He concluded by saying “that the second lady [Usha Vance] and I are very pleased to be having dinner later today. And I, as I understand it, the vice president of Azerbaijan [Mehriban Aliyeva] is also the president’s wife.”

“Hopefully that doesn’t give the second lady any ideas,” Vance added in jest.

(This story originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on February 10.)



US Vice President JD Vance (left) and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev at a signing ceremony in Baku on February 10, 2026 (official photo)

Vardanyan Given 20-Year Jail Sentence in Azerbaijan

VARDANYAN, from page 1
Azerbaijani military offensive. Five of them were sentenced to life imprisonment and the two others received 20-year prison sentences on February 5 following a separate trial. Like Vardanyan, they denied similar charges brought against them.

Throughout his trial, Vardanyan remained defiant both in the courtroom and in statements periodically communicated to his family members by phone. In his most recent statement circulated last week, he said that “what is happening is not a trial but a judicial farce” and that he is “not afraid of any punishment.”

The 57-year-old billionaire also stressed, “I have said to the court and repeated it three times when they tried to stop me from saying: Artsakh was, Artsakh is, and Artsakh will continue to exist.”

The Armenian government has still not

officially commented on the jail terms given to the former Karabakh leaders, stoking opposition allegations about its complicity in the continuing captivity of these and 11 other Armenians held in Azerbaijan. The government claims to be doing its best to try to secure their release. Vardanyan’s American lawyer, Jared Genser, repeatedly disputed these claims last year.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev rejected at the weekend calls for the release of the former Karabakh leaders, comparing them to Nazi Germany’s leaders. He said that their trials were “absolutely transparent.”

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was accused by his domestic critics of helping Baku legitimize Vardanyan’s continuing imprisonment with his scathing comments about the tycoon made in August 2024. Pashinyan seemed to echo

Aliyev’s claims that he was dispatched to Karabakh by Moscow to serve Russian interests there. The tycoon, who had made his fortune in Russia, hit back at Pashinyan in a September 2024 statement. He subsequently also criticized Pashinyan’s appeasement policy towards Azerbaijan and accused him of spreading hate speech against the Karabakh Armenians.

In what some observers see as a related development, the pro-government mayor of the Armenian resort town of Dilijan took last year legal action against Vardanyan’s charity that has invested millions of dollars in local infrastructure. The mayor is seeking court permission to terminate long-term lease agreements signed with the charity a decade ago, accusing it of not honoring its contractual obligations. Vardanyan’s wife, Veronika Zonabend, has rejected the accusation.

INTERNATIONAL

Iran Urges Armenia, Azerbaijan to Consider Its Position

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei stated during a press briefing on February 11 that Tehran expects both Yerevan and Baku to consider Iran’s position when making decisions. He emphasized that Iran regularly communicates its views and priorities to both Armenian and Azerbaijani leadership, regardless of who is visiting either country at a given time, Sputnik Armenia reported.

Baghaei stressed that Iran supports expanding transport and communication links among neighboring states, but deems any initiative that may threaten border stability unacceptable.

“Both neighboring countries are aware of Iran’s perspectives and concerns regarding these matters. We expect those considerations to be properly factored in during any decision-making,” he said.

U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance’s visit to Armenia included discussions on the TRIPP initiative, a proposed 43-kilometer railway link between Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan, which could later integrate with North-South and East-West corridors.

The plan envisions a company with majority U.S. control, granting Armenia oversight rights on critical decisions.

Yerevan, Brussels Review Strategic Partnership Agenda

BRUSSELS (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan and European Commission official Gert Jan Koopman this week discussed advancing cooperation ahead of Commissioner Marta Kos’s visit and the planned Armenia-EU summit.

Mher Grigoryan and Gert Jan Koopman, Director-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood at the European Commission, agreed to continue joint efforts to strengthen cooperation in preparation for the visit of EU Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos and the Armenia-EU summit.

The meeting was also attended by Adrien Kiraly, Director for Eastern Neighbourhood and Institution Building at the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, and Head of the EU Delegation to Armenia, Ambassador Vassilis Maragos.

The sides discussed issues related to the implementation of the strategic agenda of the Armenia-EU partnership, placing particular emphasis on the full implementation of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement.

Grigoryan and Koopman also exchanged views on regional connectivity initiatives, referring to the “Crossroads of Peace” project. They further reviewed joint work carried out within the framework of the Economic and Investment Plan.



INTERNATIONAL

Armenian Bishops Meet in Austria Despite Church Head's Prosecution

By Susan Badalian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Bishops and archbishops of the Armenian Apostolic Church were gathering in Austria for an emergency meeting on Monday despite travel bans imposed on Catholicos Karekin II and six other Armenia-based clergymen facing criminal charges rejected by them as politically motivated.

Karekin was indicted on Saturday the day after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan pledged to take “additional measures” to scuttle the meeting seen as a major blow to his efforts to depose the supreme head of the church.

The accusations leveled against the Catholicos stem from his January 27 decision to defrock a bishop involved in Pashinyan's controversial campaign. Six bishops sitting on the church's Supreme Spiritual Council are prosecuted for recommending that decision.

Karekin's office and legal experts question the legality of the charges, saying that Armenian courts and law-enforcement authorities have no jurisdiction over internal church affairs. They say the criminal proceedings are designed to prevent the conference of bishops in the Austrian city of Sankt Polten scheduled for February 16-19.

The conference was originally scheduled to take place in Echmiadzin from December 10-12. Karekin postponed it

because of what his office described as “repressions against clergy.” The Mother See gave the same reason for the subsequent decision to move it abroad.

Archbishop Natan Hovannisyan, the head of the Mother See's External Relations and Protocol Department, said on Monday that although the meeting will go ahead as planned its status will be downgraded from an official “episcopal assembly to a “gathering of bishops” due to Karekin's inability to attend it.

“The gathering can submit the conclusions of its discussions to the Mother See,” Hovannisyan said, adding that neither the Catholicos nor the indicted bishops, including himself, will participate in it via video link.

“Some 20 bishops have already arrived in Austria,” Bishop Tiran Petrosyan, the Armenian patriarchal legate in Central Europe, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service from Vienna. “Others are expected to arrive later in the day.”

All 56 bishops and archbishops of the Armenian Church were invited last month to Sankt Polten to discuss “challenges facing the church and ways of overcoming them.” Ten of them openly broke the ranks in late November to join Pashinyan's campaign.

The rebel bishops allied to Pashinyan denounced the decision to hold the meeting outside Armenia. However, one of them, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, said afterwards that he will attend it.

Derderian heads a church diocese in the western United States.

Petrosyan said only two bishops participating in the meeting are based in Armenia. The other participants represent church dioceses in Armenian Diaspora communities around the world. The Lebanon-based Catholicos Aram I, the number two figure in the church hierarchy, is understood to have canceled his participation due to the travel ban imposed on Karekin II. According to the legate, he has sent a message of support to Sankt Polten.

Critics say Pashinyan sought to prevent the rescheduled gathering because it will almost certainly demonstrate that the Catholicos continues to enjoy the top clergy's backing.

The Armenian premier indicated his intention to scuttle it on Friday when he reacted furiously to a joint statement by eight prominent members of the Armenian communities in the United States and Europe condemning his “attacks” on the church. He accused the signatories, among them four billionaires, of plotting to remove the seat of the Catholicos from Armenia and seizing church treasures kept in Echmiadzin. Pashinyan offered no proof of the allegation laughed off by Hovannisyan.

“The Mother See had returned to Echmiadzin in 1441... and the Mother See will forever remain in Armenia,” insisted the indicted archbishop.

The unprecedented accusations filed against Karekin have drawn strong condemnation from Armenia's main opposition groups as well as some Diaspora groups, notably an umbrella structure representing France's influential Armenian community.

In a weekend statement, the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France (CCAF) strongly condemned the Armenian government's “repressions” against the church and demanded an immediate end to the “illegal” criminal proceedings against the Catholicos and the six other clergymen. The CCAF also voiced its “full and unwavering support” for Karekin.

Pashinyan said until December that Karekin and other top clerics at odds with him must go because they had secret affairs in breach of their vows of celibacy. He then began accusing them of spying for a foreign country, presumably Russia. His latest allegations directed at Diaspora figures in the West raised even more questions about his real motives.

Pashinyan began his campaign last May right after Karekin accused Azerbaijan of committing ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh and illegally occupying Armenian border areas during an international conference in Switzerland. His detractors say he wants to please Azerbaijan or neutralize a key source of opposition to his unilateral concessions to Armenia's arch-foe.

US Ambassador to Turkey Tom Barrack Kept in Contact with Epstein for Years, According to Report

ISTANBUL (Turkish Minute) — Thomas Barrack, who is currently the US ambassador to Turkey and special envoy to Syria, was in regular, close contact with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein for years after Epstein's 2008 guilty plea, a CBS News analysis of newly released Justice Department files published on Friday, February 13, found.

The analysis, based on more than 100 texts and email exchanges from documents released as part of the government's Epstein files, places Barrack among a circle of wealthy and influential figures who maintained social and professional ties with Epstein even as his criminal history was publicly known. CBS News said there is no evidence Barrack participated in or had knowledge of any ongoing criminal conduct by Epstein.

Barrack, 78, is a California-born billionaire and founder of Colony Capital, a real estate investment trust. He has been one of President Donald Trump's closest personal friends and political allies, chaired Trump's 2017 presidential inauguration and served as a senior adviser to his 2016 campaign. Trump nominated him to serve as US ambassador to Turkey in December 2024. The Senate confirmed him in a 60-36 vote in April 2025. He presented his credentials to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on May 14 and was subsequently appointed special envoy for Syria.

His dual role gives him an unusually direct line to Trump on US-Turkey relations



Ambassador to Turkey Tom Barrack

and Syria, where Turkey has major military and political stakes following the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime.

What the documents show

In September 2009, months after Epstein was released from Palm Beach County jail following his guilty plea to soliciting a minor, Barrack wrote to him: “Thinking about u, hope u r good and life is calm again.” The message began what CBS News described as an extended period of regular contact between the two men.

Over the following years, the documents show Epstein facilitating introductions between Barrack and prominent figures including Palantir CEO Peter Thiel, former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak and Vitaly Churkin, then Russia's permanent representative to the United Nations. Epstein's

calendar for August 29, 2016 — weeks after Barrack delivered a prime-time speech at the Republican National Convention boosting Trump — includes a notation for “Lunch w/Ehud Barak, Tom Barrack and Vitaly Churkin.”

In April 2016, with Barrack deeply involved in the Trump campaign, Epstein forwarded him an email about a civil lawsuit filed by a woman using the pseudonym “Katie Johnson,” who alleged that Epstein and Trump raped her in 1994. Epstein described the claim as “nuts but i thought you guys should know.” The lawsuit was withdrawn. Trump has denied any wrongdoing in relation to Epstein.

The documents also show Epstein asking Barrack to send photos of him with a child — “send photos of you and child. —make me smile” — though it is unclear who the child was. CBS News described the child as Barrack's newborn baby, but the reference was ambiguous.

Epstein repeatedly encouraged Barrack to move their communications to encrypted messaging apps including Signal, the records of which were not included in the government files release. One text exchange in August 2016, while Barrack was in Turkey, shows Barrack agreeing to download Signal after Epstein invited him to dinner with filmmaker Woody Allen.

The day after a scheduled lunch meeting of Barrack, Epstein, Barak and Churkin, Epstein purchased approximately \$1 million in stock in Colony Capital, Barrack's

publicly traded company.

