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US, Armenian Officials Hold More Talks

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — US and Armenian officials held another meeting of a bilateral task force that was set up last fall to deal with practical modalities of opening a US-administered transit corridor for Azerbaijan through Armenia.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan committed himself to such an arrangement during talks with US President Donald Trump and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev held at the White House last August. The working group is tasked with helping to implement these and other US-Armenian understandings reached during the summit.

A third session of the group co-headed by US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Sonata Coulter and Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Vahan Kostanyan took place via video link on Wednesday, April 1.

“The Working Group members exchanged views on steps aimed at strengthening strategic partnership between Ar-



Armenian officials hold talks with US officials via video link, April 1, 2026.

menia and the US, including economic cooperation, energy, critical and emerging technologies,” the Armenian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The statement made no mention of the planned Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) which is due to connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave through Armenia’s strategic Syunik region bordering Iran.

According to a joint US-Armenian “implementation framework” signed in January, a special company controlled by the US government will build a railway, a road, energy supply lines and other infrastructure along the Armenian-Iranian border and manage them for at least 49 years. Pashinyan said late last year that work on that infrastructure will start this summer.

Pashinyan told reporters on March 12, however, that it will likely be delayed by the ongoing war in the Middle East. He said the TRIPP is “not a priority for the US administration today.”

Iranian officials spoke out against the transit arrangement in the months leading up to the war. They feared that it could undermine Armenian control of the border and lead to US security presence there. Some observers believe that Tehran will now be even more opposed to the TRIPP even if the war is stopped in the coming weeks.

Yerevan Threatens to Leave Russia-led Blocs In Latest Diplomatic Row with Moscow

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

Armenia has threatened to leave Russian-led economic and security blocs in response to possible economic pressure from Russia. The two countries have been engaged in a

contentious back-and-forth following a meeting between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

During the meeting on April 1, the sides discussed bilateral issues, as well as Armenia’s relations and ongoing projects with the EU and the US.

Although both Armenian and Russian officials assessed the talks positively, developments in the aftermath suggest cracks and deeper tensions in the bilateral relationship.

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Prime Minister Pashinyan meeting with President Vladimir Putin on April 1.

Roger Hagopian’s Love of History Near and Far Has Led to Series of Documentaries

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

LEXINGTON, Mass. — Roger Hagopian is both interesting and interested. He has a deep-rooted

love for the history of his home state as well as the history of his Armenian ancestors who fled Western Armenia for these shores. And he shows his love by making short documentaries about them.

In a recent interview, the soft-spoken Hagopian discussed his completed works, as well as another one that is in the pipeline.

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CAIRO

Artur Davtyan Wins Gold at Artistic Gymnastics World Cup

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DETROIT

Exhibit Showcases Artistic Career Of Fr. Garabed Kochakian

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WATERTOWN

Aznavoorian Sisters Captivate Armenian Museum Audience in Concert

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EVN Panel at Tufts Addresses International Developments Concerning Armenia

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

MEDFORD, Mass. — The Yerevan-based EVN Report online weekly magazine presented panel discussions at Tufts University and Harvard University in the Boston area, and Georgetown University in Washington D.C. in March, with the core participants Dr. Nerses Kopalyan of University of Nevada Las Vegas, Dr. Areg Danagoulian of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and EVN Report editor-in-chief Maria Titizian from Yerevan.

The Tufts panel discussion, titled “Power Transition in the South Caucasus: Armenia between Peace and Development,” was hosted by the Fletcher Eurasia Club at the Fletcher School of Law and Diploma-



Areg Danagoulian, left, and Nerses Kopalyan (photo Aram Arkun)

cy on March 12, with Titizian serving as moderator. Associate Director of the Center for Expanding Viewpoints in Higher Education at Tufts University Arik Burakovsky (formerly assistant director of the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Fletcher School) welcomed guests and later facilitated the question-and-answer session.

This panel in a sense could be viewed as an update to the EVN Report panel at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in September 2025 on the US-brokered Armenia-Azerbaijan Washington Accords last year.

Titizian started the Tufts session by asking Kopalyan whether the weakening Russian dominance in the South Caucasus was only temporary till the end of the Ukraine war. Kopalyan replied, “This is a very unique structural and systemic change in the region.” He called the situation geopoliticalism, with the US, EU, France, Iran and Turkey more involved than before.

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Astana Says No
Railway Negotiations

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN) — Kazakhstan is not currently holding negotiations on acquiring the Russian concession for Armenia's railways, Kazakhstan announced on April 6.

Earlier, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had stated that Armenia would not oppose Kazakhstan acquiring the concession, provided Russia agreed. In Armenia, the South Caucasus Railway company operates as a wholly owned subsidiary of Russian Railways. The concession agreement between Armenia and the Russian side was signed in 2008 for a period of 30 years.

Group Urges Release of
Detained Teen Accused
Of Striking Pashinyan

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Pan-Armenian Council for the Protection of the Armenian Church this week stated that the continued detention of 18-year-old Davit Minasyan has led to severe physical exhaustion and deep psychological distress.

The organization is demanding his immediate release.

In a statement, they suggested that "According to our information, Davit is suffering from unbearable headaches, likely linked to a serious vascular issue. He remains in intensive care, is extremely weakened, experiences severe dizziness, and is no longer able even to stand on his own. This is a blatant display of impunity by the authorities."

On March 29, at St. Anna Church, as Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was leaving, one person allegedly attempted to strike the prime minister.

Catholicos Issues
Annunciation Message

YEREVAN (PanArmenian.net) — Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II issued a message on the Annunciation to Virgin Mary marked in Armenia on April 7.

"On the occasion of the Annunciation to the Holy Mother of God, we extend Our Patriarchal blessing and heartfelt congratulations to our devout people, both in the homeland and in the diaspora.

"This grace-filled feast has been established as a day of blessing for women who await the joy of motherhood. In the churches, at the conclusion of the Holy Liturgy, a prayerful petition is offered, and expectant mothers receive a blessing accompanied by prayers asking God to grant them a life full of love, health, and happiness, as well as good and worthy children.

"The faithful and virtuous example of the Most Holy Mother of God has long served as a source of inspiration for mothers. Following the radiant example of the Holy Virgin, Armenian women in difficult times, with meek and humble hearts in obedience to God's will, overcame trials, steadfastly."

H. Hovnanian Family Foundation Awards \$240,000 to
Advance Youth Empowerment Across Armenia

YEREVAN — Across Armenia, young people are increasingly stepping forward as leaders in their communities, launching local initiatives, exploring careers in science, and building networks that promote healthy lifestyles and civic engagement. Supporting this momentum, the H. Hovnanian Family Foundation has awarded \$240,000 in grants to eight initiatives through its fourth-quarter 2025 Youth Empowerment Armenian grant cycle.

These projects will expand opportunities for youth across Armenia in three areas: science, sports and healthy lifestyles, and civic awareness and activism.

"Interest in this grant cycle was strong. We are encouraged by the diversity of this round's applicants and awardees, both in geographic representation and fields of focus," said Anahit Hakobyan, (Grants) Program Manager at the H. Hovnanian Family Foundation. "The eight selected projects span across Armenia and cover activities from math and physics Olympiads to GIS mapping, hiking, and civic preparedness."

The PhysMath Friends Charitable Foundation will expand Armenia's mathematics and physics Olympiad model to the regions. The project will revise Olympiad curricula, train eight regional instructors to help run newly established Olympiad clubs in Lori, Shirak, Kotayk, and Armarvir. Approximately 180 high school students will gain access to advanced instruction and mentorship to prepare them for national and international competitions.

Hyphen4 Lab will implement a seven-month mapping program in six communities, combining civic learning with practical digital and spatial skills. The project will train university students as fellows to work with TUMO students aged 12-18 conducting community mapping workshops. Together, participants will collect and refine open-access GIS datasets on infrastructure, public spaces, and other local assets, strengthening youth digital literacy while also supporting more informed local planning and dialogue with municipalities.

In Lori the Resilient Stepanavan Foundation will support the development of the Stepanavan Community Sports School, which currently serves 174 youth through wrestling, football, table tennis, boxing, and chess clubs, and will also reach additional participants through amateur volleyball, basketball and table tennis activities. The municipality will continue to cover core operational costs, including maintenance and coaches' salaries, help-

ing to ensure long-term sustainability.

