

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

SINCE 1932

Volume LXXXIII, No. 33, Issue 4922

MARCH 7, 2026

\$2.00



Iranian people attend a demonstration in support of the U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran in front of Iranian Embassy in Yerevan, Armenia on 28 February 2026. (AP Photo/Anthony Pizzoferrato).

Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia Tread Carefully as Iran Conflict Explodes

By Arshaluys Barseghyan, Mikheil Gvadzabia and Aytan Farhadova

As the US–Israeli war against Iran entered its third day on Monday, March 2, drawing in at least 12 different countries in the region, the governments of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan have continued to hedge their bets.



Protesters in Tbilisi demonstrating in support of the strikes against Iran (Photo Mariam Nikuradze/OC Media)

Issuing vague statements expressing concern, as well as offering condolences, including, in some cases, over Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, who was killed in US-Israeli airstrikes.

As one of the three major powers in the region — along with Russia and Turkey — Iran has complex ties with all the nations of the South Caucasus, encompassing trade, defense, energy and inter-ethnic ties. The rather vague and tepid reactions from Tbilisi, Yerevan and Baku indicate that despite the pariah status that Iran has achieved in

relation to much of the world, the South Caucasus is not willing to fully turn its back on such an important regional player.

Armenia has good relations with Iran, sharing an open border, unlike with Turkey and Azerbaijan. There is also a modest population of ethnic Armenians in Iran, numbering some 60,000 to 80,000,

according to various estimates.

Armenia’s government program for 2021–2026 describes the bilateral relations as ‘special’, adding that Yerevan is seeking to ‘to further develop’ ties. Despite Armenia fostering closer bonds to the West, including the US, Armenia has continued to maintain its cordial relationship with Iran.

see CONFLICT, page 6

Armenia Offers Condolences To Iran

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia’s leaders on Monday, March 2, offered condolences to neighboring Iran over the deaths of its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, other senior officials and ordinary citizens killed in ongoing US-Israeli air strikes and called for a diplomatic solution to the conflict.

“We are following the developments around Iran with great concern,” Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in a letter to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. “Please accept my condolences in connection with casualties among the leadership and citizens of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We will always remember the personal role of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ali Khamenei, in the development of Armenia-Iran relations.”

see CONDOLENCES, page 5



Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei meets Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Tehran, July 30, 2024

Ter-Petrosian Heaps Pre-Election Praise On Indicted Tycoon

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Former President Levon Ter-Petrosian lavished praise on billionaire Samvel Karapetyan on Monday, March 2, effectively endorsing him ahead of Armenia’s June 7 parliamentary elections.

“Samvel Karapetyan is capable of uniting around himself a strong government composed of professional economists and technocrats whose primary task will be to strengthen the country and improve the plight of the population,” Ter-Petrosian said in comments posted on Facebook.

“It can be stated for certain that in the event of his victory, he will not



walk away from agreements signed between Armenia and other states, but instead will further strengthen Armenia’s obligations to them,” he said.

The election victory of Karapetyan’s opposition movement would also put an end to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s “unconstitutional” campaign against the Armenian Apostolic Church, added Ter-Petrosian.

see OPPOSITION, page 3

Flights to Armenia Disrupted by Expanding War in Middle East

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — On Monday, March 2, Emirates Airlines resumed service on a limited basis, issuing the following message to travelers:

Emirates continues to monitor the situation, and we will develop our operational schedule accordingly.

Qatar Airways flights to, and from, Doha have been temporarily suspended due to the closure of Qatari airspace.

Due to the escalation in the Middle East, eight flights to Yerevan from Iran, Israel, and the UAE have been canceled.

Specifically, three flights have been cancelled from Dubai (FlyDubai), two flights from Sharjah (Air Arabia), and one flight each from Tehran (Qeshm Air), Tel Aviv (FlyOne), and Abu Dhabi (Air Arabia).

The Armenian Foreign Ministry announced that work is underway to evacuate Armenian citizens currently in the United Arab Emirates to Armenia via Oman. “The Armenian Embassy in the UAE will, where possible, also provide support for transportation from the UAE to Muscat to arrange a flight. If a flight is arranged, priority will be given to women, children, and the elderly,” the Armenian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

see EVACUATION, page 3

ARMENIA

Armenian Healthcare Summit Spotlights Boston University/HENAR Programs

Page 3



CALIFORNIA

Community Raises Money to Save Historic Vartanian House

Page 8



ITALY

Artist Mikayel Ohanjanyan Has Sculpture Exhibit In Carrara

Page 16



NEWS from ARMENIA

Simonyan Says War Is Not Risk To TRIPP

YEREVAN (News.am) — The events around Iran and in the Middle East do not pose a risk to the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) project, Speaker of the National Assembly of Armenia, Alen Simonyan, told reporters on March 3.

“We [i.e. Armenia] are very sorry for the casualties that are happening, and we hope that the events will last as short as possible, because this is happening directly with our neighbor, which cannot but worry us. At the same time, we realize that this is a very big geopolitical issue, perhaps one of the biggest wars, which, thank God, has nothing to do with us, and we hope that it will not touch the interests of Armenia in any way,” Simonyan added.

Simonyan said Armenia and Azerbaijan were able to “find the outlines of peace together.”

Catholicos of All Armenians in Contact With Armenian Communities in Iran

YEREVAN (news.am) — The Catholicos of All Armenians has been in contact with Armenian communities in all countries that have been directly or indirectly drawn into the military operations since the war in Iran began.

Catholicos Garegin II is concerned and anxious about the situation and remains in constant contact with the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, the Jerusalem Patriarchate, and the diocesan primates of the region.

Diaspora Office Receives 20 calls amid Middle East escalation

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Amid the situation in the Middle East, the Office of Armenia’s High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs has received around 20 calls from compatriots through its hotline, spokesperson Nelli Ghulyan told Sputnik Armenia.

The Commissioner’s Office has launched a hotline (077 998123, 010 589155) to provide necessary assistance to Armenians in the region.

“At this point, we have no information about casualties among Armenians. Most of the calls came from our compatriots in the United Arab Emirates. The majority of inquiries concerned air travel,” Ghulyan said.

According to her, the office has already provided the necessary information, while also urging citizens to follow official statements from the Foreign Ministry, which is also operating a hotline.

“We are trying to maintain the most intensive communication possible with our communities, especially now as the situation has escalated. In some areas there are communication problems, including internet outages,” Ghulyan said.

Pashinyan, Wife Announce Breakup of Their Marriage

By Susan Badalian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his influential common law wife, Anna Hakobyan, announced the breakup of their long-term de facto marriage on February 27 in a surprise move dismissed by their detractors as a pre-election ploy.

Hakobyan made the announcement in a video message recorded on February 25. She gave no clear reason for the divorce confirmed by Pashinyan in a separate Facebook post.

“In all my difficult days for the past 30 years, she has stood by my side and been my refuge and support,” wrote Pashinyan. “I am not sure that I have been like that for her. Perhaps I have caused her more bitterness, for which I apologize.”

Hakobyan already stated on February 17 that her 30-year marriage with Pashinyan has come to an end. Many suggested then that the couple has finally formalized it. Pashinyan previously revealed that their marriage was not registered with the Armenian Apostolic Church or a relevant state body. On February 14, Hakobyan and Pashinyan attended a public discussion of a book written by him nearly two decades ago.

Their divorce was officially announced

just days after the head of Armenia’s Anti-Corruption Committee (ACC) said that the law-enforcement agency is looking into opposition claims that a charity run by Hakobyan is breaching a law that bans politicians and individuals linked to them from engaging in benevolent activities in the run-up to elections.



Nikol Pashinyan and Anna Hakobyan in happier days

Hakobyan claimed that she may be prosecuted as a result. The ACC told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service later in the day that no criminal proceedings have been launched against her.

The announcement of the divorce was

met with suspicion and even ridicule from critics of the Armenian government, who questioned its authenticity. Some of them claimed that Pashinyan is trying to score points with voters ahead of the June 7 parliamentary elections by distancing himself from Hakobyan’s controversial activities and statements.

Hakobyan, 48, is believed to have exerted a strong influence on Pashinyan during his almost eight-year rule. Some observers have even regarded her as the premier’s closest political confidant.

In a barrage of social media posts, Hakobyan resorted last May to personal insults to attack opposition activists, public figures and other citizens critical of her. She said she is finally responding to slanderous claims about herself and her family. She also made it clear that her use of words like “donkey,” “idiot” and “louse” is part of her ongoing government-funded campaign purportedly aimed at helping Armenians become more educated.

Hakobyan toured towns and villages across Armenia last year as part of the “Getting Educated Is Fashionable” campaign launched in late 2024. Pashinyan spoke during some of those meetings attended by many local government officials and other public sector employees.

Hamlet Manukyan Named Europe’s top Gymnast for 2025

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — European champion in artistic gymnastics, Universiade gold medalist and two-time world youth champion Hamlet Manukyan has been named Europe’s best gymnast of 2025.

The 18-year-old athlete was declared the winner following a vote held on the website of the International Gymnastics Federation, receiving more than 1,030,000 votes, or 51 percent, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports reported.



Competing alongside Manukyan for the title were European bronze medalist in sports acrobatics Gabriel Albuquerque of Portugal, European champion Tofiq Aliyev of Azerbaijan, world bronze medalist and European silver medalist in artistic gymnastics Noe Seifert of Switzerland, and world silver medalist and four-time European champion Luke Whitehouse of Great Britain.

In 2025, Manukyan won gold on the pommel horse at the European Championships and also became a World Cup winner.

Manukyan is the 2023 Junior World Champion on pommel horse and rings as well as the 2025 European Champion on the former.

Armenia Moves to Nationalize Karapetyan’s Electric Networks by Declaring It a ‘Public Priority’

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

After fruitless negotiations over the shares of Armenian Electric Networks (ENA), the country’s main power grid operator, the Armenian authorities have announced the start of the next stage of their takeover of the company from detained Armenian-Russian billionaire Samvel Karapetyan.

Romanos Petrosyan, the state-appointed temporary manager of ENA and a ruling Civil Contract party member, told Factor TV that the next stage would see the recognition of ENA as an asset of public interest and the Armenian authorities compensate Karapetyan for the takeover. Petrosyan has not disclosed the possible amount Karapetyan was to be compensated.

ENA is owned by Karapetyan’s Tashir Group. The tycoon, who is currently under house arrest, was detained in June 2025 after making public statements siding with the Armenian Apostolic Church amid its confrontation with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

According to Petrosyan, the negotiations with Tashir Group “neither materialized nor took place at all. He added that the failure to move forward came as Armenian authorities, acting in accordance with the procedure established by law and within the prescribed deadline on 21 February, “made that official offer to the owners”.

“This means that after February 21, in accordance with Article 60 of the constitution, the government must recognize 100 percent of the shares of this company as [an] overriding public interest, and, after paying compensation, nationalize it in full. The process has entered that stage”, Petrosyan said.

In November 2025, Armenia’s Public

Services Regulatory Commission (PSRC) voted to revoke ENA’s electricity distribution license, based on several serious violations identified by Petrosyan.

According to legal amendments rushed through parliament in summer 2025, shortly after Karapetyan’s detention in June, if



Romanos Petrosyan

the ENA loses its license, the grid must be recognized as a “publicly overriding interest” and have its value assessed. The current owner, Tashir Group, would then be compensated for the takeover.

The government has outlined two possible scenarios: full nationalization with the grid remaining under state control, or transfer of a controlling stake to an “internationally reputable” energy operator, with the state retaining a strategic share in the company.

Tashir Group had initiated international arbitration, seeking hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation over what it describes as unlawful interference in its investment in Armenia’s power sector.

(This article originally appeared on the website www.oc-media.org on March 3.)



ARMENIA

Armenian Healthcare Summit Spotlights Boston University/HENAR Programs

YEREVAN — The World Health Organization (WHO) and HENAR Foundation convened a Healthcare Policy Summit on January 27, inviting all major Armenian healthcare institutions to coordinate programs in postgraduate medical education. In attendance were representatives of key institutional players, including the Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Education (MoE), Yerevan State Medical University (YSMU), National Institute of Health (ANIH), Boston University – Armenia Medical Partnership (BU-AMP), Asian Development Bank, and many Yerevan hospitals.

The purpose of the summit, titled “Health and Education Reforms: A Policy Dialogue on Postgraduate Medical Education,” was to facilitate a high-level, cross-sectoral policy dialogue that links Armenia’s Universal Healthcare and Primary Healthcare reform agendas with health workforce development, with a specific focus on postgraduate medical education. The summit was designed to bring together policymakers and development agencies to overcome obstacles in developing healthcare in Armenia, and to coordinate priority-setting and decision-making processes.

HENAR co-founder Arman Vosker-



Lena Nanushyan and Sargis Hayotsyan

chyan opened the summit, welcoming all participants to this milestone event in healthcare policy collaboration. He noted the importance of identifying key gaps and bottlenecks related to healthcare standards, training environments, licensing, accreditation, faculty capacity and healthcare workforce distribution.

Lena Nanushyan, First Deputy Minister of Health, presented the MoH’s plan for the development of Universal Healthcare for Armenia, which started a staged rollout on January 1. The government now provides many healthcare services free-of-charge for the disabled, children under 18, and the poor – and as of January 1, the elderly over 65. Even so, the government still cannot afford to pay for key services including most lab draws, x-rays and advanced im-



The summit participants

aging, and all but very basic medications. The goal for the next several years is to gradually extend the range of services to these existing groups, and then slowly expand coverage to all Armenians until the nation has true universal healthcare.

“The Armenian government has been continuously working to address gaps in healthcare... and we have learned that you cannot tackle large problems in isolation -- activities are interconnected, requiring a systems change,” said Nanushyan. “A competency-based residency program has been identified as a key priority as it is central to enabling doctors to better serve their patients. We want to ensure physicians graduate with strong, practical skills, so they can effectively address patients’ needs and deliver high-quality care.”

Sargis Hayotsyan, Deputy Minister of Education (MoE) and chairman of its Higher Education and Science Committee, introduced the Ministry’s main priorities for 2026. “Our purpose in participating in this event is to better understand how residency education is perceived within the policymakers’ community and among our international partners, and to present the regulatory provisions outlined in the Law on Higher Education and Science,” said Hayotsyan.

Jeff Markuns represented Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine’s Global Health Collaborative and shared his 20 years of developing

healthcare systems internationally, outlining a framework for healthcare capacity building. He outlined a phased strategy: first developing a core group of educational “champions,” then equipping departmental leaders to design and oversee new competency-based curricula, and finally strengthening faculty through targeted development programs. Markuns also stressed the importance of clear planning — using competency-based curricula, measurable goals and evaluations, strong accreditation systems, and mechanisms to sustain skills over time – to ensure reforms are effective and lasting.

The second half of the summit highlighted Armenia’s experience in implementing competency-based medical education (CBME). WHO Technical Officer Sulakhana Nandi introduced findings from a healthcare labor market analysis and workforce planning initiative conducted for Armenia. Lorky Libaridian, Program Director of the Pediatric Residency Program (launched in 2023 by HENAR Foundation in partnership with Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles), presented early lessons from implementing a competency-based residency model.

She was followed by Henry Louis, Program Director of the Masters’ program in Health Professions Education, (developed in 2025 by HENAR in conjunction with Boston University – Armenia Medical Partnership and with the support of the Armenian-American Medical Association of Greater Boston). Louis noted the program’s success in training faculty to introduce and apply the principles and practices of CBME across residency disciplines as diverse as pediatric infectious diseases, family medicine, and orthopedic surgery. Two MHPE students – Hrachuhi Ghaz-

aryan of (ANIH) and Hripsime Apresyan (YSMU) — shared reflections on the program’s impact on medical residency education in Armenia today.

The Summit concluded with a roundtable discussion, where participants exchanged perspectives on opportunities, challenges, and next steps in advancing medical residency reform in alignment with Armenia’s broader healthcare system transformation.

The Boston University-Armenia Medical Partnership (BU-AMP) is a multi-disciplinary program to coordinate collaboration for the improvement of healthcare in Armenia between the Aram V. Chobanian & Edward Avedisian School of Medicine at Boston University and health policy and healthcare entities in Armenia. For more information, contact Aram Kaligian, Director of the BU-AMP

Founded in 2021 by Noubar and Anna Afeyan, Ruben Vardanyan, and Arman Voskerchyan, the HENAR Foundation aims to contribute to the transformation of Armenia’s healthcare ecosystem. By building and empowering a network of partners, HENAR works to deliver better value, better care, and ultimately better health for current and future generations of Armenians. With support from AIFA (Afeyan Initiatives for Armenia), HENAR is leading efforts to strengthen Armenia’s primary care system, with a strong focus on talent development and digital innovation. For more information, visit <https://henar.am>

Ter-Petrosian Heaps Pre-Election Praise On Indicted Tycoon

OPPOSITION, from page 1

The 81-year-old ex-president, who had led Armenia to independence in 1991, already signaled support for Karapetyan late last week, saying that only the Russian-Armenian tycoon can unite the “fragmented opposition” in the run-up to the elections.