On the day after Trump won the 2016 election, a senior Saudi official texted Epstein to ask about the protocol for King Salman calling Trump to congratulate him. Epstein replied: “TOM barrack is your point person.”

Earlier legal scrutiny

In 2021 federal prosecutors charged Barrack with acting as an unregistered foreign agent for the United Arab Emirates during the first Trump administration and making false statements to federal investigators. A jury acquitted him on all counts in November 2022.

The UAE charges centered on allegations that Barrack used his access to Trump to advance Emirati policy goals while seeking hundreds of millions of dollars in investments from Gulf sovereign wealth funds. The Epstein files add new detail to the network of Gulf royals, Russian diplomats and Israeli politicians with whom Barrack interacted during the same period.

CBS News said it reached out to Barrack, Trump, Thiel, Barak and businesswoman Nicole Junkermann for comment and had received no responses as of publication. The US Embassy in Ankara did not respond to a request for comment.

Epstein died in a Manhattan federal detention facility in August 2019. A medical examiner ruled his death a suicide by hanging. He faced federal sex trafficking charges at the time of his death, which he denied before his arrest.

Australian Armenians in Sydney Enjoy Armenian Musical Event Dedicated to Vahan Tekeyan

RYDE, Australia — The Armenian community of Sydney was treated to a truly memorable evening of music and culture at St. Annes Auditorium, Ryde, on Sunday, February 8. Organized by the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of Sydney, the special event of music and conversation was dedicated to the poetry of Vahan Tekeyan.



Tekeyan Cultural Association of Sydney Chairman Vahe Artinian (photo Herman Mahmur)

The program featured internationally acclaimed violinist and University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Prof. Movses Pogossian, alongside Australian pianist Vatche Jambazian. Together, they

delivered an inspiring performance honoring the cultural contributions of Vahan Tekeyan through music and reflection.

Master of ceremonies Nora Bastajian warmly welcomed dignitaries, representatives, and guests, after which an audiovisual presentation highlighted Pogossian’s extensive musical work in Armenia, throughout the diaspora, and internationally.

Pogossian’s artistry powerfully reaffirmed the notion of music as a universal language. He shared insights into the ensembles he established and developed across the globe. The audience witnessed a masterful performance in which the music of Armenia’s great composers was presented with elegance, depth, and emotional resonance.

Jambazian’s piano accompaniment was a perfect complement to the violin performance, demonstrating exceptional synchronization and artistry, made even more impressive by the fact that the program had been finalized only the night before.

The evening also showcased local talent, with Deacon Boghos Keleshian presenting a moving rendition of Vahan Tekeyan’s poem “The Armenian Church,” performed as a piano and vocal composition created by the late Khoren Mekhanejian.

During the formal proceedings, Bastajian invited TCA Chairman Vahe Artinian to present commemorative trophies and express gratitude to the performers, sponsors, and volunteers whose dedication ensured the success of this complex and professionally executed event.



MC Nora Bastajian (photo Herman Mahmur)

In his closing remarks, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Australia and New Zealand Bishop Navasardyan commended the performers and organizers, acknowledging the high caliber of artistic collaboration demonstrated on stage. He also reflected on the evolution of Armenian music over the centuries, particularly its foundations in Armenian Church liturgical melodies and sacred hymns.

Sincere thanks to Bishop Navasardyan, local Armenian political, cultural and youth organizations, generous sponsors, and especially Aram Arkun, Executive Director of the Tekeyan Cultural Associ-



Prof. Movses Pogossian on violin with pianist Vatche Jambazian (photo Herman Mahmur)



Dn. Boghos Keleshian performing (photo Herman Mahmur)



Vatche Jambazian, left, receives Tekeyan award from TCA Chairman Vahe Artinian (photo Herman Mahmur)

ation of the US and Canada, for their support in making this unique cultural evening possible. Special appreciation also goes to Bastajian for editing the event booklet; to Herman Mahmur for capturing the memorable evening through his outstanding photography; and to Gerard Artinian for expertly coordinating the audiovisual components throughout the program.

Akopova and Rakhmanin Place 14th At Olympics in Figure Skating Pairs



Skaters Karina Akopova and Nikita Rakhmanin

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia’s figure skating pair Karina Akopova and Nikita Rakhmanin finished 14th at the Winter Olympics in Milan, in the country’s debut appearance in the pairs discipline.

Their free skate was performed to music from the renowned film “Slumdog Millionaire.” They earned a total of 180.66 points.

It is the first time Armenia has been represented by a pairs team at the Olympic Games.

On February 15, in the short program of figure skating, the duo performed to Ara Gevorgyan’s composition *Artsakh*.

The Akopova–Rakhmanin pair skated to the song despite objections from Baku; however, the title of the piece was not announced, and only the name of composer Ara Gevorgyan was stated.

Community News

Fresno Chamber of Commerce Honors Edward Kashian

By Dylan Gonzales

FRESNO(Business Journal) — In what CEO Scott Miller called “long overdue”, the Fresno Chamber of Commerce announced 96-year-old Edward M. Kashian, CEO and principal of Lance Kashian & Co., as the 2026 Leon S. Peters Award honoree in January.

The honor recognizes Kashian’s exceptional leadership, philanthropy and long-standing commitment to the Central Valley and communities beyond, according to a news release.

He is the son of Armenian immigrants Michael and Sarah, was born in 1929 in Philadelphia and moved to Fresno in 1946. A Navy veteran of the Korean conflict, he returned to care for his parents, married Jeanne and founded Lance Kashian & Company in 1964, transforming Fresno through major real estate developments.

As head of Lance Kashian, Kashian has played a defining role in shaping Fresno’s economic growth and built environment through the development of significant commercial, health care and mixed-use projects including River Park, Campus Pointe and the Fancher Creek Town Center.

The honor comes as Lance Kashian has built momentum as 2026 got underway. In December, Campus Pointe celebrated the opening of Hyatt House. In the two months prior, Lance Kashian celebrated the openings of Target and In-N-Out at Fancher Creek.

“This is an exciting time,” his daughter-in-law Tracy Kashian, who handles public relations for Lance Kashian, said. “That momentum has been really great. We’re so excited to see all these come just make our town and our community, even better.”

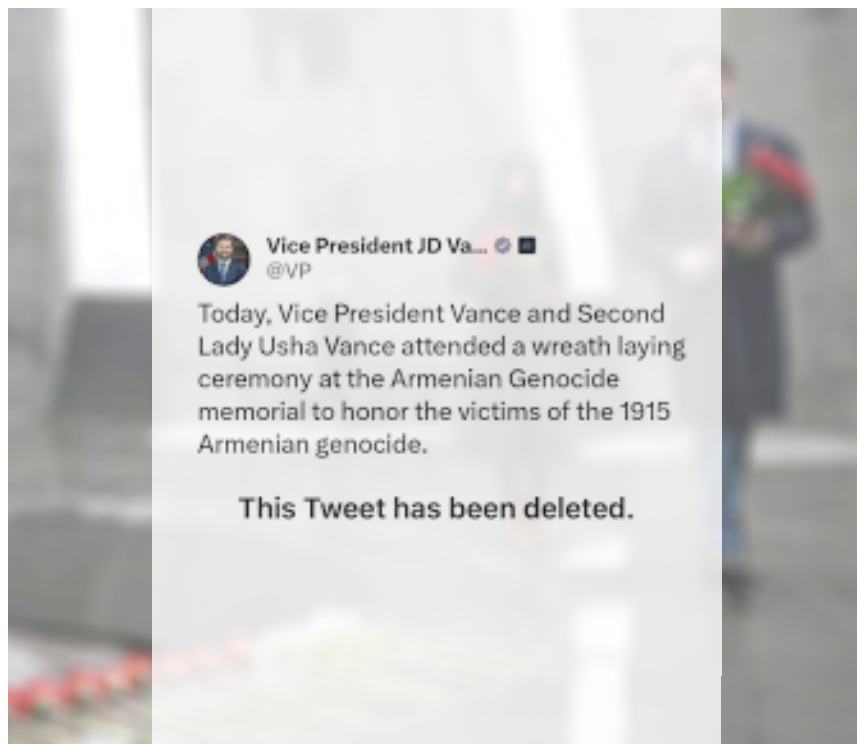
Equally impactful is Kashian’s commitment to giving back, said the Chamber, which surprised Kashian with the award Wednesday at the Lance Kashian offices in north Fresno.

With his wife, Jeanne, he has made transformational philanthropic contributions to education, health care and community institutions locally and globally. His support of higher education, medical advancement and community development reflects a deep belief in opportunity, service and long-term investment in people, said the Chamber.

“Kashian’s leadership is marked not only by professional achievement, but by integrity, generosity, and a dedication to improving lives, qualities that fully embody the spirit of the Leon S. Peters,” said the Chamber in its announcement.

The Leon S. Peters Award honors individuals who exemplify the qualities of its namesake. Leon S. Peters was widely respected as a businessman, civic leader and philanthropist who came from Armenian immigrants. He grew up on a family farm and began his career as a salesman for Valley Foundry after losing his parents at a young age. He later purchased the company and transformed

see KASHIAN, page 9



Armenian Assembly, ANCA React To Vance Deleting Post on Visting Armenian Genocide Memorial

WASHINGTON — The two leading Armenian-American organizations lobbying for Armenian issues, including recognition of the Genocide, offered angry responses to Vice President J.D. Vance’s social media account deleting photos about his visit to the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan on February 10.

Vance’s visit to Armenia was widely covered by Armenian media, including a wreath-laying ceremony and a moment of silence at the eternal flame. However, by deleting a post on the Armenian Genocide, he backtracked on the clear U.S. record of affirmation.

As reported, the initial post by Vance was retracted and replaced by a subsequent tweet that avoided the usage of the word “genocide.” While that might have kept the Vice President’s remarks consistent with the President’s April 24th 2025 statement, the incident was another reminder about the dangers of denial, especially in the context of negotiations to resolve differences between Armenia and Azerbaijan and only imposes additional costs on Armenia and rewards Turkey for

constantly meddling in regional affairs and for being unconstructive, if not obstructive, on many important issues.

“While the Assembly greatly appreciates U.S. engagement and the strengthening of relations, we cannot remain silent with respect to the Vice President’s posting and then deleting reference to the Armenian Genocide and further replacing it with a version bereft of any mention of the Memorial or the Armenian Genocide during his visit to Tsitsernakaberd,” stated Assembly Co-Chairs Talin Yacoubian and Oscar Tatosian.

“We deserve better from our elected officials and call for a public explanation for the apparent flip-flop. As Armenian Americans, we have long been united in the cause of genocide education, affirmation, and prevention,” the co-chairs continued. “At this pivotal moment, we must redouble our efforts to ensure that recognition is matched with vigilance and action. We must remain steadfast in our commitment to justice, accountability, and the prevention of future atrocities.”

Today, more than 30 countries and the Vatican have formally affirmed the Armenian Genocide. In the United States, recognition has been expressed by Presidents, the United States Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, the Judicial Branch, and all 50 states—reflecting a national consensus grounded in historical evidence and moral clarity.

Similarly, the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) called out Vice President JD Vance’s deletion of his X (Twitter) post, calling it a “disgraceful surrender to Turkish pressure” that raises serious concerns among Armenian American voters heading into the 2026 midterm elections and 2028 presidential race.