Girls of Armenia Leadership Sports (GOALS) will carry out a one-year program for 250 girls aged 11 to 15 across 20 communities. Combining intercommunity sports activities with educational workshops, hybrid sessions, and self-guided learning materials, the program is designed to strengthen leadership, teamwork, confidence, and civic awareness. It will culminate in the GOALS Girls Summit in Yerevan in fall 2026, bringing together participants from across Armenia for a national event centered on learning,

15 to 20 youth leaders aged 16-30 through a seven-day residential program focused on designing community initiatives. With mentorship and municipal engagement, participants will refine their ideas and present them to the public for voting through participatory budgeting processes.

In Vanadzor and surrounding communities the NGO Center will run a civic engagement program directly involving 60 young people aged 16-30. Through these workshops, simulation games and mentorships, participants will design and implement 20 youth-led community initiatives.



exchange, and inspiration.

The Boon Scientific-Cultural Foundation (BoonTV), through its project 'Through the Mountains,' will engage more than 50 young people aged 16 to 35 in five guided hikes to lesser-known mountain and nature sites in Tavush and Vayots Dzor. Participants will receive training in outdoor safety and skills, while also learning about healthy lifestyles, teamwork, environmental responsibility, and local communities. Implemented in partnership with Armenian Geographic, a five-episode documentary series will be produced for national broadcast and online distribution.

The Information and Education Development Network (INEDNET) will implement a program in 5 to 7 communities to help young people take a more active role in local governance. The project will train

A Youth Advisory Council attached to the Vanadzor Municipality will be established to contribute to the co-development of a local youth policy and five-year development plan, helping to institutionalize youth participation at the local level.

The Azatazen Educational NGO will expand its youth programming beyond Yerevan through an initiative serving 300 young people aged 15-20, mostly in the Lori region. The program will provide practical training in first aid, physical and emergency preparedness, outdoor safety, and civic responsibility. By focusing on hands-on knowledge and community resilience, the initiative will equip participants with concrete skills to support personal safety and broader civic preparedness.

For more information, visit <https://hovnanianfoundation.org/en>

Armenian Intellectual and Political Activist Zori Balayan Passes Away

YEREVAN — Zori Balayan, an Armenian novelist, journalist, activist, sports doctor, traveler and sports expert, passed away on April 6 at the age of 91.

Born on February 10, 1935, in Stepanakert, then part of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, he graduated from Ryazan State Medical University in 1963. He worked as a doctor in Kamchatka from 1963 to 1973. In 1973 he traversed the Kamchatka and Chokotskaya tundras on dogsled, traveling as far as the North Sea. In his book Ojakh [Hearth], published during the pre-perestroika era, he tried to demonstrate the Armenian identity of Nagorno-Karabakh and identified Nakhichevan as historically belonging to Armenia.

Balayan was co-president of the Baikal Movement, an ecological international organization, in the late 1980s.

Balayan became a leader of the Karabakh movement. In 1988, he and Armenian poet Silva Kaputikyan were received by Mikhail Gorbachev and discussed the absence of Armenian-language television programs and textbooks in Nagorno-Karabakh schools as well as other concerns of Karabakh's majority-Armenian population. From September 20 to 29, 1990, he conducted a hunger strike in Moscow demanding the restoration of the constitutional rights of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region.

From 1989 to 1992, Balayan was a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. In October 1993, he signed the "Letter of Forty-Two" along with other Russian intellectuals in connection with the 1993 Russian constitutional crisis.

From 1992 to 1995, he was a deputy of



the Supreme Council of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.

Balayan wrote as a journalist for the weekly Russian-language publication Literaturnaya Gazeta and is the author of many books.

Balayan later took part in historic maritime expeditions aboard the ships Kilikia and Armenia in the first two decades of the 21st century.



INTERNATIONAL

Easter in Jerusalem Overshadowed by War and Restrictions at Holy Sepulchre

JERUSALEM (France 24/AFP) — Silence reigned on Easter Sunday in the alleyways of Jerusalem's Old City, with the holiday overshadowed by war and restrictions on access to the Holy Sepulchre, where Christians commemorate Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

In the usually lively alleyways of Jerusalem's Old City, silence reigned on Easter Sunday, with the holiday overshadowed by war and restrictions on access to the Holy Sepulchre, where the faithful commemorate Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

On routes approaching the church, where Christians believe Jesus Christ was crucified, buried and rose from the dead, police at checkpoints screened a small number of worshippers allowed near the site.

All shops in the area were closed, heightening the sense of emptiness.

"Happy Easter," said the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, shortly after dawn as he entered the church surrounded by a modest group of clergy, according to AFP journalists at the site.

Outside, a few Catholics and Orthodox Christians tried to reach the church but were kept at a distance by security forces.

"How can you tell me I cannot go to church, it is unacceptable," said one Catholic from Tel Aviv who had attended Easter worship at the site in previous years.

Security has been stepped up in the Old City, located in annexed east Jerusalem and home to sites sacred to Jews, Christians

and Muslims.

Israel has also imposed restrictions on large gatherings as a security precaution due to the constant threat of strikes during the ongoing Middle East war.

On Palm Sunday, Cardinal Pizzaballa was prevented by Israeli police from entering the Holy Sepulchre for mass, provoking outrage, before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered he be allowed in.

"In this land where the story began... we continue to steadfastly protect the freedom of worship for all faiths, especially at this sacred time," Netanyahu said in a message marking Easter.

Read more Pope Leo condemns 'violence of war' in first Easter Mass amid Iran conflict

Since the start of the war on February 28, debris from Iranian missiles or interceptors has fallen in the Old City, including near the Holy Sepulchre, Al-Aqsa Mosque, and in the Jewish Quarter.

'Hard for all of us'

Most Palestinian Christians belong to the Orthodox faith, which celebrates Easter on April 12.

But for many other Christians, the curbs on worship have stripped Sunday's Easter celebrations of substance.

"It's very hard for all of us because it's our holiday... It's really hard to want to pray but to come here and find nothing. Everything is closed," said Christina Toderas, 44, from Romania.

Like many other worshippers, she had

resigned herself to watching the mass at the Holy Sepulchre on television.

Otmar Wassermann had also attempted to enter the Holy Sepulchre but failed.

"I must say I was somewhat frustrated," he told AFP, recalling how the feast is generally celebrated every year.

"The atmosphere is incredible," Wassermann said, noting the music in particular. "People who go there, they have deep faith."

Despite his disappointment, the 65-year-old Catholic acknowledged that if the authorities said there was "danger, then there might be danger".

Father Bernard Poggi, who was preparing to attend mass in another church near the holy site, also said he understood the security measures but added that "it seems to be more and more that there's an unevenness in how the laws are put into practice".

Inside the Holy Sepulchre, the celebrations were being held behind closed doors in front of a very small congregation, a far cry from the crowds that usually gather.

Around the Old City, where hymns and processions usually dominate at Easter, only whispers could be heard among the faithful moving discreetly through its passages.

"It is really sad. I just hope the war stops," said Julio Makhalfeh, a 25-year-old restaurant manager.

"We had enough of all this. It is time to bring some normalcy back in our life."

Stepanakert Cathedral Vandalized

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Holy Mother of God Cathedral in Stepanakert, located in territory now under Azerbaijani control, has been subjected to vandalism, according to Monumentwatch.org, which monitors Artsakh's cultural heritage.

Videos filmed by Azerbaijani users in Stepanakert show that two windows of the cathedral have been smashed.

"Although the structure remains intact and appears externally undamaged, the damage to the windows of a building representing the city's Armenian identity is concerning, as they were not previously damaged. This indicates that the monument has been subjected to vandalism," the statement said.

It is also noted that there are no recent photos or videos showing the interior condition of the church.

The Stepanakert cathedral was built in 2019 and is considered one of the city's important symbols.

The deliberate damage to the cathedral's windows constitutes a gross violation of Article 4 of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, as well as Article 9 of its 1999 Second Protocol.

Article 4(3) of the Hague Convention obliges parties to "prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of, and any acts of vandalism directed against, cultural property." Meanwhile, Article 9 of the 1999 Second Protocol requires the controlling party to prohibit and prevent any alteration of cultural property aimed at concealing or destroying cultural or historical evidence. Damage to the church's exterior constitutes such an alteration.

As the party controlling Armenian cultural heritage in the area, Azerbaijan bears international legal responsibility for failing to preserve the integrity of the cultural property and prevent acts of vandalism. Given that the cathedral is a key symbol of the city's Armenian identity, such actions are seen as aimed at erasing traces



The Holy Mother of God Cathedral in Stepanakert

of Armenian cultural heritage in the area, contradicting UNESCO principles and international humanitarian law.