“One must finally understand that the unification of the opposition is not a political issue but simply a matter of saving the nation,” he declared.

Although Karapetyan’s recently established Strong Armenia party responded cautiously to that statement, Ter-Petrosian said that the reaction was “more than I expected.” He said nothing about the possibility of his pre-election cooperation with his Armenian National Congress (HAK). Levon Zurabyan, Ter-Petrosian’s right-hand man and the HAK’s deputy chairman, signaled his readiness to join forces with Karapetyan’s movement in late December.

Strong Armenia is an offshoot of the Mer Dzevov (In Our Way) movement which Karapetyan launched in late August two months after being arrested and prosecuted following his strong criticism of Pashinyan’s efforts to depose the supreme head of the church, Catholicos Garegin II. The movement claims to have attracted 30,000 members since then. The new party spawned by it is expected to be one of Pashinyan’s main election challengers.

Under the Armenian constitution, Karapetyan cannot become prime minister because of his dual Russian citizenship. His party made it clear last month that it will try to remove this constitutional hurdle if it wins the elections.

Flights to Armenia Disrupted by Expanding War in Middle East

EVACUATION, from page 1

Flights from Armenia’s Zvartnots International Airport to the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait have been canceled due to the situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran and neighboring countries, according to a statement published on the airport’s official website.

According to the flight schedule, flights to Abu Dhabi and Kuwait have been canceled, while three flights to Dubai have been delayed.

Several flights from Yerevan to Middle

Eastern cities have been canceled following U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran and the Iranian missile retaliation.

Dubai’s international airport, which handles more than 1,000 flights a day, sustained damage from Iranian retaliatory attack on sites across the Arab Gulf states, while Abu Dhabi and Kuwait’s international airports were also hit, Reuters reported.

The U.S. and Israel launched their attack on Iran on Saturday, killing Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and prompting Iran to retaliate with missile and

drone attacks.

As airspace restrictions across the Middle East begin to ease, Gulf carriers are taking different approaches to restarting operations amid lingering security concerns.

Etihad began more aggressively resuming flights on March 2, but officially claims passenger service remains suspended. Per the carrier: “Some repositioning, cargo and repatriation flights may operate in coordination with UAE authorities and subject to strict operational and safety approvals.”

Armenia Bars Iranians from Protesting in Yerevan

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

Armenian police barred Iranian protesters in Yerevan from rallying near the Iranian Embassy on Sunday, March 1, following the US and Israeli strikes that killed top members of Iran's leadership, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, as well as numerous civilians.

Around 30–40 demonstrators were detained and taken to the National Security Service or local police stations before be-



Iranians waving Iran's pre-1979 flag at a solidarity rally in Yerevan. Photo: Arshaluys Barseghyan/OC Media.

ing released later in the day. The detentions occurred despite the protesters securing permission from Yerevan authorities to hold a rally near the embassy on Sunday afternoon.

Hosein Setoode, an Iranian protester, told OC Media that some participants had arrived at the location in advance to prepare for the demonstration, but later called him and advised him not to come, as police had not allowed them to proceed.

"I asked why, they responded that they

were not aware and that the police did not allow them to stay in the park [adjacent to the embassy]," Setoode said.

According to him, as the group attempted to change locations, police intervened, and around 20 people were detained.

Later, as he headed toward the Yerevan Municipality building, he saw police blocking other protesters who were attempting to approach on foot.

After parking nearby and walking to assess the situation, he said a white Nissan Rogue stopped beside him, and two officers called him over. As he approached, additional police vehicles arrived, and he was taken to the criminal police station.

"They very roughly and inhumanely detained us right near the municipality," Setoode said, adding that the treatment was different at the police station, where they were told that the Iranian authorities were receiving condolences

from people at the embassy.

"They said to make a decision and do not go [near the embassy] for a few days until things calm down a bit, then apply again, obtain permission [for rallies]," Setoode said.

Following the detentions, no further gatherings were held in the following days. Instead of protests, people left flowers and toys in memory of the victims, including children.

The Helsinki Citizens' Assembly-Va-

nadzor rights group strongly condemn[ed] the authorities' actions, including the arrest and phone calls urging Iranians to appear before the police and the National Security Service (NSS).

The group also noted that for a "considerable period of time," it had been receiving alerts from Iranians that their peaceful assemblies near the embassy were being hindered and Iranians were threatened "with deportation and extradition."

"We demand the immediate safeguarding of Iranian citizens' right to peaceful assembly, [and] the immediate cessation of unlawful actions aimed at mass human rights violations," the statement read.

Iranians in Armenia have been holding daily rallies near the embassy since January in support of widespread antigovernment protests which broke out in Iran starting in late December 2025. The brutal crackdown at the hands of Iranian authorities resulted in tens of thousands of deaths.

Amid those earlier protests, Iranians told OC Media that they faced various forms of pressure from the Armenian authorities, with some having been questioned by the NSS.

In the meantime, Iranian Ambassador to Armenia Khalil Shirgholami criticized the daily demonstrations, saying that they have continued despite Tehran's protests.

In response, Yerevan said Armenia is a democratic country that ensures the right of free assembly, but reports of pressure on protesters have nonetheless continued.

Later in February, Shirgholami expressed gratitude to the Armenian authorities "for the steps taken to resolve the situation with the protests in front of the Iranian Embassy in Armenia".

(This story originally appeared on the website www.oc-media.org on March 3.)

Decision to Allow UK Exports to Armenian Firm under Review over Russian Links

By Rob Davies

LONDON (*The Guardian*) — Ministers are reviewing a decision to allow a British company to export hi-tech equipment to Armenia after the Guardian uncovered links to the Russian military supply chain.

Cygnat Tekimp, based in Cheshire, was weeks away from exporting two machines that produce carbon fiber "prepreg", a lightweight material that can be used in a range of civil and military applications.

Whitehall officials told Cygnat last year that it did not require a special license for the shipment, signaling that the government's routine vetting process for exports had raised no concerns about how the equipment could be used and by whom.

But the trade minister, Chris Bryant, said he was putting the deal on ice, pending a review, over concerns that the machines could be deployed for military purposes. The material they produce can be used in the production of missiles and drones, crucial weapons in the war in Ukraine.

The decision comes after Liam Byrne, chair of the House of Commons business committee, wrote to Bryant to highlight a Guardian report outlining the links between Cygnat's Armenian client, Rydena LLC, and the Russian military.

Rydena was established two years into the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by former executives of Umatex, a Kremlin-owned company that has emerged as one of the most important suppliers to Vladimir Putin's war machine.

Experts have warned that the Rydena founders' past involvement in the Krem-

lin's military supply chain should raise concerns about whether Cygnat's hardware could be used to supply carbon fiber to Russia, circumventing sanctions designed to turn the screw on Putin.

Rydena has previously denied that it does any business with Russia or with sanctioned entities, while both it and Cygnat have said the equipment will be used for civil applications.

In a letter to Byrne, Bryant confirmed that the government is reconsidering its decision to permit the export to go ahead.

Bryant said: "We are currently reviewing an earlier determination that the export was not subject to license as the goods were not considered to be controlled (a 'No License Required' decision)."

He added that the decision followed close consultation with Cygnat Tekimp, "as a result of which we have determined that some elements of the production equipment should be considered as subject to dual-use controls".

Dual-use controls cover equipment that can be used for both civil and military applications, to prevent apparently innocent export contracts being used to disguise deals for equipment that can be used in war.

Cygnat said that it had consistently followed export rules and applied for a license because it recognized that its "prepreg" machine could potentially be categorized as "dual use" but said that the government had told it that no license was required.

Bryant said the Department for Business and Trade had "reopened the license application, which will have to be assessed before any export is permitted. I can confirm that no export has yet taken place."

Bryant signaled Cygnat Tekimp's 50-year history in hi-tech manufacturing, with a long record of complying with export licenses and a good relationship with the Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU). The unit brings together government departments and the intelligence services to hunt for red flags raised by potential export deals.

The government has so far declined to say whether the ECJU was aware of the Rydena executives' past work for Umatex, which is disclosed on their profiles on the professional networking site LinkedIn.

"You can be assured that I will continue to take a close direct interest in this case," Bryant said.

In a subsequent evidence session with Byrne's business select committee on February 25, Bryant said the government was planning to strengthen export licensing laws to improve controls on goods being diverted to Russia.

A spokesperson for Cygnat Tekimp said: "At the outset of this order, we proactively engaged with the relevant UK authorities and voluntarily submitted an application for an export license because we recognized that certain elements of the equipment, namely a prepreg machine, could potentially be categorized as 'dual use'.

"We acknowledge the UK government's decision to review its earlier guidance that a license was not required. We will await the outcome of this process. Cygnat Tekimp has always operated in full compliance with UK export control regulations and remains committed to maintaining an open, constructive and transparent dialogue with the relevant authorities at all times."

Armenia Added to European List of Journalist Jailers

By Gayane Saribekian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A coalition of Western press freedom groups has for the first time included Armenia on its list of countries in wider Europe jailing journalists or other media figures.

As part of an annual report released on Tuesday, March 3, the Platform for the Safety of Journalists also blacklisted neighboring Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia as well as Russia and Belarus. The platform consists of 15 watchdogs, including the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists and Paris-based Reporters Without Borders, cooperating with the Council of Europe.

"At the end of 2025, Armenia was recorded for the first time on the Platform with journalists or other media actors in detention, following the pre-trial detention of podcasters Vazgen Saghatelian and Narek Samsonyan on hooliganism charges," says its report.

Samsonyan and Saghatelian are currently standing trial for verbally abusing parliament speaker Alen Simonyan in response to his personal insults. Simonyan branded the two outspoken men as "sons of b*tches" when he commented on their seven-hour interview with former President Serzh Sargsyan broadcast live on YouTube in early November. They responded to him with offensive language.

Simonyan demanded criminal proceedings against them on November 11. Two days later, officers of Armenia's National Security Service (NSS) demonstratively detained the two podcasters, searching their homes and their Immemnimi podcast studio in the process. No action was taken against Simonyan, who is a leading political ally of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, notorious for spitting at a heckler in Yerevan in 2023.

Both Saghatelian and Samsonyan again pleaded not guilty to the hooliganism charge at the beginning of their trial in January. They said they are being prosecuted for exercising their freedom of speech. Samsonyan also went on hunger strike in protest against their detention.

He stopped refusing food two weeks later, after prison authorities reluctantly allowed him to undergo surgery at a Yerevan hospital of his choice. An Armenian appeals court moved him to house arrest on February 19. Saghatelian remains in jail.

Ashot Melikyan, the chairman of the Yerevan-based Committee to Protect Freedom of Speech, described Armenia's inclusion on the list of journalist jailers as a blow to its international reputation. He said it was an inevitable consequence of the "disproportionate measures" taken against the two pro-opposition podcasters.

"The mere fact that journalists are in prison is enough of a reason for serious [international] criticism," Melikyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

Dozens of other critics of Pashinyan, including an opposition mayor and three archbishops of the Armenian Apostolic Church, have also been prosecuted in recent months in what the Armenian opposition calls a pre-election government crackdown on dissent. The authorities deny that they are political prisoners.

Turkey Faces Economic, Security and Migration Risks amid Iran War, Experts Warn

ISTANBUL (Turkish Minute) — Turkey faces growing economic and security risks as the conflict sparked by US and Israeli strikes on Iran deepens, with analysts warning that prolonged instability could trigger oil shocks, refugee flows and heightened militant activity along its eastern border.

The confrontation began on February 28 with Israeli and US attacks on Iran and quickly spread as Tehran retaliated against Israel and targets in the Gulf.

Ankara has condemned both the strikes on Iran and Iran's retaliation against Gulf countries, urging an immediate halt to hostilities and offering diplomatic support to prevent further escalation.

Oil shock and economic strain

Economists say Turkey's most immediate vulnerability lies in energy markets. Oil prices rose sharply after the strikes, with Brent hovering near \$80 per barrel, according to the CNBC-e Turkish edition, which cited Goldman Sachs as saying the impact on Turkey will depend on how high prices rise and how long they remain elevated.

If Brent stays at current levels through the end of the year, Turkey's current account deficit could increase by \$18 billion, roughly 1 percent of gross domestic product, Goldman estimated. Turkey's current account deficit stood at \$25.2 billion in 2025.

Economist Mahfi Eğilmez warned in a commentary published on his website that rising oil prices would quickly feed into fuel costs, transportation expenses and production inputs, intensifying inflationary pressures and increasing demand for foreign currency.

In periods of heightened geopolitical risk, he wrote, capital tends to exit emerging markets, putting additional strain on exchange rates and raising borrowing costs.

Eğilmez calculated that each \$10 increase in oil prices could increase Turkey's current account deficit by at least \$2.5 billion and push inflation up by about 1 percentage point.

Such a sustained energy shock, he warned, would narrow room for monetary easing and complicate efforts to stabilize prices and the lira.

Migration Pressures and Border Stability

Beyond economic exposure, analysts say the greater long-term uncertainty lies in security and migration dynamics along Turkey's eastern frontier if the conflict inside Iran escalates beyond external strikes.

Sinan Ülgen, director of the Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM), told Deutsche Welle (DW) Turkish service that airstrikes alone would not automatically trigger a refugee wave.

The key turning point, he said, would be whether foreign intervention leads to internal unrest and violent domestic conflict similar to Iraq in the 1990s or Syria in the 2010s.

Iran's neighbors have long warned that major attacks on the country could destabilize the region, including by driving refugees across borders. Turkey hosts more than 74,000 Iranians with residence permits and about 5,000 refugees.

Turkey shares a 534-kilometer border with Iran. Trade Minister Ömer Bolat said there was no extraordinary situation at key crossings, though day-trip passenger crossings were suspended.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also said authorities had not observed border security problems and that police, gendarmerie and intelligence services were taking necessary measures.

Opposition Warns of Renewed Migration Influx

Opposition figures have also warned that Turkey could face renewed migration pressure.

Murat Bakan, a lawmaker from the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), said the conflict could confront Turkey with a new wave of irregular migration. He called on all concerned parties to "act against this major risk" in a social media post.

Bakan also questioned why Interior Minister Mustafa Çiftçi chaired a border security meeting, arguing that land border protection legally falls under the Ministry of Defense and the Land Forces Command.

Ümit Özdağ, leader of the ultranationalist Victory Party (ZP), warned that Turkey could not absorb another refugee wave and compared the potential fallout to the Syria crisis.

Speaking at a fast-breaking dinner event in Bursa, he called on the Turkish military to establish a buffer zone inside Iranian territory and said any humanitarian response should be organized inside Iran rather than across the Turkish border.

"We are a nation that has already paid a heavy price from migration since 2011," Özdağ said. "We are in no position to accept

more people."

Turkey's 534-kilometer (332-mile) border with Iran is already one of the region's main transit corridors.

The country hosts millions of Syrian and Afghan refugees, by most measures the largest such population in the world, and the political pressure over migration has remained a dominant issue for years.

Beyond migration, analysts warn that internal destabilization in Iran could also reshape the security landscape along the border and could pave the way for armed groups hostile to Turkey, such as the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), an Iranian affiliate of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), to expand their activities.

Dr. Cemal Kazargu argued in a column for the Independent's Turkish news website that the most dangerous scenario for Turkey would not be rivalry with a functioning Iranian state but a fragmented or militarized Iran in which state authority erodes.

Drawing comparisons to Iraq and Syria, he said prolonged instability could transform border areas into arenas for proxy competition and non-state actors, complicating Turkey's security environment along its eastern frontier.

Turkey's NATO membership adds further sensitivity because of facilities such as the İncirlik Air Base and the Kürecik radar site.

Opposition leader and former prime minister Ahmet Davutoğlu urged the government to declare Turkish territory and military facilities off-limits for attacks on Iran and to seek consultations under NATO's Article 4 mechanism.

He also called for tighter oversight of İncirlik and raised concerns about Kürecik's exposure in a confrontation involving Iran.

The Turkish Presidency's Directorate of Communications denied claims that Turkey allowed its airspace, territory or bases to be used in operations against Iran, calling such reports disinformation.

Ülgen told DW that Iran targeting Turkey was not a realistic scenario, noting that Tehran has struck countries that are not NATO members and would likely avoid expanding the conflict to include a NATO ally.