“Turkey never tires of humiliating America,” stated ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. “This time, forcing a sitting U.S. Vice President to delete his post about the Armenian Genocide. While it’s no surprise to see Turkey still strong-arming global leaders to enforce its Armenian Genocide gag-rule, it is deeply troubling to witness Vice President Vance – a man who loudly proclaims solidarity with Christian victims of persecution – display such weakness in the face of this foreign pressure.”

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Dr. Oz Invited Jeffrey Epstein to Palm Beach Valentine’s Party After Epstein Served Time as Child Sex Offender, DOJ Files Suggest

By Gabrielle Rockson

WASHINGTON (*People*) — Dr. Mehmet Oz’s name appears in the newly released batch of Epstein files

The celebrity doctor, who now runs the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, invited Jeffrey Epstein to a Valentine’s party in 2016, an email published by the Justice Department suggests

The invite came after Epstein had served 13 months in jail for soliciting prostitution from a minor

Dr. Mehmet Oz is the latest Trump administration official whose name was spotted among the millions of newly released Epstein files.

The celebrity doctor, who now runs President Donald Trump’s Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, appears to have invited convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein to a Valentine’s Day party in 2016, an email published by the Department of Justice suggests.

The email invite arrived in Epstein’s inbox on Feb. 1, 2016, with a subject line of “Mehmet & Lisa Oz’s Valentines Celebration.” The event’s location aligned with the address for the home that Dr. Oz and his wife reportedly purchased for \$18 million the year prior, as documented by The Palm Beach Post.

The invitation was sent using e-vite platform Paperless Post.

PEOPLE attempted to reach reps for Oz as well as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services for comment.

Oz’s email was sent years after Epstein became a child sex offender. In 2008, the billionaire financier pleaded guilty to one count of soliciting prostitution and one count of soliciting prostitution from a minor. He served a 13-month jail sentence in Florida.

In 2019, while awaiting trial on new federal conspiracy and sex trafficking charges, Epstein was found hanging inside a jail cell at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York City. His death at 66 was ruled a suicide.

Oz isn’t the only member of the Trump administration who has faced new scrutiny over their appearance in the latest batch of Epstein files (in addition to Trump himself, whose name allegedly appears more than a million times in the unredacted files, according to Democratic Rep. Jamie Raskin).

Earlier this week, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick was questioned about his relationship with Epstein during a hearing with the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee. Newly released emails suggested the pair had been in contact as recently as 2018, despite Lutnick vowing in October that he cut off their brief acquaintanceship in 2005.

“I’m glad to be here to make it clear,” Lutnick told the Senate committee. “I met Jeffrey Epstein when he moved-- when I moved to a house next door to him in New York. I met

see OZ, page 9



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian American Museum to Host Annual Golf Classic

GLENDALE — The Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of California invites community members, partners, and supporters for a day of friendly competition in support of the museum at the 1st Annual Armenian American Museum Golf Classic on Monday, June 1, 2026 at the La Cañada Flintridge Country Club.

The inaugural tournament promises a full day of activity and connection. Guests will enjoy breakfast upon arrival, a putting contest, raffle opportunities, lunch, drinks, and a closing dinner reception to celebrate the day's participants. More than a tournament, the Golf Classic is a chance to help build a living legacy while enjoying an unforgettable day on the green.

The Golf Classic will bring together business leaders, philanthropists, and community members in support of the Armenian American Museum's mission to build a cultural landmark dedicated to sharing the Armenian American story for generations to come.

Participants may register by visiting ArmenianAmericanMuseum.org/

AAMGolf. Registration deadline is Friday, May 22.

The Armenian American Museum and Cultural Center of California is a world-class educational and cultural in-

tions, an Auditorium, a Learning Center, a Demonstration Kitchen, an Archives Center, and more. Its mission is to promote understanding and appreciation of America's ethnic and cultural diversity



stitution currently under construction in the heart of Glendale's Arts and Entertainment District. The museum will feature Permanent and Temporary Exhibi-

by sharing the Armenian American experience.

Learn more at ArmenianAmericanMuseum.org.

Dr. Oz Invited Epstein to Palm Beach Valentine's Party

OZ, from page 8

him then. Over the next 14 years, I met him two other times that I can recall."

"Probably the total, and you've seen all of these documents of these millions and millions of documents, there may be 10 emails connecting me with him, probably about 10 emails connecting me with him over a 14-year period," he continued. "I did not have any relationship with him. I barely had anything to do with that person, okay?"

When pressed on one 2012 encounter in particular that was seemingly referenced in the Epstein files, Lutnick admitted that he visited the now-infamous "Epstein Island" — the billionaire's private getaway in the U.S. Virgin Islands, officially known as Little Saint James. Lutnick said he brought his family to the island, including his wife, their four children and nannies.

"I did have lunch with him as I was on a boat going across on a family vacation," Lutnick said of the visit. "I had another couple, they were there as well with their children, and we had lunch on the island. That is true, for an hour, and we left with all of my children, with my nannies and my wife all together."

Vice President JD Vance recently told the Daily Mail that the three million Epstein files released by the Justice Apartment on Jan. 30 "shows there's an incestuous nature to America's elites, and it's pretty gross."

However, he insisted that "President Trump is very much outside of the social circle."

Armenian Assembly, ANCA React to Vance Deleting Genocide Memorial Post

VANCE, from page 8

The White House @RapidResponse47 X (formerly Twitter) account also deleted a post featuring a reporter's question to Vice President Vance in Yerevan about the importance of his visit to the Armenian Genocide Memorial. Vice President Vance offered an evasive response: "@VP: Well, we're going to visit some important sites to Azerbaijan tomorrow... I'm the first Vice President to ever visit Armenia. They asked us to visit the site... I wanted to go and pay my respects." Vid-

eo of the exchange is available here.

ANCA Policy Director Alex Galitsky called the second post deletion "an insult to the memory of the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide — and an affront to a community that fought tirelessly for decades to ensure recognition of that crime."

When Bloomberg News' Kate Sullivan, travelling as part of the White House press pool, asked about the deletion of the Vice President's Armenian Genocide post, a VP official stated the

original tweet was "posted in error by staff who are not part of the delegation." A VP spokesperson added: "This is an account managed by staff that primarily exists to share photos and videos of the

Vice President's activities. For the Vice President's views on the substance of the question, I refer you to the comments he made earlier on the tarmac in response to the pool's question."

Fresno Chamber of Commerce Honors Kashian

KASHIAN, from page 8

it into a world-renowned supplier of agricultural equipment by revolutionizing wine production through innovations such as the wine grape crusher and seamless stainless-steel tanks.

Others will be honored as part of the 2026 Valley Business Awards being held in March. They include:

- Harold Zinkin Entrepreneur of the Year Award: Liz McIlvaine, Total Concepts

- Community Champion of the Year Award: California Teaching Fellows Foundation

- Student Entrepreneur of the Year Award: Jasmine Ruiz, Cry Baby Cookies

- Child-Friendly Business of the Year: Art of Comfort

The 2026 Valley Business Awards will take place on Friday, March 13, as a luncheon at Pardini's Catering and Banquets.



Ed Kashian, center, was surprised with the Leon S. Peters award Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2026 in Fresno (photo Dylan Gonzales)

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Boston Public School Students Explore Geometry and The Immigrant Experience at Armenian Heritage Park

BOSTON — The innovative, multidisciplinary curriculum inspired by Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway is engaging Boston Public School students in an exploration of geometry, public art and the immigrant experience. The Park's geometric features tell a powerful story of the immigrant journey, one that unites and connects everyone.

City of Boston Mayor's Office of Arts & Culture has designated the Community Windows at Boston City Hall for a public display to introduce the curriculum, "Geometry as Public Art: Telling A Story." The display includes examples of students' "I AM" poems, written in the voice of the first person in their family to come to this country and a portrait of that person.

A Reception will be held on Thursday, February 26, from 3 to 5 p.m. at Community Windows between the second and third floors at Boston City Hall. The reception is hosted by Arsenal Catering Group. RSVP is appreciated, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org.

The display will be on view from February 23 through March 27.

"Geometry as Public Art" is inspired by the park's design and geometric features, most notably the shape-changing Abstract Sculpture, a split rhomboid dodecahedron, and the Labyrinth. The curriculum connects geometry, art, history and civic engagement. It invites students and educators to explore how geometry in public space can communicate powerful narratives about the immigrant experience, resilience and the building of community.

Through interactive learning and reflection, the curriculum demonstrates how public art can serve as a catalyst for dialogue, discovery and connection, building common ground across cultures and generations.

The curriculum was developed by the Friends of Armenian Heritage Park in collaboration with 4th-grade teachers at the Eliot K-8 Innovation School in the North End. The curriculum is presently being implemented in 12 Boston Public Schools.

Funding from the Columbus Foundation/Stephen H. Barmakian Family Foundation supports round-trip bus transportation to/from school to the park and is provided by Eastern Bus Company.

The three-lesson experience connects the classroom and the community. The curriculum integrates geometry, art, language arts and social studies, promoting cross-cultural understanding and respect.

During Lesson One in the Classroom, students explore geometric shapes and view the "About the Park" presentation. They discuss the "About My Family" questionnaire to guide conversations with family members or friends about the first person in their family to come to this country.

Lesson Two is a visit to Armenian Heritage Park, where they explore the Abstract Sculpture and discuss its symbolism and connection to the immigrant journey. They read the Inscription on the Reflecting Pool, and walk the Labyrinth, learning about its meditative benefits and coming together at its center with its single jet of water, symbolic of hope and rebirth. The students discover the words etched around the Labyrinth Circle — Art, Science, Service, Commerce — recognizing contributions to American life and culture. They participate in the One Step Forward activity, physically and symbolically moving toward a shared center, reinforcing themes of unity and common ground. Each visit concludes

with students writing wishes on colorful ribbons for the Park's Wishing Tree.

Lesson Three is back in the classroom and time for reflection. Students create their "I AM" poem told in the voice of the first person in their family, sometimes themselves, to arrive in this country to start a new life. Students create a portrait of that person to accompany their poem.

Teachers report that the curriculum fosters pride, empathy and deeper understanding among students. The curriculum is "... an exciting and engaging way for students to learn more about their family heritage and reflect on the American immigration experience... a wonderful way for teachers to learn about and better understand their students and for the students to learn about one another," shares Brianna Greene, former 4th Grade Teacher, the Eliot K-8 School.

For more information, visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org or contact hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org.



Boston Public Schools 4th grade students walk the Labyrinth together at Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway



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COMMUNITY NEWS

California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation Adds New Members

SACRAMENTO — The California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation is pleased to announce new members Assemblymembers Isaac G. Bryan (D-Los Angeles) and Damon Connolly (D-San Rafael). With their addition, the foundation has now expanded to 60 members, led by its Chair,

Assemblymember John Harabedian. Bryan declared: “I’m honored to join my colleagues in the Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation, and particularly at this moment when our Armenian friends and neighbors are denigrated and attacked by those seeking to divide us,” while Connolly stated: “I am honored to join the Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation and fight for the needs of the Armenian community alongside my legislative colleagues.” The California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation serves as a forum for members from the California Senate and Assembly to identify key issues affecting Armenian Americans and develop and empower the Armenian American community throughout California. The Foundation encourages advocacy and participation in cultural, educational, and community efforts in California. Through advocacy, the Foundation strives to ensure that California Armenian American’s voices are heard and given a platform.