On December 7, 2021, the International Court of Justice, in the case "Armenia v. Azerbaijan," imposed provisional measures obliging Azerbaijan to "take all necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration affecting Armenian cultural heritage, including churches and other places of worship."

The damage to the cathedral indicates

that the state is not complying with a binding decision of the highest international court.

Under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), cultural vandalism is often regarded as part of ethnic cleansing and racial discrimination. Arti-

cle 5 guarantees the right of everyone to participate equally in cultural life. Targeting Armenian religious sites violates the fundamental right of Artsakh Armenians to access their cultural heritage.

The deliberate targeting or damage of cultural property not used for military purposes is classified as a serious violation under Article 15 of the 1999 Second Protocol to the Hague Convention and may entail individual criminal responsibility.

INTERNATIONAL

Death Toll in Lebanon Exceeds 1,500

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanon's Ministry of Health reported on April 7 that the death toll in the country during the more than one-month war between Israel and the Hezbollah movement has reached 1,530.

Among the dead are 102 women, 130 children, and 57 healthcare workers, according to the ministry's statement.

The ministry also reported that 4,812 people have been injured.

Isfahan Armenian Man Dies in US-Israeli Attack

YEREVAN — An Armenian civilian was killed in Iran's city of Isfahan following US and Israeli airstrikes, according to the Armenian Diocese of Isfahan.

The victim, identified as Hovhannes (Amirkhan) Simonian, was killed at his workplace on the morning of March 26 during bombardments targeting the Baharestan district.

According to available information, at least 26 people were killed in the March 26 attacks in Isfahan, including four children.

In an official statement, diocesan authorities expressed deep sorrow over the loss, extending condolences and support to Simonian's family. The message was issued on behalf of the Primate's Locum Tenens and national community bodies.

Moscow Says Gas Pricing Supports Armenian Growth

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The vice speaker of Russia's Federation Council, Konstantin Kosachev, said on April 7 the current price of Russian gas is a significant driver of Armenia's economic development.

According to him, this reflects the reality in which Armenia lives and develops its economy, gaining notable competitive advantages amid the global energy crisis unfolding in Europe and worldwide, which he said was not caused by Russia but by other countries.

"The current price of Russian gas is both a powerful stimulus for the development of many sectors of Armenia's economy and a significant factor of social and political stability in the country. It would be fair and honest for Armenian politicians to take into account the scale of support provided by Russia to Armenia," Kosachev said.

On April 1, Russian President Vladimir Putin, during a meeting in the Kremlin with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, stated that Armenia receives gas at a significantly lower price than Europe — around \$177.5 per 1,000 cubic meters compared to roughly \$600 in Europe.

Commenting on Putin's statement, Armenian Parliament Speaker Alen Simonyan said that if the price of Russian gas increases, Armenia could reconsider its participation in the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union.

Pashinyan's Calls for End to 'Mirrored' Genocide Accusations Appear to Go Unheard in Azerbaijan

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

Azerbaijan has repeated calls for global recognition of the 1918 massacres of Azerbaijanis by Armenians as genocide, despite efforts by Armenia's leadership to stop mutual recriminations about history amidst peace efforts.

Former Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev, the father of President Ilham Aliyev, issued a decree in 1998 declaring March 31 "the Day of Genocide of Azerbaijanis," accusing Armenians of killing "tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis."

"Although the systematic killing of the civilian population during the March–April 1918 incidents was committed on the basis of their ethnic origin and religion, these crimes of genocide have unfortunately not yet been recognized at the international

level," Azerbaijani Human Rights Defender Sabina Aliyeva's statement read.

During the period, several overlapping wars were ongoing, including WWI, the Russian Civil War, the Turkish–Armenian War, and local conflicts between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Thousands were killed in the mass violence, including civilians on all sides in a series of tit-for-tat massacres.

Amidst the backdrop of widespread violence, only Azerbaijan and Turkey appear to use the word "genocide" to describe the massacres of Azerbaijanis at that time.

On Tuesday, March 31, the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry in turn issued a statement accusing "radical Armenian groups" of carrying out a genocide against Azerbaijanis.

Such statements contrast sharply with those of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol

Pashinyan, who has suggested moving away from such allegations for the sake of peace.

In his weekly press briefing on March 26, Pashinyan refused to assess the mass exodus of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians in September 2023 as ethnic cleansing in response to a journalists' question, instead dubbing such discourse "harmful."

Referring to the word "genocide" in another journalist's question about the attack on Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023, Pashinyan suggested that focusing on such terminology was detrimental to peace in the region.

"In general, this race of genocide [accusations] needs to stop. In our region, everyone accuses everyone of genocide," Pashinyan said.

He added that discussions about genocide and return issues — in reference to Nagorno-Karabakh Armenian refugees re-

turning to the region — only trigger mirrored accusations.

"We can call it ethnic cleansing and, in response, receive mirrored accusations of ethnic cleansing, [or call it] genocide and get the mirrored genocide [narrative]," Pashinyan said.

He suggested that it was an entry into "the path of conflict, and that is not my concern," instead stating that his concern was to help refugees settle in Armenia, live in peace, and have homes and jobs.

Pashinyan has insisted that peace has been established between Armenia and Azerbaijan since the initialing of a peace treaty at the Washington summit in August 2025, but has repeatedly stated it must still be strengthened.

(This article originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on March 31.)

Yerevan Threatens to Leave Russia-led Blocs in Latest Diplomatic Row with Moscow

RUSSIA, from page 1

Even so, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that "understanding was demonstrated" by the Armenian side regarding the concerns expressed by Russia. Lavrov added that the development of relations remains to be seen.

Separately, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Aleksei Overchuk issued another warning, saying that if Armenia joins the EU, there would be no flights between Armenia and Russia, considering that "there is currently no air travel with EU countries."

Overchuk had previously accused Armenia after the meeting of coming "very close to the point where we will have to restructure our economic relations with this country."

Shortly after, Russia announced "stricter requirements" on the import of Armenian products.

In response to comments suggesting that the Russia had given Armenia ultimatums during the Pashinyan–Putin meeting, Yerevan has suggested it could leave the Russian-led security and economic blocs, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CTSO), if economic pressure from Russia continue.

Asked about the threats last Saturday, Armenian Parliamentary Speaker Alen Simonyan noted that such conversations "have been going on for years."

"If they make such a decision, Armenia will also make its own decision and will withdraw once and for all from the CSTO, and the EAEU, and from the remaining structures as well," Simonyan said. He further assessed this as unlikely, noting that following the tense public statements, Pashinyan and Putin had "a very good" and "very effective" conversation.

During the talks, Putin underscored the impossibility of being in a customs union with the EU and the EAEU. He additionally addressed gas prices, highlighting the significant discount Armenia receives from buying Russian energy.

"The price of gas in Europe exceeds \$600 per 1000 cubic meters, and Russia sells gas to Armenia for \$177.5 per 1000 cubic meters," Putin said.

Similarly to Simonyan, Armenian Economy Minister Gevorg Papoyan expressed confidence that gas prices would not change, because "Armenia is needed by its partners so that it remains both in the

CSTO and in the EAEU."

"If Armenia is not supposed to receive those benefits, then why should it remain in that union? A process of joining another union will begin, and it will happen in a more accelerated manner," Papoyan said.

He also questioned the benefits the CSTO provided to Armenia, at the same time highlighting Armenia's value as a member, serving as a passage for goods to the bloc.

Following Armenian official statements, on Monday, Belarusian President Aliaksandr Lukashenka suggested that CSTO Secretary General Taalatbek Masadykov visit Armenia to speak with Pashinyan and "learn their position on the future" regarding Armenia's membership.

Armenia had "frozen" its membership in the CSTO in February 2024, citing its refusal to aid Armenia in the face of Azerbaijani attacks in 2021 and 2022.

However, Armenian officials, including Pashinyan, appear to be more inclined towards leaving the CSTO, rather than "un-freezing" Armenia's membership. In an interview with RFE/RL last Friday, Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Vahan Kostanyan stated that Armenia was "practically out of the CSTO."

"I do not see any possibility that Armenia will return, and the remaining steps should be taken when necessary and at the appropriate time," Kostanyan said.