For Ankara, officials have emphasized diplomacy while signaling vigilance on the border and economic fallout, aware that a prolonged war could simultaneously strain Turkey's finances, security posture and social stability.

INTERNATIONAL

Aram I Voices Concern Over Middle East Armenians

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia Aram I is closely and with deep concern following developments affecting Armenian communities in the Middle East and remains in constant contact with them, the Catholicosate's press office reported this week.

"In recent days, the war unleashed by the United States and Israel against Iran has effectively encompassed the entire Middle East. The war has resulted in deaths, panic, uncertainty and widespread anxiety. Naturally, Armenian communities in Middle Eastern countries have also been affected, to varying degrees, by the consequences of the war.

On behalf of the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, Aram I expressed deep condolences to all victims and wished a swift recovery to the wounded," the statement said.

Armenia Says Syria Responsible for Transferred Convicts

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia's Ministry of Justice is not aware of the current location of the Syrian mercenaries handed over to Damascus, Sputnik Armenia reports.

On January 14, authorities, through Turkish mediation, transferred to Syria two men sentenced to life imprisonment — Muhrab Muhammad al-Shkheri and Yusef Alabet al-Haji — clarifying that they would continue serving the remainder of their sentences in their home country.

Responding to questions about whether they are still serving their sentences and, if so, where, the Justice Ministry stated that "the transfer of the mentioned persons was carried out in accordance with the requirements of Armenian legislation, with the purpose of serving the remaining part of their sentence in a relevant penitentiary institution of Syria."

Russia Says BRICS Unlikely to Aid Iran

MOSCOW (Panorama.am) — The Kremlin said on March 3, that BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) membership does not entail obligations to assist Iran in the event of an armed conflict, after the US and Israel launched strikes against the Islamic Republic on Saturday.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the bloc is focused on cooperation in economic and other spheres, not military support. "Membership in BRICS does not provide for commitments to help during armed aggression. It is an organization of a different nature," he said.

Peskov added that Russia remains in contact with Iran's leadership and with countries affected by the escalating confrontation.

Armenia Offers Condolences to Iran

CONDOLENCES, from page 1

"At this difficult time, we cherish hope for the speedy establishment of peace and stability in the Middle East," added Pashinyan, who met with Khamenei during his visits to Tehran several times.

Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan echoed the condolences in a phone call with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi. The Armenian Foreign Ministry said he also stressed "the importance of reducing tensions and reaching a peaceful resolution" to the escalating conflict.

According to the Iranian Embassy in Yerevan, Mirzoyan also expressed Yerevan's readiness to send humanitarian aid to the Islamic Republic.

In a post on social media, the embassy also quoted Araghchi as saying: "Iran is ready to continue self-defense for as long as necessary and to avenge the blood of its martyred leader."

The Armenian leaders remained care-

ful not to condemn the US-Israeli military campaign that began on Saturday morning. Armenian opposition leaders have criticized Yerevan for waiting for over 24 to officially react to the outbreak of the war which could have far-reaching implications for Armenia's security and future.

In the months leading up to the war, Iranian officials, notably Khamenei's top foreign policy aide, voiced serious concern at the Armenian government's plans to open a US-administered transit corridor for Azerbaijan that would run along the Armenian-Iranian border. Tehran fears that the planned Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) could lead to US security presence there. Yerevan has sought to allay its fears.

Iran has for decades been one of landlocked Armenia's two conduits to the outside world. Passenger and cargo traffic across the border between the two coun-

tries resumed the afternoon of March 2 after a 24-hour closure.

Two Armenian TV channels reported from the border crossing that there have been no signs of large numbers of Iranians fleeing to Armenia because of the fighting. Reports aired by them also showed residents of the Armenian border town of Agarak continuing to cross into Iran to buy cheaper goods sold there.

"We went shopping as usual," one of them told the regional Syunik TV channel.

"All shops across the border are open," said another Armenian woman.

Also, Yerevan has so far not urged Armenian nationals to leave Iran. It has only advised Armenians in the Islamic Republic as well as Israel and Gulf Arab states to take security precautions. The weekend cancellation of flights carried out to and from those nations left scores of Armenian travelers stranded in the United Arab Emirates.

Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia Tread Carefully as Iran Conflict Explodes

CONFLICT, from page 1

On Saturday — the same day the war began — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, accompanied by Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and other senior officials, launched an intra-party campaign across Armenia to determine the order of the first 50 candidates on the ruling Civil Contract party's electoral list through an internal vote.

Throughout the campaign tour, Pashinyan documented the trip via Facebook Live broadcasts. However, two videos showing Pashinyan and Parliamentary Speaker Alen Simonyan eating piroshki and corn during the trip drew the most attention.

The clips generated criticism from opposition figures, who considered the timing of sharing such content to be inappropriate. In response, members of the ruling Civil Contract party argued that the opposition was dissatisfied precisely because Armenia was not engaged in an armed conflict this time, but instead enjoying a period of peace. These conditions, they said, allowed officials to travel and eat piroshki and further called on opponents to appreciate the established peace.

During one of the live broadcasts, Pashinyan invited Mirzoyan to comment on the Middle East developments. However, his remarks were cut short due to technical difficulties.

Separately, in response to the developments, Armenia on Saturday, February 28, established a working group to assess the conflict's potential impact on Armenia.

The next day, Pashinyan chaired a Security Council meeting, during which the attendees were briefed about 'events taking place around' Iran, as well as the activities of the interdepartmental working group established.

"The participants of the meeting expressed deep regret over the painful developments, expressed their condolences for the victims, and emphasized the need for the speedy establishment of peace," the official statement read.

Armenia sent condolences to Iran only on Monday, with Pashinyan saying that they were following the developments "with deep concern." (See story on Page 1.)

"At this difficult moment, we sincerely hope for the swift restoration of peace and stability in the Middle East. Taking this opportunity, I wish you patience and strength, and to the friendly and neighboring people of Iran, peace and resilience," the letter concluded.

That same day, Mirzoyan had a telephone conversation with his Iranian counterpart, Seyyed Abbas Araghchi, during which Mirzoyan "expressed his condolences to the families of the victims in Iran, emphasizing the importance of reducing tensions and reaching a peaceful resolution."

They also discussed humanitarian issues, the Armenian Foreign Ministry noted.

On March 2, Khalil Shirgholami, the Iranian Ambassador to Armenia said the border with Armenia had been closed for 24 hours "due to problems with the systems operating at the border," but added that the land border had reopened as of Monday morning and that "traffic is flowing smoothly in both directions."

Armenia's rather cautious approach has highlighted the implications of Yerevan's changing geopolitical stance, particularly its growing friendship with Washington.

In contrast to Yerevan's outright condemnation of Israeli actions during the brief war with Iran in June 2025, there has

been a clear avoidance of any straightforward condemnation.

The main factor affecting Armenia's cautious and mild reaction to the ongoing hostilities in Iran is the US participation from the first stage of the war, Tigran Grigoryan, a political analyst and the head of the Regional Centre for Democracy and Security, told OC Media.

"The Washington summit [in August 2026] has changed the situation on the ground in the region and is a very important card for the upcoming elections for the ruling party. That is why we should not expect the kind of language that was used during the 12-day war [in June 2025] when Armenia very explicitly condemned Israel's attack against Iran," Grigoryan said.

Grigoryan anticipated that Armenia's "cautious approach" would continue, adding that the likely strongest reaction from Yerevan would be to call for a diplomatic solution.

Referring to Mirzoyan's call with his Iranian counterpart on Monday, Grigoryan suggested that it was likely a response to the Azerbaijani side's sending condolences for the killing of the Ayatollah.

Despite the apparent decision to stay above the fray for now, even rhetorically, Grigoryan said the war has the potential to have real implications for Armenia.

"The ongoing war can disrupt trade routes, other [transit routes] connecting Armenia with the Gulf countries and other parts of the world. Iran is also an important transit area for Armenian weapons, for example, purchased from India. A lot of things will of course depend also on the lengths of this operation, of this war. So there are various scenarios if we're talking about shorter term conflict and long-term conflict," he concluded.

Georgia: 'At Least We're Not Eating Piroshki Like Pashinyan'

The Georgian government released an official statement on the conflict only on the morning of March 2, expressing condolences to some parties and solidarity with others.

After voicing deep concern over the military escalation, Tbilisi first extended condolences to Iran, noting that "the ongoing military activities have claimed the lives of many individuals, including the Supreme Leader, other political leaders, numerous innocent civilians, and dozens of children."

The statement then expressed condolences to Israel and the Jewish people "over the loss of civilian lives," as well as "full solidarity with the Arab Gulf countries, with whom Georgia maintains distinguished partnerships."

"We hope that peace will soon be restored in the Middle East and that military actions will be replaced by diplomacy and political dialogue," the government added, concluding by reaffirming its readiness to ensure the safety of its own citizens in the region.

The US was not mentioned in the statement in any form.

The All-Georgia Muslim Supreme Religious Administration also expressed condolences, but drew a sharp contrast by characterizing the attack as "terror and aggression by an alliance of evil" and calling Khamenei's death a "shocking loss."

Earlier, on Sunday, March 1, the Foreign Ministry also issued a brief statement highlighting the importance of a diplomatic resolution to the conflict and the protection of Georgian citizens in the region.

Some members of the ruling Georgian Dream party were asked by journalists about the conflict — MP Nino Tsilosani was questioned whether the government had held any meetings regarding the situation, noting that Armenia had convened a National Security Council session on the topic. In response, Tsilosani said that "all threats and risks are under the highest control" and to illustrate that Georgia would not follow Armenia in everything it does, she cited a video of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan eating a piroshki, mistakenly referring to the food as a cheburek, another savory pastry common in the region.

"The Prime Minister of Armenia was even eating cheburek, or how was that? [Soon] after the war started [...] So we certainly don't intend to do the same as Armenia. We have our own risk-mitigation mechanisms," she said as quoted by IPN.

Although Georgia and Iran are not bound by a close partnership, some have pointed to signs of Tbilisi's "political and economic rapprochement" with Tehran.

Indeed, Transparency International — Georgia's 2025 report noted that, amidst deteriorating relations with Georgia's traditional Western partners, the ruling Georgian Dream party has been strengthening ties "with non-democratic regimes, including Iran."

In the past, the authorities have drawn the ire of pro-Western critics for their actions toward Iran, including 2025 visits by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze to express condolences over the death of late President Ebrahim Raisi, followed by his attendance at the inauguration of the new president, Masoud Pezeshkian.

Although these visits are regarded as "symbolic" by Giorgi Sanikidze, director of the Institute of Oriental Studies at Tbilisi-based Ilia State University (ISU), he placed much greater emphasis on the nature of Monday's statement, which included condolences to Iran and specifically mentioned the death of Khamenei.

Sanikidze compared this statement to the one released by then-Foreign Minister Davit Zalkaliani after the January 2020 killing of the influential Iranian general Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad by the US. The day after the killing, Zalkaliani condemned the attack by demonstrators on the US embassy in Baghdad, which preceded the targeting of Soleimani, stating that the "US has the legitimate right to defend its citizens."

"Within [six] years, we have such a different reality," Sanikidze told OC Media. "This difference is a very significant one between today's statement and the earlier [one]."

In his words, "It sounds like the [latest] statement maintained a neutral position," mentioning Israel and the Gulf countries alongside Iran.

"Naturally, Georgia is not a player that can actively engage in these processes, but in my view, this neutral position — taking neither side — is not really justified," he added, explaining that if Georgia has a pro-Western course — as the authorities continue to claim — "it should support Western policy."

Sanikidze explains the difference he observed between the statements as a result of both Georgia's recent tensions with the West and ongoing democracy backsliding, rather than any dramatic positive change in relations with Iran.

Shortly before the outbreak of the conflict, on February 11, Georgia's Deputy

Foreign Minister Lasha Darsalia noted that Tbilisi was ready to continue its cooperation with Iran to "advance a positive agenda in the region," emphasizing what he called "Iran's steadfast support for Georgia over the years."

Darsalia made this statement at an event marking the 47th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, held at a hotel in central Tbilisi, while the Tbilisi TV Tower was illuminated in the colors of the Iranian flag. The celebrations occurred soon after Iranian authorities' brutal crackdown on anti-government protests in January.

Weeks before the outbreak of the conflict, in a show of solidarity with the protest movement in Iran, Iranians living in Tbilisi began holding daily demonstrations outside the Iranian embassy.

The rallies continue to this day, with demonstrators on Monday celebrating Khamenei's death.

Azerbaijan: Complicated Reactions Amidst Fears of Retaliation

Despite a history of tense relations, President Ilham Aliyev expressed condolences to Pezeshkian over Khamenei's death, stating that he was "deeply saddened by the tragic death." Aliyev also expressed "deep condolences" to the Iranian people over the "heavy loss."

Similarly, on Saturday, February 28, Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov held a phone call with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi, during which he "expressed condolences due to the killing of Khamenei and innocent people because of the airstrikes."

At the same time, Bayramov emphasized that "it is impossible for any country to use the territory of Azerbaijan against neighboring and friendly Iran."

In both cases, however, Aliyev and Bayramov refrained from openly criticizing either the US — Azerbaijan's relatively newfound friend — or Israel, a long-time ally.

The divisions were also apparent in the varying reactions across Azerbaijani society, with some commentators, including Elkhan Shukurlu, the editor and founder of the local Strateq.az media outlet, expressing anger at Khamenei's death and the inability (or unwillingness) of Azerbaijanis to take a stronger stance in opposition.

"What saddens me most is that some who consider themselves Muslims and Azerbaijanis rejoice at the heinous murder of a leader — a head of state descended from the Prophet's lineage, who speaks our language and is one of us — and side with the enemy," Shukurlu wrote.

Moreover, there is also an underlying concern that Azerbaijan could be directly drawn into the war. Independent analyst Shahin Jafarli told OC Media that Khamenei's killing has caused uncertainty in Azerbaijan about how far Iran might be willing to go, referencing the attacks that Iran has carried out on countries allied with the US across the Middle East. He added that Iran had previously accused Azerbaijan of allowing its territory to be used by Israel during the war in 2025 — charges that Baku has denied.

Even so, he expressed that he highly doubted that an attack would occur as long as Pezeshkian remained in power.

"If this [Iranian leadership] delegation doesn't fully control the country and the Sepah [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] forces, then it's possible that there

continued on next page



INTERNATIONAL

Turkish Opposition Leaders Arrested, Facing Trials

ISTANBUL (Turkish Minute) — A Turkish court on March 2 ordered the arrest of Bolu Mayor Tanju Özcan, a member of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), with the Interior Ministry subsequently suspending him from office pending trial, the Stockholm Center for Freedom reported, citing Turkish media.

According to Turkish media, the Bolu 2nd Criminal Magistrate of Peace ordered the arrest of Özcan on misconduct charges as part of an investigation into alleged extortion involving supermarket chains. Deputy Mayor Süleyman Can was also arrested, while city council member Ali Sariyıldız was put under house arrest for four months and 10 other suspects were released under judicial supervision.

Özcan had been detained on February 28.

Prosecutors allege that managers from several supermarket chains were pressured to make donations to the "I Love Bolu Foundation" (BOLSEV). Supermarkets that declined to sign advertising agreements were allegedly subjected to inspections outside routine practices, and branches of the A101 and ŞOK chains had their business licenses revoked after refusing to enter into contracts.

Özcan denied the allegations in a social media post, saying the case was linked to scholarships provided to students and describing his detention as "an honor." He said supermarket representatives had themselves proposed directing their advertising budgets to billboard space owned by a municipality-linked company and operated by the foundation.

Özcan also alleged that the prosecutor handling the case harbored personal animosity toward him, stemming from a complaint he filed with Turkey's Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK) against the chief public prosecutor after a deadly ski resort fire in January 2025.

His attorney, Ferit Atalay, said the foundation was transparent and properly overseen, adding that it was established to fund the education of 528 students. He described the charges as unfounded and politically motivated.

CHP leadership criticized the arrest. Party leader Özgür Özel said Özcan had collected donations from local business owners to support disadvantaged children. "What Tanju did is not something to be ashamed of, but something to be proud of," Özel said.

CHP Deputy Chair Burhanettin Bulut described the arrest as "a decision taken with political motives." Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavaş also criticized the arrest, saying the fundamental principle should be trial without pretrial detention.

The arrest comes amid broader pressure on CHP-led municipalities, which has intensified since the arrest of İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, widely seen as President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's strongest political rival, in March 2025 on corruption charges.

According to a CHP report released in

October 2025, 16 mayors from the party are jailed and 13 municipalities have been put under government-appointed trustees since the CHP's sweeping victory in the March 2024 local elections.