California State Assemblymember Damon Connolly



California State Assemblymember Isaac G. Bryan standing on the Assembly floor

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AGBU 20 YEARS



Arts & Culture

New Western Armenian Poetry Program Launches Quarter Tone Poets

A new literary initiative dedicated to innovative Western Armenian poetry is under way for the 2025–2026 academic year. Quarter Tone Poets // Քվարտոնայ Զայն Բանաստեղծներ (QTP) is a multidisciplinary poetry program that promotes and celebrates contemporary literary expression in Western Armenian by exploring the musicality of language and the creative possibilities that emerge through music.

QTP seeks to cultivate a community that is inclusive, accessible, innovative, and enjoyable. The program strives to maintain an open mind to the many ways that linguistic expression can manifest itself, and is committed to promoting authentic self-expression as an essential path toward cultural progress and evolution.

QTP offers a range of artistic and professional opportunities, including a series of seven poetry workshops, a print and digital poetry anthology, a poetry contest with cash prizes, and a music video project integrating poetry with oud and other Armenian folk instruments. Together, these components are designed to support both emerging and established writers while expanding the expressive possibilities of Western Armenian literature. Workshops have thus far taken place with Armenian writing classes at UCLA and UC Berkeley. A spring workshop is planned to take place in New York City, with other gatherings in development for Beirut, Buenos Aires, Oakland, and beyond. To explore a workshop with your community, please connect via the contact form at <https://www.quartertonepoets.org/faq-contact>.

Submissions from writers of all levels are now open for the Quarter Tone Poets Anthology, a print and digital publication that will showcase the discoveries, voices, and complexities of the program’s creative community. All poems submitted for the anthology will also be considered for the accompanying poetry contest, which will award three cash prizes: first place: \$1,000 USD; second place \$700 USD; third place \$300 USD.

The Quarter Tone Poets program is supported by a Western Armenian culture grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and is led by Glendale’s inaugural Poet Laureate and UCLA faculty member Raffi Joe Wartanian.

Submission deadline: June 1, 2026, by 11:59 pm PST, To submit and review entry guidelines, visit: <https://forms.gle/h6xyMj7L6nNrHooo9>

To learn more about Quarter Tone Poets and its guiding values, visit: <http://quartertonepoets.org/>



Abstract Love, #6, Metal and the artist (photos Marc Barker)

Americans Discover Armenia Through Art

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK - “Art lovers from the region attended and, through my work, many of them discovered Armenia for the first time!” This is how Arman Hambardzumyan described the response he received at his solo exhibition in Oklahoma City not long ago. Billed as “acclaimed artist, ArmanH” by the 1515 Lincoln Gallery, which hosted the event, the exhibition took place October 16-November 29 and was divided into two parts. The main hall was curated by John Wolfe and featured artists from the U.S., Canada, and Europe, whose works were united under the concept of Geometrics. “The second hall was dedicated entirely to my work, where I presented 11 sculptures,” Hambardzumyan – or better, ArmanH, as his American hosts called him -- explained in an interview to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator on February 14. “The solo exhibition brought together several thematic directions: my Abstract Love metal sculpture series; bronze works inspired by ancient heroes, including Battle Against the Minotaur and Pharaoh; a series of mixed-media sculptures depicting the female nude; and animalistic sculptures in which I combined metal with native Armenian stones,” he said.

The 1515 Lincoln Gallery offered art lovers a unique chance to look beyond the works into the mind and creative activity of the artist himself. In a talk on October 18, guests were able to participate in an interactive event with Hambardzumyan. While starting from scratch on a new work, the young sculptor talked about

see ART, page 13



Solo Artist Talk at 1515 Lincoln Gallery, the artist with Gallery owner Susan McCalmont (photo Marc Barker)

Godefroi Bernier: ‘Komitas Revolutionized My Approach to The Piano’

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/LILLE, France – French pianist Godefroi Bernier (born in 1992) is deeply attached to Armenia and Armenian music. A graduate of the Lille Conservatory, he has participated in numerous festivals. In 2020, he recorded his first studio album, “The Piano at the Heart of Armenia,” presenting Armenian music through the works of six composers. In 2022, he released a second album, “Komitas: Complete Works for Piano,” featuring previously unpublished early compositions. In 2023, Bernier performed a four-hand piano repertoire with his wife, pianist Mari Poshotyan, introducing audiences to new works transcribed by Bernier himself. In 2025, he began working on a third album dedicated to the composer and pianist Georgi Sarajyan.

Dear Godefroi, how did you become a pianist?

Since I began playing the piano at the age of 20, I would say that becoming a pianist is nothing short of a miracle. I did not receive a musical education, and there were no musicians in my family; the piano appeared to me as a calling during a period when my desire for expression was intense. I tend to compare that moment in my life to a rebirth that undeniably transformed my deepest identity.

If it hadn’t been the piano, what other form of art would you have explored?

I have always been fascinated by architecture, especially ancient monuments — in France, the great cathedrals that shaped our Christian identity. I could have imagined myself as a stonemason, using my hands to restore these immortal masterpieces.

You may have already told the story of how your interest in Armenian music began; could you tell it again?

My encounter with the Armenian repertoire took place during my studies. There was a temporary exhibition at the art museum next to the conservatory entitled “Christians of the East.” At the opening, I heard Babadjanian’s *Elegy* on the piano, and that melody never left me. I subsequently immersed myself in the Armenian repertoire, which was unknown to me at the time, quickly discovering the genius of Komitas, who revolutionized my approach to the piano.

You have described Komitas as the “authentic soul of Armenian culture.” In your opinion, what makes him so unique in the world of music?

Beyond the considerable ethnomusicological work he undertook, Komitas managed to adapt to European musical writing while preserving the specific features and unique character of Armenian music. Speaking of my instrument, the piano,

see PIANO, page 13



ARTS & CULTURE

Americans Discover Armenia Through Art

ART, from page 12

himself, sharing the story of his background. Aided by a PowerPoint presentation and slideshow, he illustrated the creative journey he made to become an artist. Born in 1988 amid war and hardship in Armenia, he found refuge in art and determined at an early age to become an artist, fulfilling the unrealized dream of his father. He studied at the Henrik Igityan National Centre of Aesthetics (2000-2005) and received his B.A. and M.A. from Yerevan Pedagogical University (2009, 2011) where he developed a mastery of diverse materials, ranging from bronze to objects he found by chance, creating works that bridge history, myth, and modern life.

He has explored in depth the world of myths, especially those in Homer's epics *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* and studied the works of German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890), as well as related artworks. His sculptures depict battle scenes and mythological heroes that originate in episodes of the Homeric texts, but they also evoke reflections on violence in the contemporary world; when war broke out in 2020 in Artsakh (Karabakh), he turned to sculptures inspired by ancient Greece to express his pain and condemnation of war waged against modern Armenia.

The idea of organizing a workshop at the 1515 Lincoln Gallery, he said, came from the gallerist, Susan McCalmont. "It proved to be an excellent initiative, as the workshop allowed for a deeper understanding of my artistic process," he added. He opened the workshop by saying that his sculptures were fundamentally based on the line, that is, on a linear image: "Through the sketches I created during the workshop, viewers were able to see how three-dimensional forms emerge from graphic structures. The process helped them understand how the drawn line is transformed into a sculptural form."

Local artists attending were particularly intrigued by his technique and the equipment he uses. He recalled that they "expressed appreciation for my ability to work with metal," in particular.

But their interest was not limited to art. Following his talk, he received many questions about his country and nationality. In response, he presented a brief overview of Armenia's history — from its ancient kingdoms (Uartian, Ervanduni, Artaxiad, Ar-



Arman Hambardzumyan with his sculpture Pharaoh, bronze (photo Marc Barker)

sacid, Bagratid and the Cilician Kingdom) to the 20th century, including the First Republic of Armenia, Soviet Armenia, and the Third Republic. "I also spoke about Armenia's early adoption of Christianity," he explained, "its distinctive architectural heritage, the ancient tradition of Armenian winemaking, and elements of our national cuisine. In addition, I addressed the tragic events of the 20th and 21st centuries — to show a nation that had not yet fully recovered from the trauma of the 1915 Genocide."

Throughout the exhibition, there was a strong desire for dialogue and connection. Many visitors and fellow artists wished to meet with him personally, visit museums together, and continue conversations over lunch, engaging in meaningful and fruitful discussions.

Two Views of America

This was not the first time that Hambardzumyan had visited the U.S. In 2017, he took part in the New York City Art

Expo. His observations on the differences between the two visits are telling. "Comparing my first and second visits — New York and Oklahoma City — I experienced two completely different Americas. New York, as a typical megapolis of megacities, inspired me immensely. The dynamic rhythm, architecture, and urban energy deeply influenced me, and it was there that I began my Abstract Love artwork series, drawing inspiration directly from the spirit of the city."

Eight years later, he discovered another America: "Oklahoma, by contrast, felt more conservative, with a strong presence of local traditions. Thirty-nine Native American tribes live there, and their cultural influence is deeply rooted in the region. Known as 'the land of cowboys,' Oklahoma offered a different yet equally meaningful artistic discovery. I explored unique museums representing local art traditions alongside contemporary art. In Oklahoma City, I visited a district called Phaseo, an

area filled with galleries and artist studios. There, I discovered many talented local artists and learned a lot, especially about printmaking and glass art. The city is truly rich in artistic talent. Together with John Wolfe, another artist from Geometrics, I created some graphics with pen and paper in his studio."

His collaboration with 1515 Lincoln Gallery (formerly Objects Trouvés), a gallery dedicated to European artists and to promoting their work within the American art market, began in 2021 and it was gallery owner McCalmont who invited him to present a solo exhibition and who personally organized all the preparations for its realization.

"I would like to thank Susan McCalmont, all the gallery staff, Marc Barker, with whom I traveled extensively, and Elisabeth and Peter for their warm welcome and hospitality. Thanks to them, I will always remember my first solo exhibition in the U.S. with deep gratitude."

Godefroi Bernier: 'Komitas Revolutionized My Approach to The Piano'

PIANO, from page 12

Komitas transforms it through his writing into an ensemble of national instruments, innovating and expanding its sonic possibilities to the same extent as Debussy or Albéniz did during the same period.

For the past five years, you have presented the complete piano works of Komitas on French and Armenian stages. It is wonderful that you also introduce audiences to a lesser-known composer who fully deserves recognition: Georgi Sarajyan.

If Komitas built the foundations of modern Armenian music, Sarajyan elevated it by dedicating a substantial body of piano works to Armenian musical themes. His writing is innovative, rich, and modern. He shapes each phrase in unexpected ways, to the point that it is impossible for me to tire of it, even after hours of practice.

You are married to an Armenian



Godefroi Bernier

woman; how is Mari's career developing in France?

Mari quickly found her footing in France. She teaches piano and music theory and is preparing a Chopin recital that should be

performed next year. She is a great admirer of the Romantic period and French Impressionism, particularly Chopin and Ravel.

What is particularly remarkable about being the son-in-law of an Armenian?

It is the feeling of belonging to a great people and their history — the pride of possessing a unique and authentic connection to their culture. It is the power to bring part of this remarkable heritage to life, to share it, and to preserve it, and to apply the strong values of this people to one's own life: hospitality, kindness, respect, and love of family.

Do you have an interesting remark or a funny anecdote to share?

During my first stay, I discovered Armenian cuisine, especially Gavar pakhlava, which I loved. On my second visit, Mari's grandmother took care to prepare many pakhlavas in an enormous mold that could

probably hold around fifty pastries. I was deeply touched by this gesture, which may seem ordinary to the people of Armenia.