Armenia appears to reject Russia's aid to tackle hybrid threats

In the same interview, Kostanyan also responded to Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova, who recently expressed Moscow's readiness to assist Armenia in tackling hybrid attacks, citing its resources and capabilities.

"Russia has other resources too, the same 'Matroshka' and 'storm' networks. We would be happy to receive information from them, for example, how these Telegram bots connected to them work," Kostanyan said.

The two bot networks, affiliated with Russia, were launched in 2023. Records indicate they have been active in Armenia, Moldova, France, Germany, and other countries.

Kostanyan further accused Russia of often being more interested in the continuation of the Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict rather than finding a resolution to it.

"It has shown over the years that it is often more interested in the existence of con-

flict than in the presence of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan," Kostanyan said.

Zakharova's statement followed remarks by Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan in March.

Responding to a question about the possibility of requesting similar support from Russia to tackle hybrid attacks, as they did from the EU, Mirzoyan noted: "If Russia has its own experience in combating hybrid attacks and is ready to share it, we are not against it. Let them share it, and we will see what kind of experience it is."

On Monday, April 6, the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry responded to Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov's recent comments where he said "the question of Karabakh's ownership is in no way related to Russia; that decision rests with the Armenian authorities." Peskov had made the remark following Putin's meeting with Pashinyan.

Baku noted that "no country, including Russia, [...] has ever questioned the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan, including the Karabakh region." It also urged that "issues related to Azerbaijan's

sovereignty will not become a subject of public clarification at a time when Russian–Armenian relations are complex."

Addressing Armenia's frozen status in CSTO, Putin repeated previously debunked claims in the meeting, insisting that following Pashinyan's government's recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan in Prague in October 2022, "the CSTO's intervention in this process [...] was simply absolutely wrong in this matter."

Armenia had only appealed for CSTO assistance following the Azerbaijani attack on Armenia in September 2022. In his response during the meeting with Putin, Pashinyan insisted that in 2022, "CSTO mechanisms should have been activated, but they were not activated, and this, of course, led to the situation that we have in relations with the CSTO."

He also said that before Armenia's recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan, "the top leadership of Russia [...] twice publicly announced this."

(This story originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on April 6.)

Artur Davtyan Wins Gold at Artistic Gymnastics World Cup

CAIRO (Armenpress) — Davtyan, an Olympic silver medalist, earned the top score on vault in the men's apparatus competition, securing the gold medal on April 6.

The day before, other members of Armenia's team also excelled at this stage of the World Cup: Hamlet Manukyan won the gold medal in the pommel horse event, while Artur Avetisyan took silver in the rings event.





Community News

Dr. Taner Akçam Headlines San Diego Armenian Genocide Commemoration Event

SAN DIEGO — On April 26, at 1p.m., the San Diego Armenian community will feature scholar Dr. Taner Akçam as the keynote speaker at its 2026 Armenian Genocide Commemoration, to be held at St. Sarkis Armenian Church.

Akçam is the inaugural director of the Armenian Genocide Research Program of the Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA. Previously he was the Kaloosdian and Mugar Chair in Modern Armenian History and Genocide in the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University.



Taner Akçam

Akçam is widely recognized as one of the first Turkish scholars to write extensively on the Ottoman-Turkish Genocide of the Armenians in the early twentieth century. His latest book is *Killing Orders: Talat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide* (Palgrave 2018). He last spoke in San Diego in 2018.

The cultural program will feature musical performances by youth and adults of the San Diego Armenian community, and a Q&A with Akçam after his remarks. Refreshments will be served after the event.

The commemoration committee is co-chaired by Hygan Nalbandian and Sarah Baghdasarian and is comprised of representatives from all San Diego Armenian organizations, including St. Sarkis Armenian Church, and Very Rev. Fr. Pakrad Berjekian, Parish Priest; all St. Sarkis Church organizations, and the San Diego chapters ANCA, ARF, ARS, ASA, Homenetmen, Knights and Daughters of Vartan, and Trex Fraternity.

For more information contact info@stsarkischurchsd.com.



St. Sarkis Armenian Church. San Diego



Nairi Khatchadourian (photo Aram Arkun)

Curator Nairi Khatchadourian Presents Process of Co-Creating The Matenadaran Garden

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — Curator Nairi Khatchadourian, visiting from Yerevan, spoke about the Matenadaran garden project on Friday, March 6, at the Baikar Building in Watertown. Her English-language presentation was sponsored by the Armenian Tree Project and the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Boston.

Guests were welcomed by Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada Executive Director Aram Arkun, who introduced Judy Saryan, a philanthropist and supporter of the Armenian Tree Project's Matenadaran Garden project. Saryan pointed out the importance of the Matenadaran, or Mesrob Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, as the repository of one of the largest collections in the world of Armenian manuscripts, as well as a research center.

The Armenian Tree Project has undertaken the transformation of the barren hillside behind the Matenadaran into a public garden, with Khatchadourian involved in the design process, Saryan said. Khatchadourian, an art historian and curator born and raised in Paris, France, founded the AHA collective in 2019 in Yerevan.

Khatchadourian related that when she first moved to Yerevan in 2015 she worked at the Komitas Museum Institute. She found the contemporary art scene to be very fragmented, as none of the contemporary artists were collaborating with museums or public institutions. As a curator she created the nonprofit AHA collective as a structure to serve as a bridge between scholars and artists and public institutions like museums.

Khatchadourian said that she also opened a small gallery space in Yerevan, and attempted placemaking, which she explained as, “we, through inclusive projects, create new senses of places, or reactivate or revive public space or abandoned spaces in Yerevan and throughout the regions.”

For example, she related that during the evacuation of the Kelbajar (Karavachar) region, they created different artistic imprints on paper or clay which later were exhibited at the Cafesjian Center for the Arts in Yerevan. During this 2022 exhibition, children who came collectively wrote poetry on a long paper roll, which was read at the end of the exhibition. They also did projects in Goris and at the Golden Apricot Film Festival, and international projects such as a big design biennale in 2025 in Saint-Etienne, France, at which Armenia was the country of honor.

Khatchadourian indicated that Aleksandr Tamanyan, the chief architect of Yerevan, around 100 years ago planned to have a forest behind the Matenadaran, while she showed slides and maps.

While preparing a co-creation workshop to discuss designs for the Matenadaran garden, Khatchadourian and colleagues realized that there are very few publications about gardens in Armenia. They began to question Armenians' relationship with nature and found out that both in Western Armenia and the Republic of Armenia there have been many districts or cities that have the word *ayki/aygi* as a component of their names (e.g. *aykestan* or *aykedzor*), which does indicate a specific relationship with gardens.

All participants in the workshop — scholars, botanists, artists, or just local residents — were asked what a garden is, and what does it mean to create a garden within a museum.

see MATENADARAN, page 7

Armenian Heritage Walk to Honor Armenian American Legacy with Awards For Excellence at Dedication Apr. 24-25

PHILADELPHIA — The Armenian Heritage Walk, an historic winding pathway of Armenian art and culture next to the world-renowned Philadelphia Museum of Art, will be dedicated and its first phase unveiled Friday, April 24, and Saturday, April 25, in memory of the Armenian Genocide and in tribute to the contributions of countless Armenian Americans through the decades.

A series of festivities will mark the unveiling of Phase 1 and feature a restored 22-foot statue of the mythical Armenian figure Young Meher, the centerpiece of the parcel. First displayed on the 200th birthday of America in 1976, the statue continues to symbolize the courage and faith of the Armenian people 50 years later on the 250th birthday of America. Work will continue in Phase 2 with the selection and installation of exquisite and meaningful lighted public artwork stations and natural elements of Armenian and American origin.

Hundreds of families and friends will gather to celebrate the landmark occasion in a series of events beginning with an intercommunal church service at Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia on Friday, April 24, at 7 p.m. The walk will then be officially dedicated and Phase 1 unveiled on the parcel next to the Philadelphia Museum of Art on Saturday, April 25, at 11 a.m. Finally, the festivities will culminate in a spectacular Armenian Heritage Walk Gala at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia on Saturday, April 25, at 6 p.m. Tickets can be purchased and donations made at www.armenian-heritagewalk.org

The gala will honor the innumerable contributions of Armenian Americans through the generations by turning attention to the following noteworthy honorees, gifting them with Awards for Excellence: Michael Aram, founder and designer of Michael Aram Inc.; Dr. James Philip Bagian, engineer, physician, and NASA astronaut; Mark Hoptamajian, chairman and CEO, Hyatt Hotels Corp.; Edele Hovnanian, president and CEO, H. Hovnanian Family Office; Major Gen. Stephen J. Maranian, two-time recipient of the Distinguished Service Medal; Katherine Sarafian, senior vice president of production, Pixar Animation Studios; and Peter Vosbikian, accomplished executive, household products industry. Sona Movsessian, author, podcaster, media personality, and former executive assistant of Conan O'Brien, will host the gala.