İmamoğlu prepares to go on trial on March 9 in a corruption case with 407 defendants.

"The trial of Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu follows more than a year of weaponizing the criminal justice system against his party and other CHP elected officials while he sits in jail," said Benjamin Ward, deputy Europe and Central Asia director at Human Rights Watch. Ward said the broader set of cases points to an effort to remove İmamoğlu from politics and discredit the CHP, a move the group said undermines democracy.

İmamoğlu, who first won the İstanbul mayoral race in 2019, has spent about a year in prison after a court ordered his jailing on March 23, 2025, as the CHP was set to confirm him as its presidential candidate.

HRW underlined that the evidence in the main corruption case relies heavily on testimony from 15 witnesses whose identities are withheld from the defense and on statements by 76 defendants who agreed to testify in exchange for the possibility of reduced sentences. The group said the use of such evidence, along with public statements by prosecutors and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan about İmamoğlu and the CHP, raises fair trial concerns.

Human Rights Watch also pointed to what it described as pressure on the defense, citing the jailing of İmamoğlu's defense lawyer as a defendant in the case. It said the size of the proceedings and the number of defendants add to concerns about the right to a fair trial.

The corruption indictment accuses İmamoğlu of leading what prosecutors call a criminal organization tied to İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality contracts and tenders and alleges the scheme aimed to enrich a network and build political power

inside the CHP. İmamoğlu could face up to 1,929 years in prison if convicted on all counts.

According to HRW, prosecutors have used a second detention order in an espionage investigation as an "insurance policy" to keep İmamoğlu behind bars.

A court ordered İmamoğlu's detention in that probe on October 27, and he was indicted on February 4, along with three others. The trial is set to begin May 11 and carries a potential 15 to 20 years in prison if he is convicted.

HRW said that the broader campaign has targeted CHP municipalities and party leadership through criminal cases and court challenges, arguing that the pattern suggests an "improper purpose" barred by Article 18 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The group noted that in Turkey's March 2024 local elections, the CHP won 37.8 percent of the national vote, ahead of Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) at 35.5 percent.

Azerbaijani Troops Reportedly Deployed to Iranian Border as Conflict Rages

By Aytan Farhadova

Azerbaijani troops have reportedly been put on combat alert and deployed to the border with Iran, the independent media outlet Qazetchi has reported, citing sources. The move comes as the US-Israel war against Iran entered its fourth day, with countries across the region being drawn into the fighting.

According to information confirmed to Qazetchi from anonymous sources, "the Ministry of Defense, the State Border Service, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Emergency Situations have gone into high alert mode."

The Defense Ministry has not confirmed or denied the information, nor responded to requests for comment from OC Media.

Qazetchi wrote that "the vacations of soldiers, warrant officers, and officers" have been cancelled. Officers on leave have reportedly been recalled. Defense systems against drones and low-flying aircraft have been deployed on the border with Iran.

Opposition politician Yadigar Sadigli told OC Media that it was normal for Azerbaijan to build up defense forces along the border.

"The head of state, of course, must take certain precautions, undertake certain steps, and if they have taken them, I think that's normal. A lot can happen. Tomorrow, chaos could arise, some kind of a military unit commander could take action independently," Sadigli said, adding that it was "perfectly natural" for a neighboring country to put their military forces on high alert.

"Let's say a missile could evade its target and hit Azerbaijan, but it could be something else," Sadigli noted, adding that "it's especially important to bring air defense forces to basic combat readiness. Aviation [support] must also be in place,

and, of course, ground forces must also be ready."

Some military experts have noted that Qazetchi should not have shared the information, citing state security concerns. Others, however, supported the information, questioning how people could otherwise explain recent instances of shooting in an Azerbaijani district bordering Iran.

As tensions in Azerbaijan rose surrounding Iran's attack on other Muslim countries, the Japanese embassy in Azerbaijan firstly stated that they suspended their op-

safety of visitors in light of the tense situation in the Middle East, only the consular section was temporarily closed," stated the embassy.

Others, however, cited differing reasons for the troop buildup, with Talysh human rights defender Hilal Mammadov suggesting on social media that the army deployment could "perhaps be to prevent the influx of refugees."

"If ground troops are deployed against Iran, it is obvious that this will lead to even more terrible consequences: undoubtedly,



Azerbaijan border with Iran (official photo)

eration due to an unknown period, which sparked discussions about possible attacks and threats on social media.

Later, the embassy denied that it had suspended its operations in Azerbaijan, saying that only the consular section was temporarily closed on March 2 and 3.

"While there is currently no information about any specific threats, to ensure the

not only millions of people will join this struggle, but tens of thousands of children and women will be forced to seek refuge in neighboring countries, including ours. Undoubtedly, in this case, we will also have to provide all possible assistance to the Iranian people."

(This story originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on March 3.)

from previous page

will be some provocative steps and attempts against Azerbaijan by Sepah radicals," he said.

However, he also emphasized that "we cannot definitively say that Azerbaijan faces no threat, that there are no risks."

"In this regard, some radical commander, one of the radical officers in this group, could give the order to carry out provocations against Azerbaijan," he noted.

In turn, opposition politician Yadigar Sadigli told OC Media that the conflict in

Iran has the potential to both positively and negatively impact Azerbaijan.

"If the conflict lasts a little longer, oil prices will rise, and this will, of course, lead to increased revenue for Azerbaijan. But frankly, I don't think that Iran, Israel, or the US are interested in waging a protracted war," he said.

Sadigli said that one of the risks to Azerbaijan could be an influx of Iranian refugees, which the country is bound by international conventions to accept. Refusing to do so "could damage the image of Aliyev

and the state," he added.

Since February 28, more than 300 people — mainly Azerbaijani citizens, but also including Chinese, Russian, Pakistani and other nationalities — have been evacuated from Iran via the Azerbaijani border.

"And I think that if a ground military operation begins, [an influx of refugees to Azerbaijan] will definitely happen, although I don't believe ground operations will begin in a country the size of Iran. Because it's a much larger and more militant society," Sadigli concluded.

Despite this, the Japanese Embassy in Azerbaijan announced on March 2 that due to the tensions in the region, it was suspending its activity in the country and including visa applications. Also on Monday, a phone conversation was held between Bayramov and the EU's top diplomat Kaja Kallas, during which they discussed tensions in the region and emphasized the importance of "resolving the conflict through diplomatic means."

(This story originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on March 2.)

Community News

Glendale Teachers Association Endorses Dr. Edit Khachatryan For Glendale Community College Board of Trustees

GLENDAL — This week, Dr. Edit Khachatryan announced the endorsement of the Glendale Teachers Association (GTA) in her campaign for Glendale Community College Board of Trustees (Area 2).

“Educators are the foundation of student success and the heart of our community,” said Edit Khachatryan. “As a trustee, I will work collaboratively with faculty and staff to uphold academic excellence, strengthen shared governance, and keep Glen-



Dr. Edit Khachatryan

dale Community College accessible and affordable for every student. I’m truly honored to have the support of the Glendale Teachers Association.”

The endorsement highlights the support of local educators dedicated to academic excellence and the strength of public institutions. In announcing its endorsements for the upcoming municipal elections, the Glendale Teachers Association praised candidates who demonstrate transparency, fiscal responsibility, and a commitment to policies that uplift working families. The union emphasized the importance of accountable leadership, robust public institutions, and good-paying union jobs that support both educators and the broader community.

“Dr. Khachatryan is a dedicated advocate for students, educators, and our broader community,” said Taline Arsenian, President of the Glendale Teachers Association. “Her dedication to educational excellence and her genuine commitment to working together with all stakeholders, including educators, make her exceptionally well-qualified to serve. On behalf of the Glendale Teachers Association, I wholeheartedly support her candidacy and am confident she will be a thoughtful, collaborative trustee who prioritizes student success and supports the faculty and staff who make that success possible.”

Khachatryan entered the race with endorsements from four current members of the Glendale Community College Board of Trustees: Dr. Sevan Benlian, Dr. Armine Hacopian, Yvette Vartanian Davis, and Ann Ransford. She has since received the endorsement of the Glendale College Guild and the East Area Progressive Democrats.



The Vartanian House and its tank house

Community Raises Money to Save Historic Vartanian House

FRESNO — On Saturday, November 8, the Central Valley community came out to enjoy a memorable day at the Moordigian Open House, sponsored by the Armenian Cultural Conservancy of Fresno. The event served as a fundraiser for saving the historic Vartanian House and outbuildings.

The Open House raised over \$3,500, all of which will go towards the relocation of the Vartanian house complex, slated for demolition, to a site in Armenian Town.

Conservancy Chairman Van Der Mugerdechian said, “Our goal is to establish a permanent home for our Armenian Heritage Collections, a compilation of legacy memorabilia of the Armenians of the Central Valley, one of the earliest Armenian immigrant communities in the United States.”

Attendees were welcomed into the 1947 historic home of Helen Moordigian, lovingly restored by Helen and her late husband Dudley, where they experienced a glimpse of the past through the unique collection of family history, artwork, and hobby displays. Docents provided informative background information about each of the areas.

After touring the house, attendees had the opportunity to mingle outdoors, sampling the delicious Armenian mezza, and enjoying the live sounds of Peter Dorian on the oud.

“What an amazing day,” said ACC Board member Mary Ekmalian. “Our heartfelt thanks to Helen for opening her doors and sharing her home, and to all those who helped make this a successful event.”

The Armenian Cultural Conservancy was established to collect, preserve, and promote the story of Armenians in the Central Valley of California. Their campaign to establish a permanent site is more than bricks and mortar; it is about creating a lasting center to preserve and celebrate 150 years of Western Armenian culture.

For more information and to support the project, visit www.armeniancultural-conservancy.org.



The Moordigian home

Veteran School Board Leader Krikorian Runs For Glendale Unified School District

GLENDAL — Greg Krikorian was first elected to the Glendale Unified School District Board of Education in 2001, and I am proud to have served more than 22 years — the longest tenure in GUSD history.

In July 2022, he chose not to seek reelection. He thinks the time is right to come back, as the district has experienced downturns.

Just this past month, a GUSD special education assistant was charged with child sexual abuse at Glenoaks Elementary and Columbus Elementary Schools. (Reported on February 5, 2026 CBS Los Angeles News.)

“As a father of five and grandfather of four, this hits close to home. Our schools must be safe — period. It is



Greg Krikorian

deeply concerning that some board members are more focused on partisan politics than on working with the Glendale Police Department and maintaining School Resource Officers on our campuses,” he said.

Another reason to run in representation. In 2022, four of the five board members were of Armenian descent. By June 2026, there may be no Armenian American representation on the Glendale School Board — despite Armenians making up more than 40 percent of the district’s students and staff.

“As a 36-year Glendale resident, small business owner, father of five GUSD graduates, and grandfather of four, education has always been central to my life. I am a second-generation Armenian American; all four of my grandparents survived the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and came to America as orphans. During my 22 years on the Board, we prioritized safety, academic excellence, and fiscal responsibility while serving more than 27,000 students and 2,800 staff members. We invested over \$800 million in modern classrooms, technology, athletic facilities, and campus improvements through Bond Measures K and S,” he added.

The election will take place on June 2.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Naples Mission Parish Welcomes Bishop Mesrop

NAPLES, Fla. — On February 13-15, Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan visited the Armenian Church of Naples, where he spent time among the people of the mission parish and celebrated the *badarak*.

Saturday was occupied with meetings and social gatherings with parish leaders. Sunday's Divine Liturgy at St. Paul Episcopal Church drew more than 150 worshipers from throughout southern Florida. Fr. Krikor Sabounjian, recently retired from Holy Translators Church (Framingham, MA), assisted the Primate during the service, which was enriched by devoted altar servers and a superb choir comprised of faithful from communities around the Eastern Diocese.

A banquet at a local country club allowed the community to greet Bishop Mesrop and enjoy an atmosphere of renewed friendship.

"Our heartfelt gathering honored the founding members of this growing Armenian community, as well as the faithful who find their winter spiritual home in the Naples mission parish," said the Primate. "Their sense of unity and shared faith was truly uplifting."

"My deepest gratitude goes to everyone involved: those who served on the altar, the voices that lifted our choir, and the committee that organized the warm banquet. A special thanks to the Parish Council and its



Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan and Fr. Krikor Sabounjian with Naples church leaders, deacons and musicians

chairman, Ron Khachadoorian. Your commitment and service breathe life into the Southwest Florida community."

He concluded: "To all the faithful pa-

rishioners, your presence and devotion you for being the heart of the mission parish of Southwest Florida."



Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan celebrating the badarak in Naples, Fla.

OBITUARY

Dr. Mary Alani Iraq-Born Physician

CHICAGO — Dr. Mary Alani passed away on February 10, in Chicago.

Mary was born on March 6, 1936, in Iraq, to Victoria and Khatchik Michaelian. She met her husband, Dr. Hashim Alani, in medical school in Baghdad; he fondly recalled her as the most beautiful girl in their class. Together, they began their careers with a clinic in Kirkuk and had two daughters, Raghad and Suzanne.

During the rise of political tensions in Iraq, Mary showed extraordinary courage during a time of countless political arrests by visiting her husband daily and taking care that he would make it out alive.

After leaving Iraq, the family lived in Bradford, England, where both Mary and Hashim requalified for medical licensure. It was there they welcomed the birth of their third daughter, Anaheed, while anxiously waiting for their older daughters to arrive safely with Mary's mother, Victoria (Sarafian) Michaelian.

Upon arriving in the United States, Mary built an impressive career with Beaumont Hospital in Detroit, and started her own private clinic. She devoted herself to her work and to her family, helping many gain access to education and a new start, and personally facilitating the immigration of her mother, sister, and brother to the United States.

A fierce and independent woman, ahead of her time, Mary was a trusted medical professional who led her private practice until retirement. Deeply proud of her Armenian heritage and faith, she carried its strength, dignity, and resilience throughout her life as a Parish Council member at St. John's Armenian Apostolic Church in Southfield, Michigan. She and Hashim visited the Armenian city of Gyumri yearly, performing life-saving surgeries and delivering medical equipment that was otherwise inaccessible.



Always ones to find joy through all the hardships, their home in Bloomfield, Mich., became the center of many social gatherings of their many friends. It was dubbed 'the party house'.

Mary Alani will be remembered for her strength, compassion, and unwavering devotion to family – a life lived with courage, grace, and pride.

She is survived by her three daughters, Raghad, Suzanne, and Anaheed; her grandchildren, Nicholas, Christina, Evelyn, Nicole, and Simon; and her great-grandson, Santi.

The funeral service will be held on Saturday, March 7, at St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church, 6700 W. Diversey Ave. Visitation will take place from 9:00–11:00 a.m., followed by the funeral service at 11:00 a.m.

Burial will follow at Rosehill Cemetery, 5800 N. Ravenswood Ave., with a luncheon afterward at Oda Mediterranean Cuisine, 5657 N. Clark St.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church in Chicago.

DENNIS M. DEVENY & SONS

Cemetery Monuments

Specializing in
Armenian Designs and Lettering

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

James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC

Mark J. Giragosian

Giragosian
FUNERAL HOME

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

Telephone (617) 924-7400

Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN



COMMUNITY NEWS

Sts. Vartanants Day at St. Vartan Cathedral

NEW YORK — St. Vartan Cathedral marked its name day on the evening of Thursday, February 12, with a service and program co-sponsored by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan.

The Sts. Vartanants Day gathering began in the cathedral sanctuary, with the Divine Liturgy celebrated by Fr. Martiros Hakobyan, pastor of St. Kevork Church of Houston, Texas.

The faithful then assembled in Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium for a dinner and program, where Paul Chamesian served as Master of Ceremonies.

In a keynote address on the religious



Some of the members of the clergy celebrating mass (Harout Barsoumian photo)



Paul Chamesian (Harout Barsoumian photo)

She reflected on the choice that confronted the Armenians of St. Vartan's day: between the distant, uninvolved deity of the Persian empire, and the incarnate, ever-present Christian God. In remaining faithful to Christ, Dr. Hintlian said, Armenians embraced a God who draws near, who shares in the human struggle, and who lovingly cares for His people.

Pianist Diana Gabrielyan performed works by Arno Babajanian and Aram Khachaturian for the musical part of the program. Diocesan Vicar Fr. Simeon Odabashian offered a benediction to conclude the evening.



Fr. Martiros Hakobyan (Harout Barsoumian photo)

conflict that gripped the Armenian nation in A.D. 451, Dr. Julia Hintlian of Harvard University described the ancient religions of Persia, and contrasted these to the Christian faith of the Armenian people.