You have performed several times in Armenia—can we expect a new surprise from you during your next visit?

Absolutely. It is a project that Mari and I recently launched. Alongside our musical activities, we created a publishing house for young audiences called "Armart Édition." Our first project was completed a few months ago: a sound-enhanced book illustrating the life of Komitas through anecdotes. On each page, children can hear different sounds—singing, instruments, and even Komitas's authentic voice recorded in Paris at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Many thanks, Godefroi, for your answers and your activity! And I wish Armenian music has more ambassadors like you in the world!

Books

Armenian References in Googoosh’s Book

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

At the end of last year, the English-language autobiography of the renowned Iranian singer and actress Googoosh was published in the United States under the title *Googoosh: A Sinful Voice* (Gallery Books, co-authored with Tara Dehghani).

The number-one pop star of pre-revolutionary Iran, the first and greatest diva, Googoosh, now 75, was detained for about a month during the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, after which she was declared an undesirable person



Singer Googoosh with fellow singer Martik

by the regime and remained absent from the stage and screen for 21 years. Having settled in the United States in 2000, she resumed her career as a singer.

Googoosh’s connections with Armenian song and with Armenian-Iranian artists are well known. Although they are not mentioned in the book, among her many songs

she has also performed in Armenian, including the *Zepyur kdarnam* (“I Will Turn into a Breeze”) by gusan Shahan, *Tsaghikner, tsaghikner* (“Flowers, Flowers”) by Hasmik Manaseryan, as well as *Hazar yernek* (“A Thousand Alas”). The book does not mention that when an attempt was made in 2011 to organize a Googoosh concert in Baku, she refused to travel to Azerbaijan without her Armenian friend, as a result of which the concert was cancelled. It is also regrettable that Googoosh did not mention her concert in Yerevan on August 31, 2017, for which thousands of spectators arrived from Iran and during which the singer spoke several sentences in Armenian.

Among her Armenian connections, Googoosh first mentioned the Armenian origin of her name. “My parents called me Googoosh from the moment I was born. They had made some Armenian friends in the earlier days of their marriage, the happier days, with names like Lidoush, Minoush, and Googoosh. They liked the ring of the two melodious syllables put together and didn’t mind that it was a boy’s name. When Papa went to apply for my birth certificate, no less than eighteen months later, they told him that they couldn’t register a non-Iranian and non-Muslim name. so my first name was officially Faegheh (Victorious), but everyone called me Googoosh” (page 13).

By the way, in 2017 in Yerevan the singer met her father’s Armenian friend, the well-known Tehran-based singer Googoosh (Gurgen) Vanakian, in whose honor she received her name.

The book mentions Iranian-Armenian artists, including the singer Viguen, the “Sultan of Pop,” whose songs blended Western influence with Persian spirit, lit up the stage with his electric charisma. I was too young to understand what they were saying, but I loved how the lyrics flowed along with the incredible melodies, especially Viguen’s upbeat rhythm that was revolutionary at that time – he was the first to introduce pop music to Iran” (p. 17-18). The Persian-writing poetess Zoya Zakaryan is mentioned three times (pages 12, 240, 253); she is the lyricist for a number of Googoosh’s songs. An Armenian family friend is also mentioned, whom the author refers



to as *Aper* (“kind, Armenian sound engineer from L.A.” (p. 110).

By the way, several of her songs were written by Iranian-Armenian composer Varoujan Hakhbandian.

In the series of photographs, the singer appears with the Iranian-Armenian singer Andranik Madadian (Andi) and the guitarist Martik (Karakhanyan), as well as with Charles Aznavour.

The book also includes the following testimony: speaking about the regime’s persecution of intellectuals, Googoosh recalls: “The systematic targeting of artists and intellectuals was in full force by 1996, when there was a failed attempt to derail a bus carrying twenty-one Iranian writers and poets on their way to a poetry conference in Armenia” (p. 275). In mid-1990s the Writers’ Union of Armenia used to organized such conferences quite often.

By the way, Googoosh has recently announced that she is permanently retiring from the stage, citing the ongoing oppression in her homeland as the reason...

New Book Documents Armenian Cultural Sites in Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh

YEREVAN — Spiritual Artsakh NGO today announced the release of *The Tangible Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Artsakh*, a comprehensive, two-volume ethnographic publication detailing endangered, millennia-old, Armenian religious and cultural heritage sites across Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh. The 1,088-page publication authenticates 5,658 diverse monuments in 308 indigenous Armenian settlements across eight regions of Artsakh, which are at risk, following the large-scale and complete displacement of the Armenian population from Artsakh in 2023. The publication is available for free [download](#) in both English and Armenian.

“Our publication is a testament to the enduring resilience of Artsakh’s indigenous Armenians and the significance of safeguarding and preserving our Christian heritage,” said Dr. Vahram Balayan, co-author and Professor of Historical Sciences. “The concise inventory provides photographs of numerous sites — many of which were tragically and deliberately destroyed, altered, or remain at risk. By educating future generations, this critical documentation advocates for legal protections through relevant international platforms and organizations.”



Since 2020, 150,000 indigenous Armenians have been displaced from their ancestral homeland of Artsakh following the 44-day war in 2020, a subsequent 10-month blockade, and a renewed military offensive by Azerbaijan. Offering a comprehensive inventory of cultural heritage monuments, including monasteries, churches, khachkars (cross-stones), and cemeteries, the publication authenticates each site by detailing its location, type, period, function, architectural style, artistry, historical context and current state of preservation.

While raising global awareness of the urgency to protect these cultural monuments, this evidence-based repository supports academic research on Artsakh’s long-standing historical, ethnographic, cultural and religious Armenian traditions.

In emphasizing the publication’s core purpose, co-author and Associate Professor and Candidate of Historical Sciences, Melanya Balayan, said, “We aim to ensure that the rich cultural tapestry of Artsakh is not forgotten amidst current attempts of state-sponsored erasure.”

The Tangible Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Artsakh is co-authored by several notable Artsakh historians, including Dr. Vahram Balayan – Professor of His-

torical Sciences, Senior Research Fellow and Head of the Research Group at the Institute of History, National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia; Melanya Balayan – Associate Professor and Candidate of Historical Sciences, former director of the Artsakh State Historical and Geographical Museum, Research Fellow at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia; Lernik Hovhannisyanyan, Chair of Archaeology and Ethnography at Yerevan (Armenia) State University, and former Chair of the Diocesan Council of Artsakh; and Slava Sargsyan, a recognized expert in monument studies, known for documenting Armenian monasteries and fortresses in Artsakh.

The publication is funded by the Vahe Fattal Foundation, honoring the memory and legacy of Vahe Fattal, an artist, renowned graphic designer, and the creator of the Republic of Artsakh’s flag, who received the Artsakh Presidential Order of St. Mesrop Mashtots.

For more information about *The Tangible Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Artsakh*, or to arrange interviews with the authors, contact info@artsakhcultural-heritage.org. To access downloadable photos of the monuments and the authors, visit the [Media Kit](#).

The Spiritual Artsakh NGO was established in 2023 in response to the Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) conflict, which resulted in the forced displacement of the indigenous Armenian population from their ancestral homeland. The NGO’s first publication, *The Tangible Cultural Monuments of the Republic of Artsakh*, was initiated by its founders, prominent Artsakh historians Dr. Vahram Balayan, Melanya Balayan, and Prof. Lusine Gharakhanyan, director of the Hovhannes Toumanian Museum in Yerevan, Armenia, and former Artsakh Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport.

ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian



Lahmacun served at Mer Taghe in Yerevan, Photo Benjamin Kemper

Simply Armenian: Barbara Ghazarian’s Lahmejun

“No one knows for certain whether lahmacun’s roots lie in Armenia, Turkey, or elsewhere in the Middle East. The race to find where these ancient foods originated is not fruitful territory,” cautioned Naomi Duguid, author of *Taste of Persia: A Cook’s Travels Through Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, and Kurdistan*. After all, meat-enhanced flatbreads are ubiquitous throughout the region (we’re looking at you, Georgian kubdari and Turkish kiymali pide). ”

“George Mardikian, the beloved restaurateur, chef, philanthropist, and author of *Dinner at Omar Khayyam’s* and *Song of America*, wrote that lahmacun (spellings vary) was first prepared by the wives of wealthy traders along the Silk Road who cooked the dish over open flames in roadside inns or caravanserais. A far



Barbara Ghazarian

cry from today’s low-budget lahmacun culture, he claims the dish was historically a ‘food of the elite,’ since it called for meat, a luxury the poor couldn’t frequently afford.” Greg Keraghosian at SFGATE says, “Mardikian’s Omar Khayyam’s — an Armenian restaurant with elegant Middle Eastern decor named after an epicurean Persian poet — was destination dining for San Franciscans for more than 40 years at its underground location near the corner of Powell and O’Farrell streets. Celebrities and professionals paid up-scale prices while armed service members and refugees ate for free. Its shish kebab and bulgur pilaf were the main draw for a largely white clientele un-

familiar with such food. But the restaurant drew its life force from, as William Saroyan called him, ‘the big man with the bright face coming over to your table.’ ”

According to chef, food writer, and author Barbara Ghazarian, who wrote *Simply Armenian*, an indispensable Armenian cookbook, the meat used in this dish goes a long way. One pound of lamb, she explained, makes 12 lahmejun, enough to “feed a small army, Armenian or otherwise.” That small army is quickly becoming an ever-growing horde of international lahmejun fans. “Lahmejun is a story of culinary assimilation,” Ghazarian said, “of how one simple dish invented in or around Armenia has won over diners around the globe, from Yerevan to Beirut, to Los Angeles and Fresno, to Paterson, New Jersey.”

Here is Ghazarian’s fail-safe recipe from *Simply Armenian*:

INGREDIENTS:

Dough:

- 1 package (1/4 ounce) active dry yeast
- 1 cup warm water (about 105 degrees)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil, plus additional for greasing bowl and baking sheets
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 1/4 cups white bread flour, plus additional for rolling

Topping:

- 1 pound ground lamb
- 1 can (14 1/2 ounces) tomatoes, peeled, diced, and drained well
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1/2 red bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1/2 green bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1/2 onion, finely chopped
- 1/3 cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 teaspoon salt (to taste)
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- Pinch of cayenne (optional)
- Fresh lemon juice

Special Equipment:

- Tabletop mixer with dough hook (optional)
- Food processor or blender
- Heavy rolling pin

PREPARATION:

To prepare the dough, dissolve the yeast in water in the bowl of the tabletop mixer. Stir in the 1 tablespoon olive oil, sugar, salt, and 1 1/2 cups flour. Mix the dough with a dough hook until smooth, about 3 minutes.

Knead in the remaining flour until the dough is smooth and elastic. This will take about 10 minutes by machine, 20 minutes by hand. Shape the dough into a ball and place in a large bowl greased with olive oil. Turn the ball once to coat it completely with oil. Cover with a clean kitchen towel and let stand in a warm place for about 1 1/2 hours, or until doubled in size.

While waiting for the dough to rise, combine all the topping ingredients together in the bowl of a food processor (or blender) and pulse until just smooth. Set aside. When the dough has doubled in size, turn it out onto a floured work surface and punch it down. Knead the dough into the shape of a log. Cut the log into 12 equal pieces. Then roll each piece out into a 7-inch circle.