Michael Aram is an internationally recognized Armenian-American designer who, for more than 35 years, has created luxurious objects to enhance the everyday. The grandchild of Armenian Genocide survivors, Michael grew up immersed in the rich

see LEGACY, page 11



COMMUNITY NEWS

Roger Hagopian's Love of History Near and Far Has Led to Series of Documentaries

HAGOPIAN, from page 1

Hagopian has tried his hand at many things. He has taught music therapy at the now defunct Protestant Guild for the Blind. He also did a spell at the Fernald School in Waltham, where two teachers there taught him how to instruct the visually impaired.

He also is the owner and operator of Roger Hagopian Carpet Cleaning, a service where he comes to customers' homes to clean rugs or upholstery.

Hagopian, 76, recalled that growing up in Codman Square, Dorchester, in Boston, he was part of a large Armenian immigrant community. It was at the public library there that his passion for history, especially the fine print, and depicting it through the arts was born.

"They were scattered about. The Codman Square Public Library was in a community that was declining. I fell in love with American history when I was probably in the second grade. I used to do art work on the American Revolution and the historic buildings of Boston. By the time I was in the fourth grade, I was doing murals in my school hallway of all the historic buildings. I wanted to see every one of them and know their role in the American revolution," he recalled.

"I liked the idea of reading about them, but then I wanted to see them. I would drag my grandmother, who lived in the same house," a three-decker, to see all the local

them.

Joining them was Dr. Mabel Elliott, a British-born American physician who did post-war medical relief work in Turkey, Armenia, and Greece from 1919 to 1923. In fact, Hagopian wrote the introduction for her biography, *Unbreakable Healer: The Remarkable Life of Dr. Mabel E. Elliott* by G.L. Pedersen.

His grandmother marched for three days to Islahiyeh whence she boarded the train for Adana.

"They shipped them from Adana by train to Aleppo," and then went to Cyprus where she worked for a Greek family. After that, she ended up in Marseille, not an uncommon destination.

"On both sides of my family, the young men were sent ahead to America. They established themselves," he said. "This was fear. My grandmother's brother, Johana Parsekian, was beaten by the Turks, so they decided they better send him."

At age 49, Hagopian said he got a wake up call to delve into and preserve his family's story.

While "it's terrible stuff, the process is fun," he said.

Thus his first film, "Journey of an Armenian Family," was born.

He completed another one in 2002 based on family history and the Armenian Genocide, "Memories of Marash, The Legacy of a Lost Armenian Community." The

67-minute documentary explores the Armenian way of life of the city, a cultural, religious, commercial, and educational center located in present day Turkey, culminating in the series of massacres from the late 1800s to 1923 and the final expulsion of that populace during the Armenian Genocide.

From the Armenian documentaries, he has pivoted to American history and preservation. In 1992, he joined an American historical preservation group, called the Middlesex Canal Association.

"The Middlesex Canal was the Big Dig of its era," he said, noting that it took place from 1803 to 1853.

The canals, created to move products down lumber and granite from New Hampshire, were elevated in many spots to go over roadways. "I was just fascinated that they did this before railroads," he said.

He is currently working on an HD version of the film, which was produced by David Medzorian.

Inspired by Medzorian, he decided he needed to learn how to work a film from start to finish and ended up working at the local community cable access office.

He decided the time was right to work on his family's story, especially with his father receiving a cancer diagnosis.

"I don't know what drove me. This whole topic and the Armenian heritage pulled me into doing things I never dreamed of doing. It was like a magnet," he said.

"Once I finished it, I thought I want to do more of it," he recalled.

After that, he did a documentary on Armenian-American World War II veterans, titled "Our Boys," for the Armenian Memorial Church.

Next he did the documentary on the Hood Rubber Plant, titled "Destination Watertown." The documentary seemed to appeal to many non-Armenians whose ancestors had worked at the massive plant in Watertown in the mid part of the 20th century. He noted, "When I was showing the Hood Rubber film, a lot of Italians came," he noted.

Currently he is working on a film on Armenian-American Vietnam veterans. The idea for the film started with a friend of his,

Art Nersessian, a disabled Vietnam veteran. However, when he connected with Dr. Myron Allukian which propelled the story.

"I probably photographed over 100 photographs [that Allukian had taken] of Vietnam," he said. Allukian was a medic during the war. He was a dentist, joined the navy, switched to the marines, and was there in 1965 for the invasion of Vietnam, in Da-nang.

"They were surrounded by Agent Orange," he said.

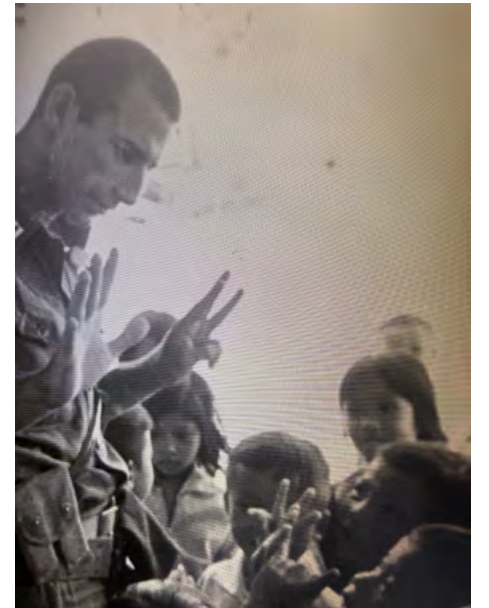
Allukian is a longtime instructor at Harvard. He was the first dentist to receive the Sedgwick Medal for Distinguished Service in Public Health, American Public Health Association's highest award, and has an Honorary Fellowship in the Royal Society of Health of Great Britain.

"He had to decide who can live and who can die," Hagopian said of Allukian. The stress and trauma left him exhausted and still, in the afternoon, he and a few others got in their jeep and went to the Vietnamese villagers and worked on the kids' teeth.

These stories, Hagopian said, "kill me," but between his "heritage and faith," he finds the strength to push through.

Other folks part of the planned documentary are veteran Manoog Kaprielian and Prof. Henry Theriault, a historian of Vietnam. While Theriault was too young to serve in the war, his father was a veteran of that war.

"I would love to have live screenings where people can come up and attend. I would like to show it to veterans groups and

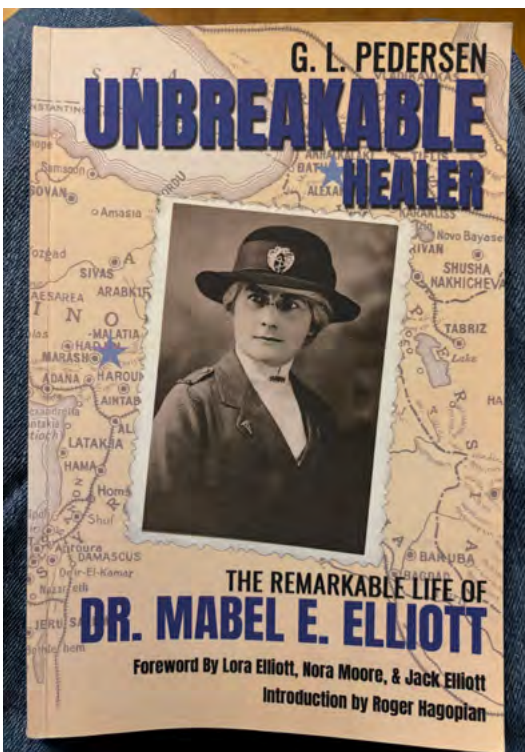


Myron Allukian with Vietnamese children during the Viet Nam War, to whom he provided free dental service

they don't have to be Armenian," he noted.

Hagopian said he is hoping to have it ready for the fall.

"My motivation to do this is the fact that I could have been taken to serve in the Vietnam war but wasn't," he said. "It's a way of me reconciling the fact that some people went and I didn't go. I feel this group of people that served our country at that time, with the war ... they had one order for 206,000 soldiers. Just the morality of this war and the idea of trying to make a democracy of Vietnam."