AGBU DISCOVER ARMENIA
YOUTH PROGRAM

Plan Your Spring and Summer Ahead

An unforgettable journey for Armenian youth ages 15-18 that strengthens their bond to Armenia, builds lifelong friendships, and inspires purpose through cultural immersion and community service.



Ziplining



Eco-Clean Up



Aid Distribution



Cooking Classes

Service activities, cultural experiences, sightseeing, and more!

2026 DATES

Spring

MARCH

28

APRIL

6

Summer 1

JUNE

25

JULY

13

Summer 2

JULY

28

AUGUST

15

BOOK YOUR SPOT!

agbu.org/discover-armenia







COMMUNITY NEWS

ANCA-WR Engaged with Officials at the California Democratic Convention in San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO — The Armenian National Committee of America – Western Region (ANCA-WR) actively engaged with leaders, delegates, elected officials, and party stakeholders at the California Democratic Party Convention in San Francisco, ensuring that Armenian-American priorities remained firmly on the political agenda.

Throughout the convention, ANCA-WR representatives met directly with State and Federal legislators, California gubernatorial candidates, party officials, and grassroots delegates to advocate for policies

sions with Congressman George Whitesides, State Senator Scott Wiener, State Senator Henry Stern, Assemblymember Patrick Ahrens, Assemblymember Jessica Caloza, Assemblymember John Harabedian, Assemblymember Rick Chavez-Zbur, Assemblymember Sade Elhawary, Assemblymember Matt Haney, Assemblymember Pilar Schiavo, Assemblymember Nick Schultz, Assemblymember and candidate for California State Superintendent Al Muratsuchi, Lieutenant Governor and candidate for California State Treasurer Eleni Kounalakis, Secretary of California's



Rep. George Whitesides, second from left, with Astine Suleimanyan, third from left

that safeguard Armenia's security, demand accountability for Azerbaijan's aggression, protect Armenian Christian heritage in Artsakh, and impose sanctions on genocidal Turkey and Azerbaijan.

ANCA-WR representatives held discus-



Astine Suleimanyan with Assemblymember Rick Chavez-Zbur

Democratic Party Diana Love, Superintendent Tony Thurmond, as well as gubernatorial candidates Ian Calderon, former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Former Congressman, and Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra, and Former California State Controller Betty Yee.

ANCA-WR Board Member Astine Suleimanyan, ANCA-WR's Executive Director Ruben Karapetian, and Northern California Regional Coordinator Henry Agajanov participated in driving conversations and ensuring Armenian-American concerns were neither sidelined nor diluted. Leaders reinforced the urgency of standing firmly against Azerbaijan's genocidal ethnic cleansing of Artsakh, demanded continued state-level solidarity with Armenia's sovereignty, and emphasized the moral re-



Secretary of California's Democratic Party Diana Love and Astine Suleimanyan

sponsibility of California leaders to defend human rights globally.

Reflecting on her engagement, Suleimanyan stated that "With 28,000 delegates in San Francisco this weekend, we witnessed the unmistakable rise of Armenian-American political power. I was especially proud to hear Vice Chair Deepa Sharma address the full delegation, forcefully standing up against the attacks on our community by figures like Dr. Mehmet Oz. This level of visibility is exactly why our work is so vital." She further expanded on the importance of grassroots advocacy by stating, "Through a deliberate, intensive effort by ANCA-WR, we ensured our community was a dominant force on the convention floor. By showing up in record numbers alongside Southern California Armenian Democrats (SCAD) to support our endorsed candidate, Fiona Ma, for Lieutenant Governor, we proved our community is organized, passionate, and ready to lead. We aren't just asking for a seat at the table anymore; we are building the table, and we will only continue to grow at every convention to come."

"Being at the California Democratic Party Convention is part of our responsibility to our community," said Karapetian. "The Armenian National Committee of America – Western Region engages anywhere decisions are made so Armenian American concerns are understood before policy takes

shape, not after. Our goal is to provide clear and actionable insight so decision-makers understand what's at stake for Armenian Americans."

"It was an honor to engage with Assembly Members, gubernatorial candidates,



Fiona Ma

and other elected and Democratic Party leaders from across California," said Agajanov. "At the California Democratic Party convention, we had meaningful discussions about policy priorities, representation, and the future of our state. These conversations underscore the growing strength and civic leadership of the Armenian American community in California."

Sassoon Grigorian to Speak on 'Armenia in 2035' at Fresno State

FRESNO — Sassoon Grigorian will present a virtual lecture on "Armenia in 2035: What it Can and Should Be," at on Thursday, March 12, at 7 p.m. Pacific Time.

His presentation is part of the Armenian Studies Program Spring lecture series.

Grigorian will discuss his new book, *Smart Nation: A Blueprint for Modern Armenia*. The groundbreaking first edition had more than 70 percent of its predictions and recommendations adopted in full or in part. Among them were Armenia developing its first home grown unicorn technology startup (which became Picsart), rapid adoption of e-government, appointing a special envoy to address Armenia-Turkey relations, extend free economic zones along Armenia borders (Meghri free economic zone), laws against domestic violence, and reforms to address corruption and monopolistic behavior.

The second edition tackles issues of technology, diplomacy, security and prosperity in an era of uncertainty with new insights, bold strategies, and visionary ideas that could help shape Armenia's tomorrow. According to reviews it has been described by former United States Ambassador to Israel, Ambassador [Djerejian] as a "thought-provoking book that is a must read for those interested in the future of Armenia and peace and stability in the South Caucasus. Its focus on state building and how that can be advanced through the pursuit of coherent and effective domestic and foreign policies on the part of the Armenian government, including the role of the Armenian Diaspora, is worthy of serious consideration."

Smart Nation: A Blueprint for Modern Armenia, editions one (2016) and two (2025) are published by the Gomidas In-

stitute. The second edition reached top 10 in Amazon best sellers in the international diplomacy category. He is a leading government affairs and public policy professional in the technology sector, having worked for four Fortune 500 companies. He has had opinion pieces published on political issues for *The Spectator*, *the Sydney Morning Herald*, *the Daily Telegraph*, *the Australian Financial Review*, *the Canberra Times*, *the Australian*, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *the Armenian Weekly*, EVN Report and many other publications.

The Zoom registration link is: <https://bit.ly/sassoongrigorianlecture>.

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

For information about upcoming Armenian Studies Program presentations, please



Sassoon Grigorian

follow us on our Facebook page, @ArmenianStudiesFresnoState or at the Program website, <https://fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies>.



Arts & Culture

Anahid Literary Prize Award Ceremony to Be Held at Columbia University Faculty House on March 30

NEW YORK — The Columbia University Armenian Center will host the Anahid Literary Prize Award Ceremony on Monday, March 30, at 4:15 p.m. at Faculty House, located at 64 Morningside Drive.

After opening remarks by Peter Balakian, the ceremony will feature readings by prize recipients Lory Bedikian and Aaron Poochigian, followed by a conversation and reception.

The Anahid Literary Prize has been awarded to Lory Bedikian for 2024 and Aaron Poochigian for 2025. The award recognizes writers of Armenian descent writing in English who are in the early or middle stages of their careers and honors their literary achievement. Founded by an anonymous donor, the prize has been administered by the Columbia University Armenian Center since 1989.

Past recipients include writers in poetry, fiction, playwriting and screenwriting such as Laura Kalpakian, Leslie Ayzavian, Peter Balakian, Eric Bogosian, Diana Der Hovanesian, Micheline Marcom, Aris Janigian, Atom Egoyan, Arthur Nersesian, Patricia Sarafian Ward and Susan Barba. The prize carries a \$5,000 cash award. The prize committee includes Peter Balakian, Aris Janigian, Micheline Marcom and Patricia Sarafian Ward.

Lory Bedikian is the author of *The Book of Lamenting*, which won the Philip Levine Prize in Poetry, and *Jagadakeer: Apology to the Body*, which received the 2023 Raz/Shumaker Prairie Schooner Book Prize in Poetry and was published by the University of Nebraska Press. Her poems have appeared in *Gulf Coast*, *Tin House*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *Northwest Review* and *Massachusetts Review*. Bedikian holds a BA from the University of California, Los Angeles, and an MFA from the University of Oregon. She teaches poetry workshops in Los Angeles and elsewhere, including at Poets House of New York and the Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center of Los Angeles.

Aaron Poochigian is the author of the poetry collections *Manhattanite*, *The Cosmic Purr* and *American Divine*, which won the Richard Wilbur Award. His work has appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *The Paris Review* and *POETRY*. His most recent book, *Four Walks in Central: A Poetic Guide to the Park*, was published in September 2025. He holds a Ph.D. in Classics from the University of Minnesota and an MFA in Creative Writing from Columbia University. His translations from Greek and Latin have been published by Penguin Classics and W.W. Norton, including *Stung with Love: Poems and Fragments by Sappho*.

The Faculty House entrance is on 116th Street between Amsterdam Avenue and Morningside Drive. Registration is required. To register, visit: <https://forms.gle/qqQXc1eaWBUH-HzGJ7>.



Hovhannes Karapetyan (Photo Max Borchardt)

Hovhannes Karapetyan Is a Special ‘Mamma’ in Donizetti Opera

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

As the saying goes, “Italians are born actors.” But Italians have no monopoly on this talent. In a review of an opera currently drawing capacity audiences at the Wiesbaden State Theater, the *Frankfurter Neue Presse* wrote. “With bass-baritone Hovhannes Karapetyan in the title part, director Wolfgang Nägele can rely on a natural born comedian.”

The title role is Mamma Agata in a comic opera by Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848) entitled “La Mamma: convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali” (roughly: “proper and improper behavior/harmony and disharmony/good and bad manners in theater”). Donizetti’s original is not one but two works, *opere buffe* — or comic operas — on a similar theme. Both are very short, and the current production represents a recasting, with material and music. The arrangement by Tony Burke includes selections from Donizetti, Bernstein, Stravinsky, Tchaikovsky and Verdi.

The subject of the opera is opera: an ensemble is rehearsing an opera, “Romolo ed Ersilia,” in which the main characters are designated by their roles: The Primadonna, Her Husband, The Female Singer of Lead Male Romolo [Trouser role], The Tenor, The Composer, Poet, Director, and Theater Manager. Then there is La Mamma, a cleaning woman, who is a passionate fan of the opera, and Her Daughter, an aspiring singer. Donizetti cast the role of La Mamma as a bass (!) and ensemble member Hovhannes Karapetyan fills the role brilliantly, with the name Agata Hovhannisyanyan; the daughter, Aida Hovhannisyanyan.

The plot is straightforward; characters and events often reflect clichés then and now. Aida arrives at the rehearsal to audition for a part, and as she feared, Mamma Agata, whose job is to clean the place, appears on the scene, not to clean but to intervene. The Primadonna shows off her talents, then strife breaks out — over the number of solos assigned, who gets what; singers want more, or some demand cuts of the Composer; they argue about the place of their names on the poster. The female singer in the trouser role Romolo abandons the troupe. Mamma Agata forcefully demands her daughter be included in the cast, to the chagrin of the

see OPERA, page 13



Fabian-Jakob Balkhausen, Thando Zwane, Inna Fedorii and Hovhannes Karapetyan (Photo Max Borchardt)

Aznavoorian Sisters to Make Boston Debut at Armenian Museum of America

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America recently announced the first Music in Color concert of the season featuring acclaimed cellist Ani Aznavoorian and pianist Marta Aznavoorian, making their Boston debut as a duo, on Saturday, March 28, at 7 p.m.

The concert will feature Armenian composers alongside classical repertoire. A highlight will be the Boston premiere of Peter Boyer’s *Mount Ararat*, written for the Aznavoorian Sisters. Additionally, the program will include compositions by Komitas, Brahms (*Sonata for Cello and Piano in F Major, Opus 99*), Avet Terterian (*Sonata for Cello and Piano*), and Paganini.

The Music in Color program fosters meaningful engagement with the museum’s exhibitions, inviting audiences to experience the rich tapestry of Armenian music and art. Now in its second year and supported by longtime benefactor Nancy R. Kolligian, the series brings intimate performances to the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Galleries while deepening public connection to Armenian culture through music.

“We are thrilled to kick off this year’s Music in Color program with the extraordinary Aznavoorian Sisters. Their artistry and international acclaim reflect exactly the kind of dynamic



Cellist Ani Aznavoorian and pianist Marta Aznavoorian

and meaningful programming we are proud to present at the Museum. We are honored to host these wonderfully talented musicians and to continue to build a space where music, art, and community intersect in powerful ways,” said Nancy R. Kolligian.

The Aznavoorian Sisters began performing together at ages 4 and 8 at their Armenian church in Evanston, Ill. After winning First Prize in the Illinois Bell Young Performers Competition, they appeared live with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in a performance broadcast on PBS. They have since performed internationally across Europe and Armenia, including appearances in Khachaturian and Komitas Halls, and at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall. They have performed individually at

see DEBUT, page 13

ARTS & CULTURE

Andok Youth Ensemble Marks 10th Anniversary with A Tribute Performance to Writer Gostan Zarian

YEREVAN — The Andok youth folk song and dance ensemble, based in Charentsavan, presented its theatrical production “The Secret of That Tribe” on November 21, 2025, and February 20, 2026, at the Paronyan State Musical Comedy Theatre in Yerevan, dedicating the performances to the 140th anniversary of the distinguished Armenian writer and thinker Gostan Zarian and to the ensemble’s 10th anniversary.

The program combined excerpts from Zarian’s reflections with Armenian folk

song and dance, creating a multi-layered artistic tribute to Armenian cultural continuity. The performance showcased a variety of Armenian dances—work, wedding, war, ceremonial and more. Among the dances presented were Karno Kochary, Yarkhushta, Msho Khr, Astvatsatsna, and more — each performed with historical character and exact form. The performance was staged for the second time in three months, and both showings were sold out.

Zarian’s words, woven throughout the production, underscored the philosophical dimension of the evening. “Dance is buried within the body. It is not the self alone, but the spirit — the inheritance that remembers — the mysterious essence that has preserved within its muscles its own rhythm and form. One need only remember, listen to the body, and dance without strain. To be able to listen to one’s body, to be able to hear the inner song — that is...”

The production was conceived and choreographed by Hrayr Parsadanyan, founder of Andok. The director was Edgar Mehrabyan, literary adaptation was prepared by Areg Bedrosyants, with set design by Andranik Harutyunyan and chorus direction by Narek Lazyan. The program featured



Hrayr Parsadanyan at dance floor



Andok performers

Armenian actors Samvel Topalyan, Marine Petrosyan, and Hamlet Dovlatyan, who performed excerpts from Zarian’s writings, illuminating the richness and philosophical depth of his thoughts.

The evening concluded with the dance of Karno Kochary, during which many in the audience joined the dancers — an expression of collective participation emblematic of the folk tradition itself.

Hrayr Parsadanyan, a native of Charentsavan, began his artistic journey as a teenager with the Karin folk dance and song group, established by the late master of Armenian dance, Gagik Ginosyan. At age 15, Hrayr founded Andok with the stated purpose of cultivating cultural con-

sciousness among youth through traditional dance in his native Charentsavan.

“National culture is not meant merely to appear on stage or to earn applause and glory. Within the Armenian culture is embodied the very identity of the Armenian nation — its unity and its nobility. Therefore, it must be approached with reverence, caution, and sacred respect, for Armenian culture is the final stronghold for remaining Armenian in the world,” stated Parsadanyan.

Now entering its second decade, Andok continues to train youth ages 12 to 18 in Charentsavan, affirming that Armenian traditional dance is not a relic of the past, but a living inheritance.

Karapetyan Is a Special ‘Mamma’ In Donizetti Opera

OPERA, from page 12

Primadonna. Then, La Mamma offers to solve the crisis by singing the lead role herself, except it turns out that she can’t read music. Chaos ensues, threats to quit abound, daughter Aida receives a job offer from the Frankfurt opera, time is pressing for the dress rehearsal.

Following a timely break, the action resumes with astounding developments: The lover of opera Mamma Agata, though untrained, can indeed sing beautifully. Karapetyan, dressed in an outrageous costume with furry white boots, oversized quilted bloomers and what looked like a ballet tutu, delivered a masterful performance. Mamma Agata’s music inspires the entire cast, the mood shifts, and reconciliation prevails. The set, now remarkably enlarged, provides the stage for a multilayered procession of all players, dressed in vastly differentiated, garish costumes (everything to be found in the costume room, said Lisa Dässlaer, responsible for set and costumes), bizarre, cliché-filled, and uproariously funny. The magic of the opera has overwhelmed the environment and its players ... until the fateful news arrives that the theater management has cancelled the performance and no one will be paid! The moral of the story, as the performers know, is that “Now people throughout the city will say, there is no theater any longer!”