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Lightly grease 2 to 4 baking sheets with olive oil. Arrange the circles on the prepared baking sheets. Allow the dough to rest and rise slightly, about 15 minutes. Then, spread the meat mixture evenly over the entire surface of each round. Bake in the middle of the oven for 25 to 30 minutes. Cool the pizzas on a wire rack. Serve warm with a splash of fresh lemon juice for a quick lunch or snack.

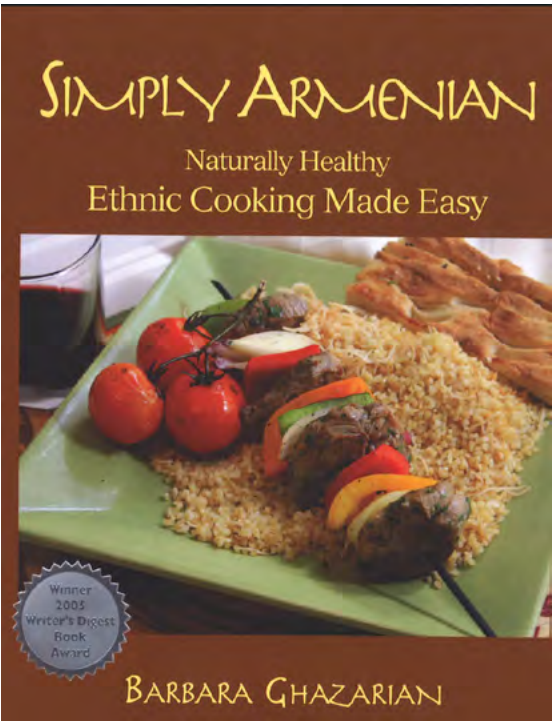
Simply Armenian: Naturally Healthy Ethnic Cooking Made Easy in its 6th printing (Mayreni Publishing), with over 16,000 copies sold. Barbara Ghazarian is passionate about sharing her Armenian ancestry with others. She draws on personal history and her ancestors’ culinary traditions to present a basic, solid overview of Armenian cuisine. The author, who is half Armenian and is married to an Armenian man, presents a number of recipes that will be familiar to lovers of Greek, Turkish and other Middle Eastern foods, such as Parsley Salad (Tabouli), Rice-Stuffed Grape Leaves, Lamb Shish-Kebab, Rice Pilaf, and Eggplant with Tahini (Baba Ghanoush). Armenian cuisine, she explains, relies heavily on bulgur (cracked wheat) and lentils, as well as vegetables (especially eggplant) and flatbread, and while this is not a vegetarian cookbook, many dishes are meat-free (when Ghazarian does include meat, it’s often lamb). Written for the novice and spiked with yarns about Ghazarian’s childhood and family traditions, this book should make Armenian cooking accessible to any home cook. Helpful notes and introductions accompany each recipe, explaining foods that may be unfamiliar to American cooks, such as quince, baharat spice and purslane.

In 2009, with the publication of *Simply Quince* (Mayreni Publishing), she became known as the Queen of Quince. The bounty of quince recipes in the collection are widely credited as establishing the base line for cooking with the near-forgotten fruit in the U.S. and around the globe.

To order *Simply Armenian*, go to: <https://www.armenianvendorstore.com/category-s/52.htm>

Or contact:

Baykar “Ed” Dervishian
211 Fountain St.
Framingham, MA 01702
Phone: (508) 667-2980
Email: baykar@armenianvendor.com
(Armenian Vendor is both the wholesaler and retailer of the book.)





ARTS & CULTURE

Karine Dulyan Has Two Simultaneous Exhibitions in the United States

By Karine Armen

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GLENDAL — The Center for Armenian Arts hosted an art exhibition by Yerevan-based artist Karine Dulyan, titled “Colors of Yerevan,” on February 13 and 14. Dulyan, who is currently on a US tour, also has another exhibition on display in Washington, D.C., marking an active period in her international presence. (See story on this page.)

Karine Dulyan, known as Karishok, has exhibited in galleries across Yerevan, Tbilisi, New York, Washington, D.C., Glendale and Pasadena. An artist since childhood, she spent three years studying in Madrid, an experience that broadened her cultural and artistic perspective. She is fluent in Armenian, English, Russian and Spanish.

Working in acrylics, watercolor, ink, pastel and mixed media, Dulyan builds layered compositions that move between structure and spontaneity. She often begins with small studies before expanding them into larger works, allowing revision and experimentation to shape the final image. For her, mistakes are not failures but essential steps in personal and artistic growth.

Seta Injeyan, an artist who attended the

exhibition, said, “Through luminous, complementary colors and gentle transparency, her images of Armenian houses and streets transform everyday places into intimate vessels of memory.”

Although trained in architecture and urban planning, Dulyan returned to painting in full in 2020. Her architectural background remains visible in her fascination with windows, balconies, façades and rooftops — elements that, in her work, become emotional carriers of memory rather than simple city scenes. Through vibrant complementary colors and carefully balanced compositions, she evokes both familiarity and quiet optimism.

“Painting over Arthur Lumen’s photos shows a collaboration and meeting points of two artists,” Dulyan said. “I left some parts of the photos visible and allowed myself the freedom to transform elements — for example, making an elderly couple appear young to suggest renewal and new beginnings.”

Dulyan prefers to work in her studio, where she reflects on photographs she has taken or received and later reinterprets them through paint and layered detail. In the piece entitled “Mint and Blue,” she worked from a photograph sent by a friend.



Karine Karishok Dulyan at the opening reception of her art exhibition on February 13, in Glendale (Karine Armen photo)

She drew inspiration from the color relationships of Paul Balmer, while allowing her emotions and intuition to guide the final composition.

The exhibition featured paintings in a

variety of sizes, as well as small postcards and magnets offered at accessible prices. Dulyan said, “I used joyful colors in the Yerevan scenery paintings to evoke calming emotions in our chaotic world.”

Painter Dulyan Connects People

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Karine Dulyan paints some of her artwork directly over photographs, adding artwork to the still images that Armenian photographer Arthur Lumen’s camera captured. “The purpose of art is connecting people, and this is one of the ways the connection happens,” noted she referring to her cooperation with the photographer.

Despite the traffic issues that ensue ever since heavy snow paralyzed the nation’s capital’s streets and sidewalks in late January, the Arts Club of Washington was pretty full the evening of February 6. Along with Armenian community members, a significant number of non-Armenians were present for the opening night of Dulyan’s exhibition.

The curator of the club, Dr. Erich Keel described Karine’s artwork as “wide range of colors.” In her speech, the Armenian artist referred to the background story that made the exhibition happen: last year when Karine’s pictures were on display at the Armenian Embassy, Sheila Flanders, who works for the Club, saw them and suggested a follow-up exhibit at their venue. “What was felt like a simple conversation back then has become this evening now,” noted Karine. Armenia’s Ministry of Cul-



Karine Yenokian

ture paid for her airfare, allowing Karine to return to Washington for a nearly month-long display: the Art Club will keep her exhibit till the end of February.

There is lots of Armenia, from streets of Yerevan to a detail of a traditional rug in her paintings. In one case, she painted some Yerevan buildings on a photograph that had

continued on next page



Artist Karine Dulyan talking with Misha



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

DECEMBER 12-APRIL 26 —The Armenian Museum of America 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.

NOW THROUGH FEBRUARY 28 — "The Art of Disruption: The Art & Impact of Serj Tankian," Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown. Hours: Thursday-Sunday 12-6pm. World renowned musician Serj Tankian is known globally as the lead singer and songwriter for the band, System Of A Down. He is also a visionary poet, visual artist, and outspoken advocate for human rights. Inspired by his memoir, Down with the System, the exhibition immerses visitors in the dynamic intersections of music, painting, and protest that define Tankian's work. This exhibition is curated by Ryann Casey. Sponsored by Carolyn Mugar and the Alan K. & Isabelle DerKazarian Foundation. <https://www.armenianmuseum.org/serj-tankian> **FEBRUARY 23 - MARCH 22** — On exhibit at Boston City Hall, "Geometry as Public Part: Telling a Story," Curriculum Inspired by Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway.

MARCH 1 — **UNDER THE SNOW MOON.** Sunday at 4pm, virtual. Virtual program of Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway. Registration: ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Calendar

MARCH 2 — Monday St. James Monthly dinner & Fellowship 6.15pm mezza, 7 pm dinner Losh & Kheyima, \$25;00 per person, Guest Speaker Brett Dean, President and CEO of Watertown Savings Bank. 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown.

MARCH 9 — "Memories Flow Beneath It, From Valley to Quabbin," A film by Roger Hagopian in collaboration with author and historian, J.R.Greene. Local filmmaker Roger Hagopian presents his documentary film, tracing the displacement of people and the loss of a way of life in the Swift River Valley of western Massachusetts, when the Quabbin Reservoir flooded four towns in order to create water infrastructure for 52 Boston metropolitan communities. 6:15—8:00 PM Marcy Room, Stoneham Library 431 Main Street, Stoneham, MA

MARCH 14 — "Memories Flow Beneath It, From Valley to Quabbin," A film by Roger Hagopian in collaboration with author and historian, J.R.Greene. Local filmmaker Roger Hagopian presents his documentary film, tracing the displacement of people and the loss of a way of life in the Swift River Valley of western Massachusetts, when the Quabbin Reservoir flooded four towns in order to create water infrastructure for 52 Boston metropolitan communities. 2-4 PM Bedford Public Library 7 Mudge Way Bedford MA

MARCH 20 — City of Smile fundraiser, Jinalov Hatz Masterclass, Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Cambridge. Friday, 7 p.m. A hands-on culinary experience where tradition meets the taste! Cook, Learn, and Taste. Seating is

limited. Tickets \$100, which includes lovely take home gift. <https://www.ticketsource.com/null/t-zozvmlo>

MARCH 21 — "Memories Flow Beneath It, From Valley to Quabbin," A film by Roger Hagopian in collaboration with author and historian, J.R.Greene. Local filmmaker Roger Hagopian presents his documentary film, tracing the displacement of people and the loss of a way of life in the Swift River Valley of western Massachusetts, when the Quabbin Reservoir flooded four towns in order to create water infrastructure for 52 Boston metropolitan communities 1:00—3:00 PM Tarbell Room Lincoln Public Library 3 Bedford Rd, Lincoln.

MARCH 28 — "Memories Flow Beneath It, From Valley to Quabbin," A film by Roger Hagopian in collaboration with author and historian, J.R.Greene. Local filmmaker Roger Hagopian presents his documentary film, tracing the displacement of people and the loss of a way of life in the Swift River Valley of western Massachusetts, when the Quabbin Reservoir flooded four towns in order to create water infrastructure for 52 Boston metropolitan communities 2-4 PM Marlborough Public Library 35 W Main St. Marlborough, MA

APRIL 9 — LET'S GET TOGETHER! Thursday, 7-9pm JOIA BOSTON AT THE HARBORSIDE INN, BOSTON

Young Leaders' Friends Benefit for Armenian Heritage Park Donation: \$30/ person. Advance Reservations. ArmeniaHeritagePark.org/Support

APRIL 24 — Armenian Genocide Commemoration at the Massachusetts State House, 24 Beacon St., Boston, starts 10:30 a.m., with reception to follow. Program details to be announced. Organized by the Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee of MA. Buses from Watertown will be available courtesy of the Knights of Vartan Ararat Lodge No. 1. The event is free and open to all. For more information, email bostonagcc@gmail.com.