Cover of *Unbreakable Healer: The Remarkable Life of Dr. Mabel E. Elliott*, for which Hagopian wrote the introduction

sites he had read about in books.

Hagopian's family has deep roots in the US.

His maternal grandfather came to the US before the Genocide. "We think he lost his parents during the Hamidian massacres," he recalled.

On his father's side, his grandmother's brother was sent to the US because all the adult men in the family in Van had been massacred.

His mother's family in Marash was also similarly affected.

"According to my mother's sister, she was told that their father had witnessed his parents being killed in front of him. He and his brother escaped. One brother went to Brazil and the other came to Boston," he said. He was a shoemaker from Marash and plied his trade in Boston.

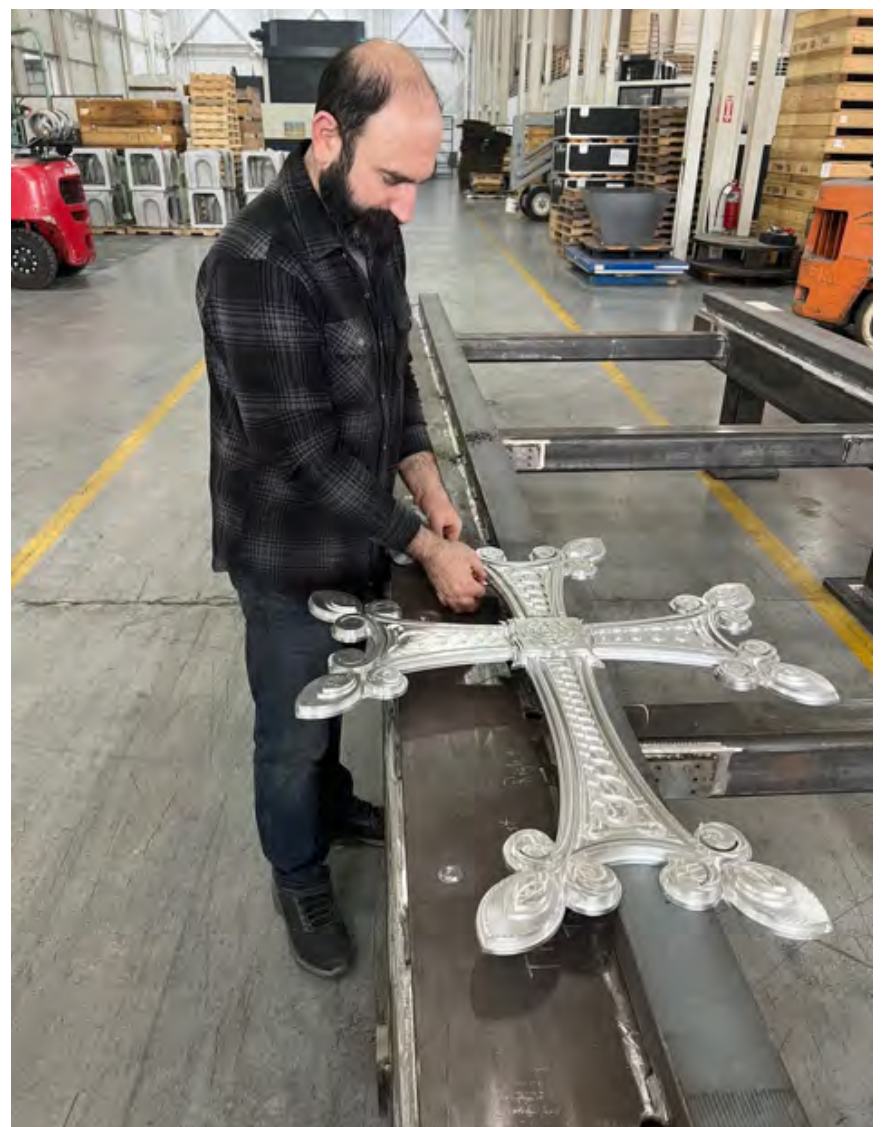
One grandmother marched in February 1920 for three days with the orphans. While she was not an orphan, she had been visiting a friend in the orphanage. When the French left Cilicia and she couldn't get back to her family, she had to march with the rest of

New Cross Installed at St. Stephen's

WATERTOWN, Mass. — On Palm Sunday, St Stephen's Armenian Church of Watertown installed an Armenian-style cross on the side entrance new door of the church. The cross was manufactured and donated by Gary Mardiros, the son of Aurelian and Anahid Mardiros, who had donated and manufactured of the Armenian Genocide sculpture at Armenian Heritage Park in Boston.

The cross was made with an intricate process that beautifully fused ancient tradition with modern technology.

In the photo below, Gary Mardiros is putting the finishing touches on the cross.





COMMUNITY NEWS

The Process of Co-Creating the Matenadaran Garden

MATENADARAN, from page 5

Khatchadourian said that in the West – in Europe and the US – co-creation has been going on for decades. The main question Khatchadourian, the AHA collective and ATP faced was how to introduce co-creation into Yerevan’s urban planning, especially when there actually has not been real urban planning going on for the last few decades and the city has been expanding chaotically.

She said that a public space like a garden should have a conceptual framework and its basis. AHA and ATP followed several principles in their conceptual phase. First, the co-creation approach has to be site-specific. In this case, the site is approximately 1.5 hectares (3.71 acres) in Yerevan on a slope facing south. Then it has to be context-specific in the questions and exercises for the workshop.

Third, it has to be interdisciplinary. When an architect’s studio is asked to design a public space, that does not resonate with people, she said. Instead, in addition to architects and designers, urban planning representatives from the Yerevan municipality, environmentalists (from ATP and elsewhere), scholars who work at the Matenadaran and know the surroundings, technical and development specialists and irrigation specialists were invited to the workshop. The aforementioned were both established professionals as well as younger emerging practitioners. Local residents, including people born in Armenia, Artsakh and the diaspora, were invited.

The workshop took place on November 22, 2025 at the Matenadaran with 40 participants. They examined the garden from cultural, social and ecological perspectives. They were divided into six groups, with six different facilitators, to whom Khatchadourian had given worksheets and an agenda to follow. Each group included a variety of different professionals.

First, they examined the social aspect, which is defining shared values. What val-

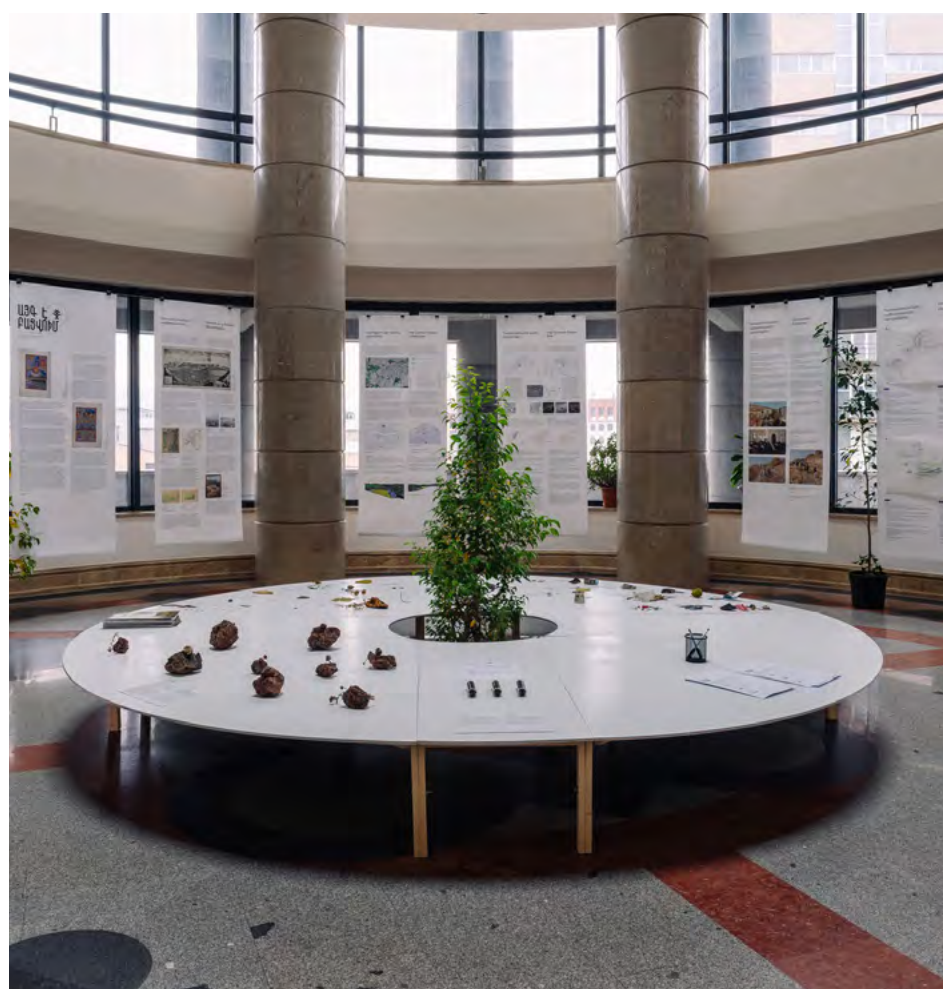
ue do they see in a garden? What are the values that they want to put in the garden? Then came the cultural aspect, to explore the essence of what the modern garden is. Then they went to walk on the slope to think about the spatial and urban perspective. We went and walked on the slope. Each participant was given one envelope to collect from the site any element, any item, they wanted. Everyone was asked to write labels, like museum labels, for each object.