As the real director Wolfgang Nägele explained in an interview, “This is how the original piece concluded, this is how the evening here ends, with a bang — and

in one fell swoop we are right back in the world of today.” It was a shrill reminder of the precarious conditions under which actors, musicians, singers and all vital members of their companies struggle to maintain a vibrant cultural life for a grateful public.

The production has received enthusiastic applause and reviews and for good reason. Although the subject of the libretto is comedy, extending to slapstick, deeper themes reverberate throughout. The roles people play in the opera can be viewed as metaphors for the roles assumed in life. Self-perceptions and misconceptions, egos and vanity, professional competitiveness, prejudices, all contribute to defining social relations, conflict or harmony. Attitudes and assumptions that were cliché in Donizetti’s time reappear today in modern guise. The director’s brief references to Frankfurt and Wiesbaden — where Donizetti would have had Naples or Rome in mind — invite reflection on the condition of the arts in a time of budget-slashing. At the same time, the fact that the director did not choose to exploit the occurrence on the Italian stage of women playing trouser roles to shape the production around contemporary gender politics, reflects a focus on the universal themes of an artwork. The mere fact that a bass (sporting a full beard) portrays Mamma Agata, who as a female character is supposed to step into the trouser role of male lead Romolo, provides ample comic reverberations without elaboration. And the audience responded with hearty laughter and applause.

Aznavoorian Sisters to Make Boston Debut

DEBUT, from page 12

Armenian Night at the Pops with the Boston Pops at Symphony Hall. Recent highlights include a winter residency with the Seattle Chamber Music Society and performances at the Ravinia Festival. This season, they

embark on a U.S. tour with engagements nationwide and a featured recital at Festival Mozaic.

Tickets are \$25 for Members and \$50 for Non-Members. Please visit www.armenianmuseum.org/rsvp to purchase tickets.



ԹԵՔԵՅԱՆ ՄԵՏՐՈՊՈԼԻՏԵՆԻ ՄԻՈՒԹԵԱՆ
ՄԵՇԱԳՈՅՆ ԼՈՍ ԱՆՋԵԼՈՍԻ ՄԱՍՆԱՃԻՂ
TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
METRO LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

KET TIME LA



FEATURING:

ANTRANIG KZIRIAN
Oud & Vocals

YERVAND KALAJIAN
Violin

MHER MNATSAKANYAN
Clarinet & Duduk

VIK MOMJIAN
Bass

GEORGE BILEZIKJIAN
Dumbeg

SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2026

TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION BESHGETURIAN CENTER
1901 N. ALLEN AVENUE, ALTADENA, CA 91001

DOORS OPEN: 6:30 PM · DINNER: 7 PM · LIVE MUSIC: 8 PM

CATERING BY CAROUSEL RESTAURANT HOLLYWOOD
INCLUDES DINNER, DRINKS AND ENTERTAINMENT

\$125 PER PERSON

TABLES OF 10 - NO TICKETS WILL BE SOLD AT THE DOOR

FOR INFO: CALL/TEXT 818.730.1100 ZELLE: INFO@TEKEYANLA.ORG

  @TEKEYANLA

Books

Fustuk: A Unique World of Parskahye Culture And Food Brought Vividly to Life

By Christopher Atamian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Robert Mgrdich Apelian's graphic novel *Fustuk* ("pistachio") takes a fascinating look at an imagined episode in *Parskahye* or Armenian-Iranian history, while providing a fun overview of some of the culinary traditions shared by Iranians and Armenians.

Set in a mythical Pars kingdom amidst a family of Armenian chefs who have survived as a minority through their talent and hard work, the story is theoretically straightforward though at times the details may seem a bit challenging for those not familiar with Iranian and Armenian history. For example, a lot is made of certain kitchen instruments being *jadoo* or magic, but it's unclear why family members choose to use them at certain times and not at others. Told from the perspective of the youngest 17-year-old son Katah and his siblings Noori and Garo, the Armenian family portrayed is disconsolate about the fact that their mother is dying of a serious illness. The story moves back and forth between different timelines which one must be careful to follow to fully understand the backstory.

A handsome sensitive young man, Katah is also the only one in the family to have not inherited his father's legendary talent for cooking — in fact he is a veritable klutz in the kitchen, at least at first. Desperate to save their beloved mom, Katah and his siblings decide to enlist the help of an evil *Div* known as Az to save their mother. Az agrees to cure her, but only if they can cook him a dish as good as the one their father made him years ago before he mysteriously passed away.

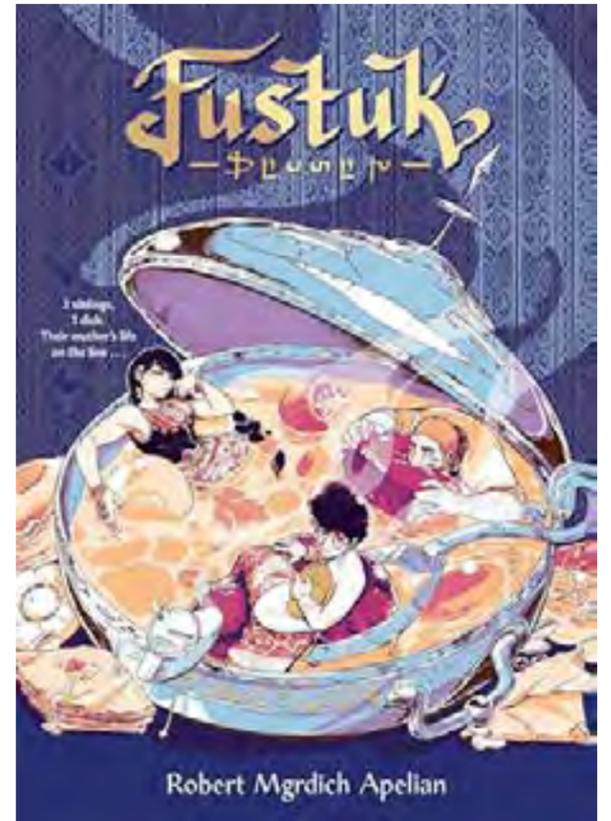
Meanwhile, Katah experiences a series of dreams

which lead him to believe that he too may have powers of divination.

As the story progresses, the children begin to experiment with meals that could potentially satisfy the mean-spirited little Az. These include *dolma* and *sarma* (stuffed grape leaves and vegetables) and *madzoon about* (yoghurt soup) which will be most recognizable to Armenian readers, while those of Iranian-Armenian background will drool as they watch the family prepare such Iranian specialties as *makluba* (upside down potted meat and vegetables), *halim* (wheat and lentil stew) and *khoreshe-gheysi* (apple stew with dried apricots).

Apelian also includes Armenian and Farsi vocabulary and alphabets throughout the book: for those who read either or both, it's an added visual and linguistic treat. Mythology, anthropology and culinary history mix in a unique way in *Fustuk*. What makes the book unique, however, are Apelian's lush illustrations, from his renderings of historical fashions to the meals that the family recreates together. As they race to find that one ultimate meal to satisfy an evil spirit who may just be pulling a fast one on them, the reader also prays that their mother will be saved — and that someone will soon cook them some of the fabulous recipes displayed in the book. On a deeper level perhaps, this graphic novel also offers a sustained meditation on how food shapes our sense of self and sparks deep, lasting connections.

In an author's note Apelian — who grew up in New Jersey and Maryland — writes that like many Armenians growing up the diaspora, he often found works on Armenian history and culture unnecessarily lachrymose and tragic. This book — drawn in luscious oranges,



and blues — is certainly one antidote to that tendency. The author does include some background on Armenian history — and the difficulties his people experienced under the Persians, but he limits it to what is strictly necessary to understand the story at hand. Apelian has obviously been heavily influenced by the Japanese manga tradition, which makes the work even richer on a cross-cultural level. While being a manga fan is certainly not necessary to enjoy *Fustuk*, it seems to me that those who are will enjoy this beautiful volume even more. *Fustuk* makes a fascinating addition to contemporary Armenian and Middle Eastern arts — a most satisfying way to celebrate a rich and too often stereotyped culture.

The book is available on the Penguin books' website as well as Amazon.

New Book by Victoria Abrahamyan Published on Armenian Refugees in French Mandate Syria

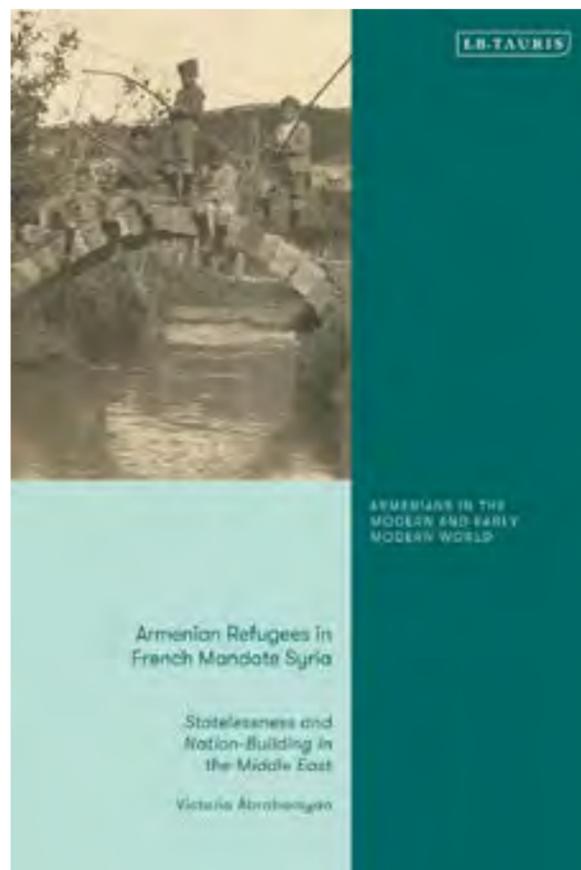
LONDON/NEW YORK—I. B. Tauris, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing, has announced the publication of Dr. Victoria Abrahamyan's *Armenian Refugees in French Mandate Syria: Statelessness and Nation-Building in the Middle East*. The book is part of the series *Armenians in the Modern and Early Modern World* edited by Bedross Der Matossian (University of Nebraska, Lincoln).

In the aftermath of the First World War, the Armenian Genocide, and the Turkish War of Independence, Syria became home to thousands of Armenian refugees. In this comprehensive history covering 1920 to 1948, Victoria Abrahamyan foregrounds the experience of Armenian refugees in the Syrian Jazira as they navigated competing state-building efforts led by the French mandatory power, Syrian nationalists and Soviet Armenia.

The book reveals the refugees' agency amid internal conflicts and diverse loyalties. It sheds light on the intricate power struggles over their status and belonging, particularly through competing French and Soviet post-war refugee settlement schemes, in a critical frontier between Western imperialist powers, the Soviet bloc, and Turkey. Drawing on Armenian, Arabic, Russian, and French sources, the book explores how the Armenian refugee community responded to the rise of Arab nationalism in Syria, complicating simplistic sectarian interpretations of their place and reception in interwar Syria.

By situating this history within the broader context of Armenian experiences in the Eastern Mediterranean and the role of refugees and displaced populations in state-building in the post-war Middle East, this study offers essential reading for students and scholars of Armenian and Middle Eastern history alike.

Abrahamyan commented on the book, saying, "*Armenian Refugees in French Mandate Syria* seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the Armenian refugee experience in interwar Syria, challenging conventional Western narratives that portray Armenian refugees as voiceless, as well as dominant Arab nationalist accounts. The book explores the formative post-Genocide years, showing how Armenian refugees played a crucial role in shaping state- and nation-building processes in interwar Syria. Positioned at the intersection of competing state-building



projects led by the French mandate, Syrian nationalists, and Soviet authorities in Yerevan and Moscow, Armenian refugees and their leaders exercised remarkable agency—navigating, negotiating, and at times resisting these pressures. In this sense, the book represents a History from Below."

According to her, the book, for the first time, situates the Armenian refugees within broader geopolitical struggles. It examines how the French authorities, the League of Nations, Turkey, Soviet Armenia, the USSR and local Syrian actors sought to influence the settlement and political trajectory of Armenian refugees. Specifically, it trac-

es the entangled history of Armenian refugee settlements under the French mandate and their intricate connections to repatriation efforts initiated by Soviet authorities. By connecting the Armenian refugees' experience to global power dynamics, the book illuminates the interplay between refugees, state-building, and the longstanding involvement of foreign actors in Syria to control populations, resources, and trade routes. Reflecting on the early decades of the twentieth century, when various powers vied for control over Armenian refugees, offers a lens not only for understanding Syria's past but also for grasping the enduring relevance of displacement, agency, and geopolitics today.

"Victoria Abrahamyan's *Armenian Refugees in French Mandate Syria* is a pioneering analysis of displacement, agency, and state formation after genocide and imperial rule. Focusing on the Syrian Jazira from 1920 to 1948, the book portrays Armenian refugees as active agents rather than mere victims, engaging with the ambitions of the French Mandate, Syrian nationalists, Turkey, and Soviet Armenia," said Der Matossian, editor of the series. "Using multilingual archival materials, Abrahamyan demonstrates how refugees influenced—and were influenced by—conflicts over settlement, repatriation, identity, and sovereignty along a complex geopolitical border. By placing the Armenian experience within broader Middle Eastern and global power contexts, this work presents a vivid "history from below" that challenges traditional narratives about refugees' contributions to the development of modern Syria and the post-war Eastern Mediterranean," he concluded.

Reviews

"Victoria Abrahamyan has succeeded in providing a distinctive and original contribution to scholarship. Her impressive book, drawing meticulously and sensitively upon primary sources in a wide array of languages, deserves close attention from anyone interested in armed conflict, refugees and state formation, and the entangled relationships between multiple actors, whether in the Middle East or beyond." —Peter Gatrell, Professor, The University of Manchester, UK

continued on next page



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Julia Child's Eggplant-Walnut Dip Recipe

From the New York Times: “This recipe from the second volume of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* is nontraditional but very Julia Child, with her famous love of cocktail snacks. Caviar d’aubergines, fluffy eggplant caviar, is popular in the South of France, but this one contains raw ginger and hot sauce, two of the least-French ingredients imaginable. Feel free to tinker with the spices (cumin and coriander are also good) and the heat level. This dip ripens very well over a few days in the refrigerator. Taste and re-season before serving.” — Julia Moskin



Julia Child had a well-documented appreciation for eggplant (often referred to by its French name, aubergine), frequently highlighting it in Mediterranean-inspired dishes that emphasized slow cooking and, quite often, “cooking it to death” to achieve a creamy texture. Her approaches often involved “sweating” the eggplant with salt to remove bitterness and moisture before cooking.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 firm, shiny eggplants (about 2 pounds total)
- 1 cup finely chopped toasted walnuts
- 3 garlic cloves, smashed, peeled and minced or put through a press
- 1 teaspoon freshly grated ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice (or another warm spice or spice blend, like cinnamon, coriander or garam masala)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Hot sauce, such as Tabasco
- 5 to 8 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

PREPARATION:

Heat oven to 425°F. Cut green caps off eggplants and place them whole in a baking dish. Bake until very soft and collapsing, 30 to 35 minutes. When cool enough to handle, scrape flesh into the bowl of a mixer (or use a hand mixer).

Beat at high speed for about two minutes, until smooth and fluffy. Add walnuts, garlic, ginger, allspice, two big pinches of salt and one of pepper. Shake in a few dashes of hot sauce. Mix well.

With the mixer running, gradually drizzle in oil, as if making mayonnaise, just until mixture is emulsified and creamy. Stop, taste and adjust the seasonings with salt, pepper and hot sauce. If desired, beat in remaining olive oil.

Serve immediately, or cover and refrigerate for up to one week.

Yield: About 4 cups

For this recipe, go to: <https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1018307-julia-childs-eggplant-walnut-dip>

For Julia Child's Eggplant Caviar with Walnuts, go to: <https://shesalmostalwaysHungry.com/julia-childs-la-tentation-de-bramafam-eggplant-caviar-with-walnuts/>

Julia Child's Aubergine (Eggplant) Persillade



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 medium eggplant
- 4 tablespoons olive oil (or more if needed)
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced (or to taste) or equivalent amount of prepared minced garlic
- 5-6 tablespoons fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 1/2 - 1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese (optional)

PREPARATION:

Peel eggplant and cut into half-inch dice. (If you wish, salt cubes with 1/2 teaspoon salt, let drain for 20 minutes, then dry in a towel, optional).

Fill large (preferably nonstick) skillet with the olive oil. Sauté eggplant cubes over medium-high heat for 4-5 minutes, until tender. Add minced garlic and toss for a couple of minutes.