APRIL 26 — Armenian Genocide Commemoration at Armenian Heritage Park, at the Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston, starts 2:30 pm. Program details to be announced. Organized by the Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee of MA. Buses from Watertown will be available courtesy of the Knights of Vartan Ararat Lodge No. 1. The event is free and open to all. For more information, email bostonagcc@gmail.com.

MAY 2 — CELEBRATE PUBLIC ART! ABSTRACT SCULPTURE PERMANENT & ALIVE & WORLD LABYRINTH DAY: WALK AS ONE. Saturday at 12:30 pm. ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY, BOSTON Join people in cities & towns in 35 countries world-wide: Armenia (Gyumri), Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, South Africa, Spain, many more. Reception following.

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

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

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Mount Ararat in its background, keeping the mountain visible and making the outlines of the roofs like the silhouettes of the mountain. Young couples appear in her artwork here and there. "I try to paint love as much as I can," added Dulyan.

"She has a very unique look to all the pieces and mixing her paintings over the photography is a very compelling and unique choice," noted one of the visitors who identified himself as Fred from D.C.

Misha from Russia, now a student at one of Washington's colleges, lived in Yerevan for about three years before coming to America. "As soon as I looked at the paintings, it teleported me to those cozy Yerevan apartments," said Misha in response to my inquiry.

The Art Center is walking distance from the World Bank's headquarters. Karine Yenokian, who works at the bank, said she was planning to bring her coworkers during the lunch breaks in the following weeks. "It's great to see an exhibit of an Armenian artist from Yerevan in the heart of Washington, DC," she noted.

See an accompanying video report at mirrorspectator.com.



Karine Dulyan, addressing the visitors



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



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I Welcome Enthusiastically the Appeal to Halt the Destructive Regime-Church Crisis in Armenia



By Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, C.M.

While our homeland and church are living through critical days, I would like to praise highly the call of alarm jointly raised for the sake of the integrity of the Armenian Apostolic Church, by: Moderna co-founder Noubar Afeyan, former co-chair of the Armenian Assembly of America Anthony Barsamian, British-Armenian surgeon and member of the House of Lords of Great Britain Ara Darzi, UCLA physician and philanthropist Eric Israelian, prominent businessman Vatche Manoukian, Swiss-Armenian businessman Vahe Gabrache, French-Armenian financier Joseph Oughourlian, and honorary president of the Armenian General Benevolent Union Berge Setrakian.

The statement by the abovementioned personalities rightly emphasizes that: "Armenia stands at a critical crossroads in its history. This is no time for internal divisions between Church and State in Armenia to weaken the global Armenian nation further. It is, indeed, the time to deescalate this internal crisis so that the Armenian State, the Armenian Church and the Armenian Diaspora can move forward into a new era of peace and prosperity. We call on all Armenians in the diaspora to raise their collective voices and to demand their right to practice their religion within a self-renewing church free from political interference."

As a logical continuation of my own prior statements and adopted positions, I unconditionally endorse every word of the aforementioned statement of my dear colleagues and long-time friends, and in turn personally call on my compatriots around the world, as well as patriotic organizations and the phalanx of their leadership dedicated to our homeland for them too to join their voices and abilities for the sake of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church and the inviolability of the homeland, which is the basis of our identity.

Let us together immediately create an unstoppable pan-Armenian movement that on the one hand demands that the Armenian authorities immediately stop the unprecedented and divisive campaign it has unleashed against the Armenian Church, as well as stop arresting and detaining, without serious legal grounds, in a condemnable and upsetting manner, high-ranking clergy who are traditionally subject to absolute respect in accordance with our Armenian upbringing.

This movement should furthermore demand an immediate stop to the unconstitutional, illegitimate government-controlled so-called church reform committee activity.

Instead, it should urge the authorities of Armenia to extend a hand to the Mother See and create a proper and peaceful atmosphere around the Armenian Church, so that the latter may undertake positive reforms by means of its traditional structure and canons, for the benefit of the strength of the faith of our believing Armenian people.

At the same time, it filially will ask the Mother See to respond positively and constructively to the authorities of the Republic of Armenia when they attempt to extend a hand, of course in the expectation that this be based on sincere and respectful intentions.

In the final analysis, it is my personal heartfelt call that we unite from Diaspora to Armenia as one nation and face together all the difficulties confronting us, for the sake of the physical security of our people, to give meaning to our identity and survival, and for the glory and eternity of our church, homeland and nation.

(Dr. Arshavir Gundjian is decorated as Member of the Order of Canada, he is emeritus member of the AGBU Central Board of Directors, honorary chairman of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Canada Diocesan Council, president of the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada, and an inventor, scientist, and retired professor at McGill University in Montreal, Canada.)

Vance's Trip to Armenia and Azerbaijan

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The historical visit of US Vice President James D. Vance to Armenia and Azerbaijan should be neither underestimated nor overestimated. While this is the highest-level visit of any American official to Armenia or Azerbaijan, there is a need to correctly understand the nuances of politics and US interests in the South Caucasus.

Unfortunately, there was very limited coverage in the American media about Vance's historic visit. It did not become an important topic, and the core substance of the visit was not widely discussed, since it was not of interest to the average American. However, the deletion of his tweet regarding the recognition of the Armenian Genocide became the subject of quite serious criticism. It was criticized both by leading American media outlets and by US congressmen and other public figures. In other words, the main emphasis of the American press regarding the visit was precisely on that issue, rather than on the substance of the visit itself.

Nevertheless, Trump's second administration has brought the United States closer than ever to its long-held goal in the South Caucasus: establishing influence and di-

minishing Russia's sphere of influence. Previous attempts, such as leveraging the Georgia factor under President George W. Bush, were unsuccessful, but current conditions with Armenia and Azerbaijan may prove more fruitful. As a matter of fact, Vance is not supporting Armenia or Azerbaijan; he is advancing American geopolitical interests from Central Asia to Europe, part of which encompass the

in Armenia were widely discussed, especially due to misinterpretations in Armenia. Vice President Vance did not say the US would invest billions of dollars in Armenia. The interpreter misspoke, saying there would be American investments when the VP actually stated the US government may greenlight American companies selling several billion dollars' worth of technologies and products to invest in Armenia. As a matter of fact, the Trump administration is focused on attracting investment to the US by selling American goods, weapons, and technologies globally. This became a cause for serious debates, especially in the context of the Armenian authorities trying to use this visit to their advantage, as their own achievement.

Vance's statement that he knows that there will be elections in Armenia soon, and in essence, addressing words of support to the incumbent Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan elicited further controversy. It was wrong for Vance to address Armenia's elections at all. After all, over the past decade the number one political topic in the United States has been interference in elections by Russia or other

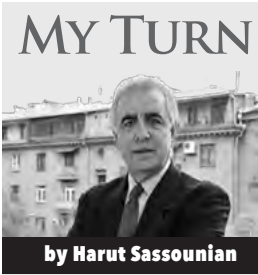
states and the unacceptability of such interference. At the same time, it may be understood that US support is not for Pashinyan specifically, but for whoever advances the agenda that benefits the United States — a normal aspect of realpolitik. From the

continued on next page





COMMENTARY



MY TURN

Not One Armenian-American Should Vote For Vance in 2028 Presidential Election

U.S. Vice President JD Vance visited Armenia and Azerbaijan last week. It was a PR stunt for the benefit of Pashinyan, Aliyev, and Trump, accompanied by several blunders and scandalous incidents.

To begin with, Vance and his wife made an unexpected stop at the Armenian Genocide Monument in Yerevan and laid a wreath to honor the memory of the 1.5 million Armenian Genocide victims. Right afterward, Vance posted on his Twitter (X) account: “Today, Vice President Vance and Second Lady Usha Vance attended a wreath laying ceremony at the Armenian Genocide memorial to honor the victims of the 1915 Armenian Genocide.” The Vice President wrote in the Genocide Museum’s guest book: “In solemn remembrance to the lives lost, we honor the resilience and enduring spirit of the Armenian people. May America and Armenia strive for a future of peace and understanding together.”

However, this solemn gesture was marred by a serious controversy shortly thereafter when Vance’s post was deleted and replaced with a message without referencing the Armenian Genocide: “VP and SLOUS [Second Lady of the U.S.] lay flowers at the eternal flame and sign the guest book on the final day of their visit to Armenia.” The altered text was posted by Taylor Van Kirk, Vance’s Press Secretary. It is obvious that the Press Secretary did not replace the post on his own. He was most probably told to do so by the White House after receiving a harsh complaint from Turkey’s denialist regime.

The reason for revising Vance’s initial post is that President Trump did not use the term Armenian Genocide in his April 24, 2025 statement, even though President Joe Biden had acknowledged it for four consecutive years. This is the result when some members of the Armenian community vote for a genocide denier. The deletion of the reference to the Armenian Genocide is such an insulting act that Armenian-Americans should refuse to vote for Vance in the 2028 U.S. Presidential election.

When the White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt was asked to comment on the scandalous deletion of Vance’s post, she avoided the issue without once using the term Armenian Genocide. Leavitt cynically stated, “No change in policy at this time,” meaning no acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide.

Before leaving Yerevan, when Vance was asked about the deletion of the words Armenian Genocide from his post, he gave an evasive answer: “They said this is a very important site for us, and obviously I’m the first [U.S.] vice president to ever visit Armenia. They asked us to visit the site. Obviously, it’s a very terrible thing that happened a little over a hundred years ago and something that’s very, very important to them culturally.”

So Vance reduced the mass murder of 1.5 million Armenians to “a very terri-

ble thing” and “very important to them culturally.” Ironically, Vance’s deletion of the reference to the Armenian Genocide was covered extensively by the U.S. and international media, including CNN, Reuters, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times. By deleting that reference, the White House helped further attract attention to the issue.

Vance’s visit to the Armenian Genocide Monument in Yerevan was probably intended to balance his later visit in Baku to the “Martyrs’ Alley,” a national cemetery and memorial for soldiers killed in Azerbaijan’s wars.

Vance also committed the faux pas of sticking his nose in Armenia’s domestic politics by endorsing Pashinyan in next June’s parliamentary elections. No self-respecting political leader would interfere in another country’s elections with such audacity. Vance said during a press conference in Yerevan: “I know there is an election coming up. I won’t talk about that, but to the extent my endorsement means anything, he [Pashinyan] certainly has it because this is a guy who can build the long-term partnership to make this kind of a thing stick.”

Vance also made the error of referring to Armenia as “one of the oldest Christian countries in the world,” instead of “the oldest” or “first Christian state.”

Another one of Vance’s statements stirred a lot of controversy in Armenia. In reality, it was the fault of the translator who was chosen by the American side. When Vance spoke about the U.S. exporting to Armenia \$9 billion worth of modular nuclear reactors and parts, the word “export” was mistranslated as “investment.” So rather than the U.S. investing in Armenia, it is Armenia that would be investing in the U.S. The hefty sum of \$9 billion equals Armenia’s entire annual budget. While Vance presented the U.S. sale of the modular reactors as a done deal, Pashinyan said that Armenia is shopping around with several other countries to get competitive bids.

While Pashinyan keeps talking about peace day and night, President Aliyev is demanding further concessions from Armenia and refuses to sign the so-called “Peace Treaty.” Azerbaijan is also holding in a Baku jail the former leaders of Artsakh on trumped-up charges, saying that the Armenian hostages committed worse crimes than the Nazis.

Surprisingly, Pashinyan announced that he spoke to Vance about the Armenian prisoners. Vance added that he will raise this issue with Aliyev, who confirmed that Vance did speak to him about the prisoners. But the fact remains that Vance left Baku without being able to free a single Armenian hostage.