Each of the six groups at the end of the workshop day produced a map that reflected their social, cultural, ecological, urban, and design views. Khatchadourian presented some of these maps and the ideas of the groups. A report was created for ATP and then AHA prepared an exhibition titled “Ayg e batsvum/The Sun Is Rising: The Matenadaran Garden Vision.” It opened on February 6 in the Matenadaran’s academic building.

Khatchadourian said, “After 11 years living in Armenia, I think this is the most fruitful opening — fruitful, interesting.” This was because there were all sorts of people present who don’t generally interact with each other, just as during the co-creation process.”

Moreover, out of the six maps and ideas, three garden visions were later prepared. The first combines elements from four of the maps, with an Armenian orchard and a pathway organic to the topography. Khatchadourian said that it would have a rich biodiversity highlighted in the garden, different facilities to see it, and then a viewing platform. There would be water elements like fountains. Climbing up the garden would be like a pilgrimage and also an educational zone.

The second vision is of a very geometric urban vineyard. That group thought there should be roses along with the vineyard and the wind that comes from the north towards the heart of Yerevan would carry their scent. There would be some seating areas and access from different parts of the site.



The exhibition at the Matenadaran

The third vision is of a contemplative garden, which is like the modernist approach of big open spaces. It would have a water element and more wide spaces that would serve like a city forest type of greenery serving as block to the dust and noise from the city avenue outside.

In the exhibition at the Matenadaran, visitors were given the opportunity to vote for their preferred versions, and the first one received the most votes. The Matenadaran board, ATP and the AHA collective also preferred this one. Number three got the second most votes, followed by number three.

Khatchadourian said, “This project has a value that has to be shared internationally.” She proposed that the Sun Is Rising project be presented at the Venice Biennale, which next year will be dedicated to architecture. There is time to invite new practitioners to reflect on the garden design process, she said, and to also draw a connection between it and the San Lazzaro monastery of the Mekhitarist monks. She suggested a mirror project between the two sites of the Matenadaran and San Lazzaro, with the garden project “a prototype of collective intelligence and co-creation, as a shared living space that awakens all the senses.”



WHEN
Sunday, April 26th
3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

WHERE
Heritage Park, Rose Kennedy Greenway
 Free Bus Transportation is provided by Knights of Vartan Ararat Lodge No. 1
Departing from the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center in Watertown at 2:00PM

Please RSVP: kofvararat1@gmail.com

FREE BUS SERVICE FROM WATERTOWN ON FIRST-COME-FIRST-SERVE BASIS

DEPARTING PROMPTLY AT 2:00 PM FROM
 Armenian Cultural And Educational Center,
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 Watertown, MA

DEPARTING BOSTON FOR WATERTOWN AT 5:30 PM



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COMMUNITY NEWS

EVN Panel at Tufts Addresses International Developments Concerning Armenia

TUFTS, from page 1

As far as the US role in the region, he said, “The amount of investment, geopolitically, economically and strategically, the United States is making in the South Caucasus is suggesting to us that the United States is here for the long run, that their objectives seem to be long-term. So in that context, whether that pans out or not is a different subject of conversation.” One reason is that the US views southern Armenia as part of the so-called Middle Corridor or Transcaspian route connecting Asia to Europe commercially, he noted.

Titizian asked Danagoulian about the importance of the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) agreements concerning nuclear energy last August in this context. He replied that they are significant in particular for Armenia’s energy security and sovereignty. One-third of Armenia’s electricity comes from the aging Metsamor nuclear power plant, which the Armenian government appears committed to replace with another reactor. Danagoulian said that the Armenians are quite interested in US designs, so during US Vice President JD Vance’s Yerevan visit in February, 2026, Armenia finalized a so-called 123 agreement, which is a key step for Armenia to acquire US nuclear technologies.

This agreement, derived from the 1954 Atomic Energy Act, places oversights on how Armenia would use such technology, with the goal of preventing its use for weapons development. This is a \$5-billion project, so, Danagoulian said, this means stronger Armenian ties with US industries, which will also give Armenia more political weight in the US.

If Armenia goes with US technology, Danagoulian said that the Russians will not be happy as the latter use nuclear reactors as a tool of influence, as do many other countries. While there could be some delays in fuel for Metsamor, he said that Westinghouse in recent years has begun building the same fuel the Russians used to monopolize and it has been delivered to Ukraine, Finland and Bulgaria. Thus, that lever of influence has been lost to the Russians.

Titizian pressed Danagoulian as to why Armenia should not just continue its nuclear agreements with Russia. He replied that any agreement on building new nuclear power plants implies cooperation for a century, since it takes 10 years to build a plant, 80 years to operate it, and then 10 years to decommission it. He said, “Now Russia has this kind of incredible habit of generating a revolution or some kind of a political crisis or some kind of a political meltdown, no pun intended, every 50 years. The question is, should Armenia tie itself to a country that is in chaos with a periodicity of 25 to 50 years? It’s probably not a good idea.”

Titizian then asked Kopalyan whether the pivot towards the US, or “this dance that we’re dancing,” is going to lead to any kind of stability and peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Kopalyan declared that from late 2022, Armenia has implemented a policy of diversification, developing a multiplicity of strategic partnerships with a wide range of partners, which meant it pivoted away from Russia, in the realms of security and energy in particular, as well as the economy.

The authoritarian Russian regime, he said, prefers a state of “unpeace” or frozen conflicts, which make actors economically and politically dependent on Russia as the arbiter of their conflict. With the US stepping in, and pushing for a peace treaty, Kopalyan said “the jury’s out” on whether the Aliyev regime is negotiating in good faith with Armenia.

He said his research shows that it is not

in Azerbaijan’s strategic interests to sign a final peace treaty. Instead, he said, it is engaging in “negative peace,” where it stops attacking, since the new hegemon, the US, will not tolerate such overt belligerence. However, at the same time, Kopalyan said that the Aliyev regime’s domestic policies and narratives that perpetuate this kind of behavior have not changed. Instead, Azer-

goulian about the dangers of Armenia using nuclear small module reactors (SMR) when their design has not been perfected. He also asked whether Armenia really only had a binary choice between Russia and the US as vendors of nuclear reactors, or could it also consider China or other suppliers. Danagoulian replied that the SMRs are more financially appropriate for Ar-

media due to the small size of Armenia’s electrical grid demands. There could be cost overruns and scheduling delays with new units, but Danagoulian said that they are based on older designs that are being improved or scaled down versions of larger extant designs.

To mitigate the risks of adopting newly designed units, Danagoulian said you can come to an agreement with the vendor as to who will pay the cost for delays or other problems, though you can probably not fully remove these risks.

As far as the different nuclear reactor vendors go, Danagoulian said that Russia and China have been making the same type of reactors for a long time and have per-

fectured their supply chains and knowledge, whereas Americans tend to like to do each design of a reactor a little differently. Koreans also have had some recent excellent experience, he said. Danagoulian added that the Chinese reactors are actually cheaper than the others for a variety of reasons.