Add parsley only at the last minute and toss before serving. Fine alone (hot or cold) as a side dish, or serve over prepared spaghetti squash. May toss with optional parmesan cheese.

For this recipe, go to: <https://www.food.com/recipe/eggplant-aubergine-persillade-julia-childs-205254#recipe>

For Julia Child's Ratatouille, go to: <https://juliachildsrecipes.com/vegetables/julia-childs-ratatouille/>

(This recipe is based in part on the technique outlined in Volume 1 of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* by Julia Child.)

from previous page

“Armenian Refugees in French Mandate Syria is a fascinating account of a displaced community’s resettlement into a fluid and uncertain emerging regional and global order, and in particular of refugees’ efforts to manage their own movements and direct their own political lives. It will be essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the history of migration and refugeehood in the interwar Eastern Mediterranean.” —Laura Robson, Professor, Yale University, USA

“In this important new work, Abrahamyan tells the compelling story of post-genocide Armenian survivance in the Modern Middle East. Drawing from a wealth of sources, she weaves together the building of an Armenian diaspora national community with interwar French colonialism, rising Arab nationalism, and the politics of Soviet Arme-

nia. In her account Armenians are active agents in creating a new community, not just beneficiaries of international humanitarianism or tools of European colonialism. Armenians come alive as complex actors in the social and ideological tumult of that period in a way no other historian of the interwar era has been able to accomplish.” —Keith David Watenpaugh, Professor, University of California Davis, USA

About the Author

Abrahamyan is a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Geneva. She has held visiting fellowships at the London School of Economics (January–June 2025) and Aix-Marseille University (October–December 2025). She received her PhD in Contemporary History, summa cum laude, from the University of Neuchâtel in 2023, and her BA and MA from Yerevan State University. Her doctor-

al dissertation received the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) Outstanding Dissertation Award (2020–2023). Dr. Abrahamyan has published widely in leading academic journals and was recently awarded the Syrian Studies Association Article/Chapter Prize (2025) for her article, “Loyalty at Stake: Armenian Refugees and the Syrian Great Revolt,” published in *Microhistories in Armenian Studies*, edited by Barlow Der Mugardehian, Ümit Kurt, and Ara Sarafian (Fresno: The Press at California State University, 2025).

Copies of *Armenian Refugees in French Mandate Syria: Statelessness and Nation-Building in the Middle East* are available for purchase from the Bloomsbury Press website. Enter code ARMENIA at checkout on [bloomsbury.com](https://www.bloomsbury.com) for 25% off.

Artist Mikayel Ohanjanyan Has Sculpture Exhibit in Carrara

NEW YORK/CARRARA, Italy — Atamian Hovsepien Curatorial Practice and mudaC, Carrara recently presented an exhibition by established Armenian-Italian artist Mikayel Ohanjanyan: *Legami: Ties that Bind*. Centered on universal themes of connection, historical memory, and resilience, the exhibition situates Ohanjanyan's work in dialogue with both past and present generations.

Carrara, Italy — the historic marble city that shaped sculpture from Roman antiquity through Michelangelo's Renaissance masterpieces and into contemporary practice — hosts the exhibition in its innovative museum, where works by leading artists such as Jannis Kounellis, Lynn Russell Chadwick and David Tremlett form part of the permanent collection.

Curators Christopher Atamian and Tamar Hovsepien present a project by Ohanjanyan created specifically for this exhibition. Notably, Carrara, home to the artist's new studio and a sister city to Yerevan, embodies the exhibition's theme of universal connection through art.

"Educated in Armenia and having refined his practice in Italy, Ohanjanyan's artistic language is both deeply rooted and universal, transcending time and place. We are honored to present his work in such a historically significant city and institution."

For the February 13 opening, more than 200 guests filled the museum to overflowing, accompanied by a champagne reception attended by the region's artistic, political and cultural elite.

"We were also thrilled," noted Atamian, "that many of Italy's leading publications such as *La Stampa* and *Il Corriere dell'Arte* featured the exhibition full front and center as a lead story or review." While the exhibition has already drawn in hundreds of visitors in its first week, Hovsepien is quick to add that anyone interested in the contemporary Armenian or Italian art has ample time to attend: "Ohanjanyan is one of the world's most important sculptors and the show runs through August 30, so please do visit the beautiful city of Carrara and this unique exhibition."

For Ohanjanyan, *legami* — "bonds," "ties," "connections" — is a foundational



Mikayel Ohanjanyan, center, with guests in front of one of his sculptures

concept that extends beyond the interpersonal to encompass existential, spiritual, and universal dimensions. His work envisions humanity as part of a vast web, linking individuals to one another and to the forces of nature, time, and history.

In this exhibition, the artist presents an installation of five sculptures of varying

scale, carved from white statuary marble. Each work consists of two formless blocks bound together by stainless steel cables that cut deeply into the stone as they traverse its surface. These cables create a palpable tension while simultaneously suggesting unity and interdependence.

Portions of the marble are polished smooth, resembling remnants of something once whole — fragments that evoke a primordial vibration whose traces persist within us and within all matter. Though the forms remain incomplete and inherently incompatible, the act of binding them together proposes an attempt to recover a lost, collective memory. This gesture is utopian in nature, yet essential for engaging with the present and imagining the future.

Through these material metaphors, Ohanjanyan translates abstract ideas into physical form, raising fundamental questions about what connects us — to one another, to the world, and to our own past and present — and how these connections shape identity, history, and the broader human narrative.

Visually and conceptually, the works suggest a quiet reconciliation between opposing forces: tension and fragility, permanence and transformation, the physical and the metaphysical. Together, they offer a poetic meditation on the human condition and the hidden structures that bind everything together.

Born in 1976 in Yerevan, Ohanjanyan lives and works between Florence and Carrara. He was educated at the State Academy of Fine Arts in Yerevan and later at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence.

Ohanjanyan's artistic journey began with a classical training that gradually evolved into a highly personal and exploratory vi-

sual language. At the core of his practice is the human being, investigated in both its inner and outer dimensions. This ongoing inquiry is evident in series such as *Prospettive Introverse* and *Materialità dell'Invisibile*, which reflect a continuous and multifaceted evolution of his work.

Ohanjanyan has participated in numerous significant international exhibitions and projects. In 2015, he was selected as one of the participating artists in the Armenian National Pavilion, which was awarded the Golden Lion at the 56th Venice Biennale. In 2016, he presented two large-scale site-specific installations for the *La Statale Arte* project at the University of Milan. That same year, his project *Diario* was selected for the Frieze Sculpture Park at Regent's Park in London and later entered the permanent collection of the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. In 2017, he took part in the first edition of *STAND-ART*, the Contemporary Art Triennial of Armenia, and exhibited works at *FIAC On Site*, displayed outdoors in front of the Petit Palais in Paris. In 2018, he was awarded the E. Marinelli International Contemporary Art Prize for the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo in Florence, where his work is now part of the permanent collection. In 2021, Ohanjanyan won the competition announced by the Italian Episcopal Conference and the Vatican to create liturgical artworks for the Church of Don Giovanni Bosco in Bagheria, Sicily. In 2022, he was invited by the Aria Foundation to participate in the ninth edition of *Stills of Peace and Everyday Life*, exhibiting at the Roman Cisterns of Palazzo Ducale Acquaviva in Atri, Italy. In 2023, as part of *White Carrara 2023: Still Liv(f)e – Le formec*

continued on next page



Mikayel Ohanjanyan, right, with guests and Christopher Atamian, left, at the exhibit



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CONNECTICUT

APRIL 25 — The Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee of Connecticut will hold its annual program, on the 111th anniversary of the Genocide, on Saturday, at 10:30 am. Historic Connecticut House Chamber at the State Capitol, 210 Capitol Avenue, Hartford. The program will include the Martyrs' Service. Clergy from Armenian Churches in Connecticut will participate in the service. Keynote speaker will be Bryan Ardouny, Executive Director of the Armenian Assembly of America. A reception will follow. For questions call Melanie at 860-651-0629.

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.

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-zozvml0>

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

MARCH 28 — "Music in Color" concert series featuring cellist Ani Aznavoorian and pianist Marta Aznavoorian in their Boston debut performing together. The program includes works by Komitas, Brahms, Paganini, and the Boston premiere of Peter Boyer's "Mount Ararat," written for the Aznavoorian sisters. "Music in Color" is generously sponsored by Nancy R. Kolligian. 7pm at the Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown, MA. Please RSVP at www.armenianmuseum.org/rsvp.

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 11 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of Boston and AGBU New England District present HyeVibe. All Armenian students' Association clubs and university students are invited for an evening of music and dancing. Live music provided by Berklee School of Music ASA. Snacks and other

refreshments. Armenian and American pop and dance music. 8-11 p.m., 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. Tickets \$10. Buy through venmo: @Tekeyan_Boston.

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

MICHIGAN

THROUGH APRIL 30 — Watertown, Mass.-based Project Save Photograph Archive, which collects and preserves pictures and ephemera from generations of Armenian families around the world, will have its first exhibition outside Massachusetts this winter. Sponsored by the University of Michigan Center for Armenian Studies in Ann Arbor, the exhibition highlights photographs from key moments in Armenian history, as well as photos collected from Michigan and other midwestern families. Hours vary. Center for Armenian Studies, University of Michigan Ann Arbor Weiser Hall 500 Church St., Ann Arbor. 734-647-4143. For more info visit projectsave.org.

NEW YORK

MARCH 20 — Pegasus: The Orchestra will make its debut at St. Vartan Cathedral on Friday, at 7 p.m., in a program titled "Armenian Voices, American Rhapsody." The concert is presented by the Cultural Committee of St. Vartan Cathedral, under the auspices of Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate. The program opens with selections from Komitas's Armenian Dances, performed by guest pianist Kiron Atom Tellian, alongside orchestral arrangements of Komitas by Pegasus founder and conductor Karen Hakobyan. Cellist Sergey Antonov will perform Saint-Saëns's Cello Concerto No. 1 and Arutunian's Impromptu, followed by Rachmaninoff's Vocalise. 300 East 34th Street, New York. Tickets: \$40, with ages 12 and under free. For more information or tickets, visit <https://givebutter.com/pegasus-concert>

PENNSYLVANIA

APRIL 24 — Intercommunal Church Service, 7:00 PM Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, Philadelphia. This historic Service of Gratitude, Unity, and Commemoration, remembering the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide and honoring America250, will unite the Armenian community in faith. The service will be presided over by Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Archbishop Anoushavan, and Bishop Mikael Mouradian, with clergy from all five Armenian churches in the Greater Philadelphia area and an Armenian community choir. A special additional ceremony will follow in an adjacent garden. Transportation available.

APRIL 25 — Saturday, 11 a.m., Philadelphia Museum of Art. After eight years of dedicated work, the Armenian Heritage Walk is ready for dedication and the revitalized Young Meher statue is set to be unveiled. This event marks the completion of Phase One, highlighted by the installation of a nearly 15,000 square foot garden and walkway. Philadelphia Museum of Art, North Entrance. The event will be followed by the Armenian Heritage Walk Gala at the National Constitution Center. This black-tie event will honor the completion of Phase One. \$515 per Ticket (includes credit card processing fee. Please note a ticket processing fee will be added at check out.) 6:00 PM Cocktail Reception, 7:30 PM Dinner and Program, 9:30 PM Post Reception. National Constitution Center, 525 Arch St, Philadelphia.

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.

from previous page

della scultura, he was invited by the City of Carrara to present works in public spaces throughout the city. In 2024, he presented the site-specific project *E... se non ci fosse la scrittura* at Assab One in Milan. Among other recognitions, Ohan-

janyan has received the Targetti Light Art Prize in 2009 and the Henraux Prize in 2014. www.ohanjanyan.com

Founded in 2022 in New York City, Atamian Hovsepian Curatorial Practice (AHCP) presented 18 exhibitions at its art gallery in Manhattan nurturing exper-

imental practices and bringing vital new voices to the public. Committed to the promotion of creativity, equity, and diversity, AHCP recognizes art as a transformative force and a vehicle for social change. AHCP also collaborates with universities, museums, and other public institutions to

curate challenging art exhibitions, workshops, and public events. Most notable collaborations include the exhibition with Lebanese American University of New York (2023), The Lyon Biennale (2024), and the State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia (2025). www.atamianhovsepian.art

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

CONTRIBUTORS

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

REGIONAL

CORRESPONDENTS

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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

Baikar Association, Inc.

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com
For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

© 2026 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator
Periodical Class Postage Paid at Boston,
MA and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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

Time to Call a Spade a Spade: Is Prime Minister Pashinyan Starting to Become Delusional?

What is happening in Armenia is becoming quite dangerous. Is it possible that Prime Minister Pashinyan has started to become delusional?

Let us observe his recent actions carefully. He officially declares that those same very well-known benefactors of Holy Echmiadzin, who are in fact its most reliable defenders, aim to take the Mother See, along with its treasures, out of Armenia.

In another instance, Pashinyan, who promotes himself everywhere as a hero and defender of canons and rules of the Church, has in fact lived comfortably with his partner, contrary to the canons of the Armenian Church, for more than a quarter of a century, and, as a result, actually became the father of four children. Yet now, suddenly, he has decided to finally “legalize” his cohabitation and has announced that he is having according to state law (not church canons), a civil wedding. Evidently, all this is done in order to diminish the current appropriate, but perhaps unseemly, public conversations concerning him and his partner, as well as to justify his otherwise constitutionally illegitimate and absurd claim to be a so-called “reformer” of the church. [After this editorial was written, social media reports appeared indicating that apparently he is actually separating from his partner.]

By now, the readers of these lines have certainly witnessed his recent interview with a group of reporters. Apparently running out of slanders against the Armenian Church leadership, this time he tried, invoking his “prime ministerial capacity,” to convince the journalists, as part of a long series of questions and answers, that he is well informed that the main goal and nefarious plan of those well-known diasporan Armenian personalities who are these days coming out with appeals in defense of our two-thousand-year-old Armenian Church, the Mother See and the Catholics of All Armenians, is to take Holy Echmiadzin, along with its treasures, out of Armenia to an as yet unknown foreign destination – Vienna, Moscow, or who knows where else...

Naturally, when Prime Minister Pashinyan, apparently having no other choice left, is forced to stoop to this level and publicly utter such an evident blatant lie, furthermore trying to disguise it with a fake smile on his face, there is no other explanation left for sane and rational Armenians, except to conclude that either the man in question is in a worryingly mentally unbalanced state (considering also this sudden very much “delayed” decision, after more than 25 years, to marry legally) or he is under such heavy pressure from his Turkish and Azerbaijani patrons that he does not hesitate to fabricate such a clearly ridiculous lie.

With this lie, he evidently does not hesitate to even take the risk of losing the respect that a small number of Armenians may have for him as prime minister.

The sad thing is that we live in such an awful environment of disinformation nearly everywhere, that it cannot be excluded that there probably still be believers, even when Pashinyan might say (an Armenian saying) that “a four-legged donkey has been discovered that flies with two wings.”



Surely enough, and sadly, already without delay, proponents of “conspiracy theories” have already begun to appear, who do not exclude the hypothesis that “Pashinyan probably has National Security Service secret recordings that confirm these allegations to ‘smuggle out’ Holy Echmiadzin.”

It is a pity that what has taken place is not merely an entertaining small incident. It is very painful for any informed Armenian in such troubled times to see a person bearing the status of prime minister of Armenia ready to degrade himself this much by publicly uttering such a great lie.

Indeed, it must be assumed that Pashinyan does not realize that henceforth no other statement or “promise” by a prime minister who officially tells such a pitifully ridiculous lie can have anymore any meaning or value for any knowledgeable Armenian.

As for foreigners, what we Armenians may consider ridiculous, or in essence a rather a mortal sin, leaves them of course completely indifferent, as long as Pashinyan is a willing puppet in their hands who faithfully carries out their orders.

The fact is that Turks and the Azerbaijanis have already succeeded so easily, to erase our holy Ararat and the just cause of one and a half million martyrs, the Genocide, from the official records, discourse and agenda of Armenia. Furthermore now, they are unceasingly on the path to impoverishing and dismantling the centuries-old structure of the Armenian Apostolic Church, thanks to the same Pashinyan. For its part, America has nearly succeeded as a superpower in creating a new and deep rift on the southwestern borders of its rival Russia.

If any other being could ever “deliver” such great “achievements” to those countries so easily, they certainly would promise “peace” in that region, such that the work for them of such a convenient servant would not be disturbed...