Furthermore, Vance neither met with Catholicos Karekin II nor visited the Armenian Bishops jailed in Armenia. According to reliable sources, Vance was asked by the Armenian government not to meet with the Catholicos during his visit to Armenia.

In Armenia and Azerbaijan, Vance did not utter a single word of criticism for the anti-democratic policies of both Pashinyan and Aliyev. He made a reference to Aliyev’s wife, Mehriban, who is Azerbaijan’s vice president, by saying: “hopefully that doesn’t give the US Second Lady any ideas.” Vance’s Azeri hosts did not appreciate his remark. It was censored by Azerbaijan’s state television.

Therefore, Turkey plays a key role in this scenario. We just need to know how to play our cards right.”

from previous page
perspective of cooperation, Armenia and Azerbaijan are on the same level for the United States.

Another topic of discussion concerned the Armenian prisoners held in Baku. Vance’s statement about raising the issue remained purely rhetorical in practice, which is regrettable for a leading candidate for the next US president. It would have been highly meaningful and symbolic if Vance had brought with him some of the prisoners held in Baku. However, the fact that he traveled from Baku to Yerevan — instead of the opposite — clearly indicated that such an initiative was not planned.

If Vance did not raise the issue of Armenian prisoners in Baku, then it means he did not keep his promise. But if he did raise it and it produced no result that was made public, then it means that the Azerbaijani authorities simply did not take the issue raised by Vance seriously, which is already a matter of credibility and authority.

Despite all this, the visit is indeed historic, and much now depends on the Armenian authorities. Whether they will pursue deeper relations with the United States, build a new nuclear power plant by attracting investors, or use this opportunity to advance a more substantive and ambitious agenda with the US will be revealed in time. One fact is clear: the ball is now in Armenia’s court

and much depends on the decisions of its authorities.

As for the visit to Baku, there are also some extremely interesting aspects concerning the signing of the US–Azerbaijan strategic cooperation document. Armenia also has a similar document, but the usefulness of such documents can only be realized if the countries signing them with the United States actually seek broader cooperation, and in Azerbaijan’s case such a desire is already evident.

It is also interesting that Azerbaijan is acquiring certain military equipment and technology from the United States which, in essence, can only be used against Iran. From this perspective, Baku is quite demonstratively strengthening its relations with the United States, showing Russia and Iran that it is a regional player and can be a troublemaker for Russia and Iran while having the direct support of the US and Turkey. By exploiting these contradictions, Azerbaijan is trying to increase its regional weight and importance for all players in the South Caucasus.

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

Inconsistency of Azerbaijani Cultural Appropriation: The Case of Ara Gevorgyan’s Artsakh

By Lorenzo Riva

Cultural appropriation is a prominent feature in current Armeno-Azerbaijani relations. In recent decades Azerbaijan has tried to rebrand Armenian churches, monasteries, carpets, music, and historical figures as Azeri or Albanian, in an attempt to bolster its national identity and erase every trace associated with Armenia.

For example, in the village of Nidzh — located in the Qabala region — lies the Saint Elisæus Church, an Armenian temple built in the first half of the 19th century. In 2004, Azerbaijani authorities restored the edifice, as part of a project funded by the Norwegian Humanitarian Enterprise. However, the works led to the erasure of Armenian inscriptions on walls and gravestones, while Azerbaijan began presenting the church as an Albanian temple.

This approach toward Armenian heritage is not only heinous, but has proved to be inconsistent and hypocritical on several occasions. In fact, Azerbaijan has tended to spread different and incompatible narratives surrounding the same objects. For example, during the 1980s, Soviet Azerbaijani authorities recognized as “Albanian heritage” the Armenian monuments of Nakhichevan, pledging to protect them. Nevertheless, over the following twenty years not only Baku didn’t preserve such monuments, but also launched a campaign of mass destruction against them, culminating in the erasure of Julfa’s *khachkars*. This episode exposes the hypocrisy of Azerbaijani actions: They claim Armenian monuments as “theirs”, yet simultaneously destroy them. It’s clear that Nakhichevan’s authorities were well aware of the real nature of Christian chapels, monasteries and cemeteries.

This pattern of cultural appropriation is not limited to monuments alone; music, too, has become a site of contested ownership, as seen in the controversy surrounding Ara Gevorgyan’s Artsakh. The song is part of an album titled Ani, published in 1999 by renowned Armenian composer and musician Ara Gevorgyan. The piece is associated with the First Nagorno Karabakh War, a complex period in Armenian history marked by tragedies, victories and moments of joy. This work has clearly entered into the Armenian mass culture, being performed at political, institutional, cultural and sporting events. However, part of the Azerbaijani public opinion still claims this song as theirs, believing it was stolen by the mendacious enemies.

In 2007, the Azeri singer and ambassador to Russia Polad Bülbüloğlu declared that Ara Gevorgyan had taken part of *Sene de qalmaz*, a song composed by Tofiq Quliyev decades earlier. The Armenian musician responded that Bülbüloğlu’s statements were a result of confusion from an incident that occurred during the Russian TV show Ice Age. In fact, see APPROPRIATION, page 20

Inconsistency of Azerbaijani Cultural Appropriation: The Case of Ara Gevorgyan’s Artsakh

APPROPRIATION, from page 19

during the performance of Russian singer Aleksandra Savaleva and Israeli ice dancer Sergei Sakhnovski, it was initially announced that the song they were going to use was the one of Gevorgyan, but instead *Sene de qalmaz* was played, and only after that a portion of Artsakh was played. Upon hearing the excerpt of the Azerbaijani music and the announcement that the couple had danced to Armenian music, Azerbaijani viewers of the program appealed to Azerbaijan’s Ambassador to Russia. In response, he held a press conference in which he threatened legal actions for the alleged appropriation of Azerbaijani music. Gevorgyan presented all the evidence in his favor to the Armenian Embassy in Russia, which later announced that Polad Bülbüloğlu had apologized verbally.

The Armenian musician remarked that he had to wait nine months to obtain copyright protection for *Artsakh* in 1998 at the U.S. Copyright Office, and that in 1999 the album “Ani” was awarded “Album of the Year” (USA). Gevorgyan has always affirmed that he doesn’t fear lawsuits; however, the representatives of Azerbaijan have never initiated legal actions against him, probably because they know the baseless nature of their claims.

Despite this conclusion, the dispute has not faded away. During the inaugural edition of the European Games – held in Baku in 2015 – the song was played, but it was attributed to Fikrət Emirov, author of *Qarabağ incileri*. Two years later, the music was performed at a school located in the Azeri village of Masazır, during a special event marking the start of the new school year. This choice sparked controversy and embarrassment within Azerbaijani society. Some argued that Artsakh was just a plagiarism of *Qarabağ incileri*, composed by the Azerbaijani musician Fikrət Emirov. However, Cəmil Əmirov – son of the aforementioned composer – refuted such statements when interviewed by Azerbaijani media. Siyavuş Kərimi – dean of the National

Conservatory of Azerbaijan – confirmed the denial, declaring that Fikrət Əmirov didn’t own the disputed song. Moreover, when Oxu.az published the same claims regarding the paternity of Fikrət Emirov, many commentators reacted negatively, affirming that the piece was Armenian. Even the Azerbaijani Ministry of Culture stated that Artsakh has nothing to do with *Qarabağ incileri*.

Despite these facts, the Azerbaijani Wikipedia still links the music of Ara Gevorgyan to Fikrət Emirov. The piece has been used by Azeris in several contexts, even in movies and videos about their army. Part of local society continues to believe in the narrative of evil Armenians that steal music from their neighbor.

In 2026, the controversy surrounding *Artsakh* entered the global sporting arena during the Winter Olympic Games in Italy. At the Games, the Armenian figure skating pair chose *Artsakh* for their competitive routine, prompting a formal complaint from the Azerbaijani National Olympic Committee to the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Baku argued that the use of the titled composition carried political and separatist connotations inconsistent with the Olympic Charter’s principle of political neutrality. Though Olympic authorities ultimately permitted the music’s use, the official competition listings omitted the title “Artsakh,” reflecting the delicate balance sports governing bodies sought to maintain between cultural expression and politically sensitive symbolism.

This episode demonstrates, once again, the hypocrisy of Azerbaijani propaganda: for years they attempted to appropriate Gevorgyan’s work as their own, yet now they frame it as “political” and “controversial,” implicitly acknowledging its Armenian authorship and its connection to Artsakh. If the piece were truly Azerbaijani, they would not have objected, or at most would have raised claims of appropriation of Azerbaijani music. Their recent reactions confirm the work’s undeniable Armenian identity.

Diasporan Community Leaders Issue Statement on Church-State Conflict

STATEMENT, from page 1

We call for all matters related to church governance to be addressed through the governance structures of the Church, which have functioned now for 18 centuries in accordance with the teachings and traditions of the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Church has already called for a synod of bishops on February 17 to 19, to be held in Vienna. Unfortunately, the government has reportedly served legal notices to several bishops denying them the right to leave the country to attend the meeting. The synod would be followed by a gathering of the National Ecclesiastical Assembly to discuss the current challenges and offer a path to renewal consistent with the longstanding traditions and canons of the church.

The self-governance of the Church for continual improvement and reform is of critical importance. It organizes periodic synods — gatherings of its bishops — as well as National Ecclesiastic Assemblies (NEA), which importantly involve laymen and clergy. This entity is the highest governing body of the Church and only this body elects the Catholicos. This Assembly also deliberates and can vote for modifications to the Church’s rules, canons, and practices.

We call for the Armenian Government and the Armenian Church to address any differences in a manner that respects the self-governance rules of the Church, respects the separation of political activities from the mission of the church, and protects the right of Armenians throughout the diaspora to practice their faith without the current ripple effect political interference from the government. For descendants of Armenian Genocide survivors, the memory of that failed mission to exterminate all Armenians and our ensuing long road to revival makes the current events especially painful and threatening. It is the Church that helped the population survive and revive in the period after the Genocide; the Church that helped resurrect the Armenian soul; and the same Church that is needed for a globally dispersed ancient nation to thrive. Even if unintentional, the Armenian government’s approach is risking severing its relationship with the diaspora — something not even the Ottoman Empire or the Soviet Union were able to do.

The Armenian church provides spiritual nourishment to all Armenians, including the vast majority of Armenians who are living outside of Armenia. As such, any attack or interference by an individual, government or any outside entity other than the duly elected delegates of the NEA with the Church’s governance or activities has a direct effect on Armenians through the world. As current citizens of the United States and many other countries, diasporan Armenians are obliged to seek the assis-

tance of our own governments — including political remedies and legal actions if necessary — in protecting our religious rights. These rights include the Armenian Apostolic Church’s reliance on self-governance with established canons and traditions dating back to the earliest days of Christianity.

Armenia stands at a critical crossroads in its history. This is no time for internal divisions between Church and State in Armenia to weaken the global Armenian nation further. It is, indeed, the time to deescalate this internal crisis so that the Armenian State, the Armenian Church and the Armenian diaspora can move forward into a new era of peace and prosperity. We call on all Armenians in the diaspora to raise their collective voices and to demand their right to practice their religion within a self-renewing church free from political



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Any inquiries for information about the Sponsor a Teacher Program or donations should be henceforth directed to the central office of the Tekeyan Cultural Association at 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown MA 02472, or emailed to Aram Arkun at tcadirector@aol.com.



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