Let’s face it, of the great powers, who does care about Ararat, the Genocide, or the institution of the Armenian Church and its so-called “reform needs”? For foreigners, we wretched beings called Armenians, will just clamor for a little while. In Armenia, which by this process may soon become Western Azerbaijan, a significant number of Armenians living there are always busy feasting and reciting thunderous toasts to the homeland. On the other hand, as for the so-called diaspora, when the third generation following the Genocide, as well, leaves this earthly life and passes on to eternity, absolute silence and tranquility will reign there too.

In short, this is what peace at all costs is worth... yes, peace and deadly silence in Armenia and the Diaspora, throughout the world, thanks to Nikol Pashinyan and his associates.

Shame, a thousand times shame for all of us if we allow such to become our end.

(The above article is a translation of the Armenian-language editorial which appeared in *Baikar* in its February 23, 2026 issue no. 8 (463).)

The Lom People: More Armenian than Armenians?

By Lorenzo Riva

The Caucasus is a complex region, characterized by the presence of several dozen ethnic groups, which differ from each other in language, religion, origins, and traditions. This richness — difficult to find in other areas of the Earth — intrigued Greek, Roman, and Arab authors, such as Timosthenes, Strabo, Pliny, and al-Mas’ūdī. The Arab invaders coined the term *jabal al-alsun* (literally “mountain of languages”), affirming that only God could count all ethnic groups living on the Caucasian territory.

One of the lesser-known ethnicities is certainly the Lom people, who currently live in Armenia, Georgia, and Turkey. Several ethnonyms currently exist for this community: Lom, Bosh, Hay Bosh, Gnchu, and Maghagorts. In Turkey they are called *Posha* or *Çingene*. The Loms share their origins with the Roma and Dom peoples: in fact, all trace back to the Indian subcontinent. However, while the Roma and Doms settled respectively in Europe and the Middle East, the Loms migrated to Transcaucasia and the Armenian Highlands

between the 10th and the 12th centuries.

The history of the Bosh people is deeply intertwined with Armenia, since they have lived among Armenians for centuries. They converted to Christianity — becoming members of the Armenian Apostolic Church — learned and gradually adopted the Armenian language, progressively forgetting their old mother tongue, and also adopted Armenian names, family names, and traditions. On several occasions — such as the Ottoman-Safavid conflict and the Russo-Turkish wars — Loms and Armenians fought side by side against the Sublime Porte. During the 19th century, many Boshas followed Armenians in their migrations from Anatolia to Russian-controlled Caucasus, settling in present-day Georgia (Akhaltzikhe, Akhalkalaki, Tsalika, and Aspindza), Armenia (Gyumri and Akhtala), and Azerbaijan (Shamakhi). Some Maghagorts living in Asia Minor — just as some Armenians — chose to convert to Islam and adopted the Turkish language. Those who remained faithful to their forefathers’ religion were persecuted during the Armenian Genocide: the memories of such tragic events are preserved in

some Lom families living in Armenia.

It’s difficult to determine the exact number of the Loms living in Transcaucasia. According to the Russian census carried out in 1897, only 212 Gypsies (цыгане) lived in the South Caucasus. Nevertheless, this category wasn’t synonymous with “Boshas”, since it included other Indo-Aryan communities like the Roma people. Moreover, the statistics seem to underestimate the real number of the Loms settled in the area. The Soviet census carried out in 1989 counted 48 Gypsies in the Armenian SSR, 145 in the Azerbaijan SSR, and 1,774 in the Georgian SSR. Of course, these numbers suffered from the aforementioned problems. Additionally, many Boshas declared themselves as Armenians and were counted as such. Currently, Armenian and Azerbaijani authorities don’t record such communities, while in Georgia the Lom people self-identify as Armenian. According to the estimates, between 5,000 and 6,000 Boshas inhabit Armenia, concentrated in Yerevan, Gyumri, Akhtala, Vanadzor, Nor Kharberd, Gyulagarak and Jraber. Between 2,000 and 3,000 reside in Georgia, especially in the

see LOM, page 20



MY TURN Pashinyan's Chief of Staff Responds To My Criticism of his Useless Trip to L.A.

Arayik Harutyunyan, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Chief of Staff, responded on Facebook to my criticism of his and former Ambassador Lilit Makunts' controversial trip to Los Angeles.

Here is my reply to his baseless comments:

1) I am deeply touched that Harutyunyan devoted his valuable time as a clerk for Pashinyan to respond to my column. I guess he has nothing better to do. Since the country is so well managed, my column must have been the most important item on his agenda.

2) Rather than responding to my serious criticisms of the bungling duo's misadventures in Los Angeles, Harutyunyan resorted to name-calling, which shows a lack of justification for their disastrous trip.

3) Harutyunyan called me "an over-the-hill columnist in the US media field":

a) I am glad Harutyunyan knows that I am a journalist, which proves that he is not completely clueless.

b) If I were truly an "over-the-hill" journalist, why did Harutyunyan waste his time to reply to a worthless columnist? Why is my weekly analysis reprinted by dozens of newspapers and websites around the world? Furthermore, he should know that Pashinyan disagrees with his assessment of my journalistic skills. On April 17, 2019, the prime minister wrote on Facebook that my newspaper, the *California Courier*, is "one of the most prestigious newspapers of the Diaspora."

c) Harutyunyan vainly boasted that with one trip to Los Angeles, he destroyed the lies against the Pashinyan regime. He is wrong because there are hardly any Pashinyan supporters left in and out of Armenia.

d) If Pashinyan had such a large number of supporters in Los Angeles, why did Harutyunyan and Makunts keep their visit a secret from the community, meeting with just a small group of hand-picked supporters?

e) Harutyunyan claimed that the expenses of their trip to Los Angeles were not paid by the Armenian government. He said that they were on vacation. I view this claim with suspicion because the cost of their flights to Los Angeles and a week-long stay at a hotel probably exceeds several times their monthly salaries. Secondly, their announced plan -- to dispel "misinformation" about the Pashinyan regime -- sounds more like a political activity than a vacation. I doubt they went to Disneyland or visited other tourism sites.

f) If the government did not pay their trip expenses, they may have found an oligarch to pay for them, in which case, it should have been reported to the Armenian government as a gift.

g) Harutyunyan claimed that he and Makunts did not inform the [local] consul general of Armenia of their visit. How can Armenia's local representative be left in the dark that two of the prime minister's highest officials are in town? Now we know why she was not present at any of their public meetings!

h) Harutyunyan gave the excuse that I was not invited because I would have ruined their meetings. If Pashinyan was so popular in Los Angeles, what are they afraid of? One of Pashinyan's supporters confirmed that they kept their visit a secret because they were scared that their public meetings would have been disrupted.

i) Harutyunyan incorrectly described as non-Armenian the Armenian TV stations that interviewed them: ARTN, AMGA, AABC, and USArmenia.

j) Harutyunyan ended his diatribe on Facebook with an empty warning: "We have decided to systematically destroy the monopoly of lies to the American-Armenian community by him [Sassounian] and those like him." Harutyunyan thus provoked his small circle of blind followers in Yerevan to write vile comments about me, without knowing anything about me.

To make matters worse, at a luncheon with Pashinyan supporters in Glendale, one of the guests questioned Harutyunyan about the regime's approach to the Armenian national ideology, saying, "You are making not only territorial concessions, but also giving up on Armenian ideology." Harutyunyan shamelessly told the audience, "Armenian nationalism is a very dangerous thing. Your thinking is very dangerous."

Unfortunately, Harutyunyan is confusing nationalism with chauvinism. There is nothing wrong with people being proud of their nation, history and culture. Pashinyan has deracinated the nation of its several millennia-long history. The prime minister is acting as if the Armenian nation came into existence only after he assumed power in 2018. That is why he is against Armenia's history, religion, culture, and sacred national symbols. With his myopic view of the Armenian nation, Armenia is not only cut off from its past, but also loses its vision for a glorious future.

The well-known Armenian poet Paruyr Sevag wrote a very memorable poem describing who we are as Armenians. I suggest that Harutyunyan read this masterpiece, to restore his Armenian identity. Here is an excerpt from that poem:

"We are few, but we are called Armenians.

We do not view ourselves as superior to anyone.

Simply, we also will admit,

That we, only we, have Mt. Ararat.

And it is here on high up Sevan,

The sky makes its exact duplicate.

Simply, David has fought here.

Simply, the Narek was written here.

Simply, we know how to build a monastery from a rock,

Fish from a stone, and bird from clay...."

What Comes Next in Iran?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The beginning of the war against Iran had been anticipated days earlier, when the United States was amassing troops throughout the Middle East and preparing for military operations. Today, it is difficult to say how events will unfold and to what extent the US will be able, within a short period of time, to achieve its main objectives: a complete change of power in Iran and the final elimination of its nuclear and missile programs.

This process could last weeks. However, if Washington concludes that a change of government is not achievable — because the Iranian population does not take to the streets — then it may declare "victory" prematurely and withdraw from the region without achieving a full transfer of authority in Iran. If the US fails to reach this objective, the war could be considered pointless, as the primary target would remain unmet.

The Trump administration has not succeeded in securing broad domestic political support, since this war is not popular among the public, and neither is Trump himself. According to polls, approximately 27% of Americans approve of the joint US-Israeli strikes against Iran. Within the Republican Party, support reaches only around 40%. At the same time, only about 43% of Americans hold a favorable view of Donald Trump. These are relatively weak indicators for a sitting administration.

It is worth recalling that after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, George W. Bush's approval rating exceeded 90%, and he had strong support from both Congress and the public for the invasion of Afghanistan.

Against the backdrop of potential casualties and losses of military equipment, Trump's approval rating could decline even further, which would complicate the Republicans' position in the November 2026 midterm elections. In this context, the prospect of impeachment in the United States could also become somewhat realistic — following a scenario similar to how Armenia's opposition envisions political pressure: through public pressure, persuading certain Republicans to join Democrats in initiating impeachment proceedings against Trump. Therefore, a prolonged and large-scale war is absolutely not in



Trump's interest; he needs to demonstrate quick results and bring the troops home.

As for the regional situation, tensions in the Middle East are high, but in the South Caucasus there are currently no significant escalations. This is largely because there have not yet been large-scale refugee flows that could create challenges for Armenia and other countries. In Iran itself, a fragmentation process has not taken shape so far, and the population is not taking to the streets en masse to carry out a revolution.

For Armenia, the worst-case scenario would be the

fragmentation of Iran and the creation of separate states within its territory. However, I consider this prospect unlikely. Although Iran could theoretically be drawn into a civil war, at this moment there are no clear signs pointing in that direction.

If a civil war does not break out in Iran and the country does not fragment, then, most likely, all sides will declare "victory," attempting to present the outcome of their actions as a success to their respective domestic audiences. In such situations, informational and political outcomes often become no less important than military ones.

I would emphasize again: if internal collapse or large-scale instability does not occur in Iran, the direct and significant impact on Armenia will likely be limited. Of course, indirect economic or energy-related consequences are possible, but they would most likely be manageable.

As for the post-war phase, the situation could become more tense. A key question is to what extent Iran will tolerate the implementation of projects or security rearrangements in its immediate neighborhood that could be perceived as threats to its interests like a TRIPP. However, at this point, the prospect of Iran's fragmentation or the collapse of its Islamic system does not appear realistic.

At the same time, Trump's political time is limited. He needs visible and rapid results, both for his domestic audience and in the context of electoral processes. If such results are not clear and tangible, the military initiative could turn into a domestic political burden. Overall, the situation remains fluid and unpredictable, and definitive assessments will only be possible once it becomes clear whether internal processes in Iran will deepen or not.

(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.)



Australian Murder Suspects Nabbed; Family Waiting to Bury Victim

By Arthur Hagopian

SYDNEY — As the family of the slain senior Chris Baghsarian wait to bury the body of the innocent widower, they have difficulty comprehending or accepting the heinous crime that deprived them of the man they have known as an amiable, gentle presence, always ready with a joke, a hug or a laugh to lift the heart.

Chris, or Khatchig to those who use his Armenian name, came to Australia at the end of 1963, seeking a better fortune and build a new home among strangers, people

known all over the world for their friendliness and hospitality.

A private wake had been planned for this week but was cancelled when news leaked out and the press pounced.

Gerard Andrews, 29, and Daniel Stevens, 24, were arrested on February 25 in raids and charged with kidnapping and murder.

Police suspect the attack may have been connected to organized crime and intended to demand a ransom. Further arrests are expected, as investigators believe others were involved in the abduction.

The body of Baghsarian had been found

on the same day.

The police ramped up their investigation, using various means in their arsenal, and soon after the crime, had the men in custody.

Baghsarian was born in Jaffa but spent most of his childhood and youth in the Old Armenian Quarter of the City of Jerusalem.

He had six uncles, of whom two died young, and four aunts, all linked together in an unbreakable bond molded in faith, love and devotion.

He attended the Armenian parish school and unlike some of his elder cousins who

were given to pranks, he was modest and quiet.

His one vice as a youth was smoking Lucky Strikes or some other American cigarette which he obtained at a discount from a staffer at a UN center.

When he left school, he was apprenticed at a photographer's, honing the skills he would find useful when he joined a movie distribution company in Sydney.

He arrived in Australia in the 1960s.

In Sydney, he married and bought a house in North Ryde (the one broken into).

His wife passed away a few years ago.

The Lom People: More Armenian than Armenians?

LOM, from page 18

capital and in Javakhk. Azerbaijan used to host several Lom families, settled mainly in the Shahumyan region of Karabakh and urban centers such as Baku and Ganja; however, they had to abandon the country during the First Nagorno Karabakh War. Boshas also live in many zones of Turkey, such as those of Artvin, Kars, Erzurum, Tokat, Erzincan, and Gümüşhane.

The majority are sedentary; nevertheless, there are still some nomadic or semi-nomadic communities. They are members of the Armenian Apostolic Church, except for those who reside in Turkey, where the Muslim faith (both Sunni and Shia) is prevalent. Alongside the Armenian language, they still speak Lomavren, an argot used only among them. It constitutes a hybrid language composed of Armenian, Indo-Aryan, Iranian, and Turkic elements: the grammar is essentially Armenian, while the vocabulary consists of Indo-Aryan and Armenian words with many Iranian (mostly Persian and Kurdish) and Turkic (especially in Turkish communities) borrowings. In the past, this mixture made it more difficult for scholars to classify this argot: some authors considered it an Indo-Aryan variety, while others classified it as a peculiar Armenian dialect.

Probably, when the Loms arrived in Transcaucasia during the Middle Ages they spoke an Indo-Aryan dialect, using Armenian only with strangers; however, over the course of time, the language was enriched with Armenian, Iranian, and Turkic borrowings, gradually losing its original character. Today, only the older generations know Lomavren, while the young

have little knowledge of their forefathers' language. Unfortunately, Lom parents appear uninterested in the preservation of their linguistic heritage, accepting assimilation as inevitable and necessary in order to live in modern societies. Their sons and daughters attend only Armenian, Georgian or Turkish-language schools, where the argot has no place in the curriculum. Thus, Lomavren is considered on the brink of extinction.

In Armenia and Georgia, the Boshas maintain their Armenian national identity, refusing to be associated with the Dom and Roma people. They live in the same quarters of other Armenians, pray to the same God, have the same rights, comparable living standards and similar level of instruction. Their physical appearance and their clothes do not differ from those of ordinary Armenians. The Loms don't want to establish their own organizations, or to

be considered a different national group. That's why many Armenians are not aware of their existence. Moreover — and even more significantly — Boshas are often stricter in observing traditional Armenian customs and rituals than most Armenians. That is why they often say: "We are more Armenian than the Armenians," or "Only we are the true Armenians; only we preserve the old Armenian names and ancient customs."



Sponsor a Teacher Program

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.



Institute for the Study of Eastern Christianity

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

GRACE AND PAUL SHAHINIAN ARMENIAN CHRISTIAN ART AND CULTURE LECTURE SERIES

ARMENIAN ART AND THE WORLD

HELEN C. EVANS, Ph.D.

Mary and Michael Jaharis Curator for Byzantine Art Emerita
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Date: March 26, 2026

Time: 5 p.m.

Location: Heritage Hall*

The Catholic University of America

Father O'Connell Hall

620 Michigan Ave., N.E.

Washington, DC 20064

* Heritage Hall is located on the main floor of Father O'Connell Hall.



ABSTRACT

Domed churches, intricate sculpted images, elaborately illuminated manuscripts, gilded reliquaries, richly decorated textiles — Armenian art is the multifaceted visual voice of the Armenian people. It defines how Armenians view themselves, as well as the important role they have played over the centuries, and still play, in the larger world. This talk shows that Armenian art — once studied primarily as a national tradition — is also evidence of Armenia's importance to the world and its art.

This lecture is free and open to the public. For information and to register, visit our website.

To request accommodations for individuals with disabilities, please call 202-319-5683.