The problem is that Armenia does not need more than one reactor, so it cannot



From left, Areg Danagoulian, Nerses Kopalyan, Maria Titizian, and Arik Burakovsky (photo Aram Arkun)

bajjan is creating artificial obstacles to signing a final peace because it already has gotten everything it wanted.

Titizian asked Kopalyan how the Israeli-US war on Iran impacts a future Armenia-Azerbaijan peace deal and TRIPP. He replied that the 2025 Washington Accords and the TRIPP project are cornerstones for the normalization and peace process, and if they do not work, the probability is that the peace process will not lead to a final peace. On the one hand, he said, “So my understanding, [based on] a lot of my conversations in D.C., is that at this point, the United States does not consider the developments in Iran to in any way create problems, complications, or limitations in going forward with TRIPP.” However, he said, that is predicated on this conflict only lasting a few months at the most. If it turns into a prolonged war, that would pose serious threats. TRIPP could be deprioritized compared to the US war effort.

There could also be a spillover effect of the Iran war, in which Azerbaijan is dragged into it, or broader regional instability and perhaps civil war or fragmentation of Iran takes place. Massive refugee influxes, or a fragmentation as in Syria or Libya would lead to chaos in the security realm. This would make TRIPP no longer a tenable project.

Questions to the Panelists

Burakovsky started the question-and-answer session by asking Titizian how public attitudes in Armenia might be shifting prior to the upcoming June parliamentary elections concerning the pursuit of peace, encroachments on Armenian sovereignty, and questions of justice.

Titizian said that EVN recently conducted a poll of potential voters and will be doing three more such polls ahead of the elections. There was robust support for TRIPP, she said, but close to 40 percent were uncommitted.

She also pointed to the threat of misinformation spreading anti-EU or anti-West narratives and promoting Russia as the security guarantor. She concluded: “Pashinyan’s Civil Contract party is pulling ahead, but much will depend on what happens economically. what happens to the southern parts of our country. So, a lot of these things are still up in the air.”

A Tufts graduate student asked Dana-

diversify suppliers, he said, plus even one reactor costs around ¼ of Armenia’s GDP.

Kopalyan interjected that Armenia cannot speak of diversification and then contract with Russia, which means maintaining dependency on Russia. Moreover, he said, “And also the current US administration’s approach is a little different on these matters. And so when they build relations with a certain country, they have certain expectations. And so the politics of this also cannot be ignored.”

The same student asked Titizian whether she was concerned about issues concerning free speech in Armenia, giving the example of government conflicts with the

continued on next page

Based on
Antonia Arslan’s
memoir
Skylark Farm



THURSDAY
APRIL 23
7:00PM

St. Vartan Room
Presented by
St. John Armenian Church
&
Tekeyan Cultural Association
Detroit Chapter

For questions please contact:
Diana Alexanian: 248-505-6159 | Madisen Lundquist: 503-758-8805





COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

Armenian Church or the firing of the head of the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute for giving books about Karabakh to JD Vance.

She responded that freedom of speech should never come under threat. She said, “I’ve worked under three administrations, under the Kocharyan, Sargsyan, and now the Pashinyan administrations. And I have always practiced responsible journalism. I’ve never come under any kind of threat.”

At the same time, she said, “But are we seeing these trends that are concerning? Absolutely. And we have to speak up about it constantly.” She said, “the government has tried to pass some legislation that was concerning, but then with public outcry, it retreated every time. So this is the situation. And, you know, freedom of speech, we have to fight for that everywhere, not only in Armenia. Look at what’s happening here in the United States and in different parts of the world as well.”

As far as the clashes with the Armenian Church goes, Kopalyan replied that the government does not consider it to be an issue of church-state relations, but rather a national security issue. He said the government views the church leadership as being a subversive group that tried to undertake a theocratic coup and also an extension of Russian interests at the institutional level. Moreover, he said the church was seen as aligned with the prior regimes, while the government was also trying to separate the roles of church and state. He said this issue is heavily politicized in the diaspora as well.

A student asked about reports that the Armenian government plans to sign a deal concerning TRIPP with a Turkish company called Limak for 40 years, and that during the first 10 years the revenue will go to the Turkish government completely. Kopalyan said that this was not a tenable report. He said that as, “someone who’s been involved in sort of helping the negotiations in the process of TRIPP from the very start, I can tell you that we just got the feasibility

study, and ... the US-supported financial packet is not finalized.”

In other words, he said that decisions have not even been made on what the infrastructure and building process is going to be so there are no discussions about hiring yet. Moreover, the possibility of a Turkish company being hired has been consistently precluded.

The *Mirror-Spectator* asked whether the US would be actually committing or donating its own money to the costs of TRIPP



Arik Burakovsky (photo Aram Arkun)

and accompanying agreements, including potentially a nuclear reactor, or will it all be done through loans or “investments,” largely by private enterprises? Kopalyan responded that Armenia does not want the US to give it the \$9 billion cost “because it puts Armenia in another dependency structure.” Instead, it is a 25- or 35-year collective investment, Kopalyan said.

Kopalyan continued; “The logic of expecting handouts from partners to address your energy needs isn’t a tenable option, so Armenia is considering various financial packages from international institutions.

The United States, my understanding is, [as] part of the 1-2-3 agreement, will be willing to give some grants and so forth, which eventually are forgiven — things of that sort. ... Specifically, if, for example, Armenia chooses to go to the United States and Westinghouse is doing the servicing and the management and the maintenance of it [the nuclear plant], clearly it’s going to be in the interest of the United States to offer certain incentives because it contracts a huge amount of big projects with Ameri-

can companies.”

The good part of this, Danagoulian added, is that the US is expecting to provide some kind of financing, meaning low interest loan guarantees. This means that the US is effectively taking upon itself a risk, therefore it has an interest in the success of Armenia. In other words, he said, “The United States will not want Armenia to burn down.”

An Armenian community member asked about the seismological danger of rebuilding a nuclear power plant in an earthquake-prone zone. Danagoulian said that

Japan has one of the biggest sets of nuclear plants despite it being a very seismically active location, and another such location is California. He said that if done competently, nuclear plants can be made reliably seismically resistant in such locations.

A question about the effect the influx of Artsakh refugees have on Armenian domestic politics was addressed by Titizian. She responded, “I think from the state’s perspective, they tried to put together some benefit packages for the families. Were they perfect? No, they were not. Were expectations more than what the government could do? Perhaps. Was the government obligated to do more? I would argue, yes...I think that the expectation and the delivery did not match, and on both ends, there should have been a little bit more work done.”

She concluded: “And I really feel very strongly that anybody who tries to politicize the plight of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh to score political points in Armenia should be considered a traitor. That’s my position, to be honest.”

The final question taken was from a Tufts University Armenian-American undergraduate, who asked how unresolved tensions between Armenia and Turkey would affect the border opening between the two countries. Kopalyan replied that Turkey had used the Nagorno-Karabakh issue as an obstacle to denying opening of the border,

whereas every Armenian government since independence has wanted to normalize relations and open the border.

When the Karabakh issue was resolved, from the Turkish perspective, Turkey continued to dance around the issue due to two reasons. Baku exercises an informal veto on Turkish politics because of it funds a lot of the operations of the ruling political party in Turkey, especially in rural areas. Secondly, the US has been pressuring Turkey to open the border so Turkey’s strategic perspective is to see what it can get from the US in exchange for doing this. This situation, Kopalyan said, is basically outside of official Yerevan’s control.



WHEN

**Friday, April 24th
10:30 AM – 12 Noon**

WHERE

The Massachusetts State House

Armenian Genocide Commemoration Ceremony – 10:30 AM in House Chamber

**Free Bus Transportation provided by Knights of Vartan Ararat Lodge No. 1
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Saint James Armenian Apostolic Church 465 Mount Auburn St. Watertown, MA

DEPARTING STATE HOUSE FOR WATERTOWN AT 1:30 PM



AWWA Launches \$150,000 Global Grant to Support Aging Armenian Communities

BOSTON — At a time when aging populations are growing rapidly worldwide — and access to care remains uneven—Armenian Women’s Welfare Association (AWWA), a Boston-based nonprofit headquartered in Jamaica Plain, has announced the launch of its 2026 international grant program, committing up to \$150,000 to support essential services for Armenian elders living outside the United States.

The program will fund nonprofit organizations providing critical care to underserved Armenian populations aged 65 and older, including healthcare, mental health services, and social engagement programs that combat isolation and improve quality of life.

For many Armenian families, elders are more than caregivers — they are the living connection to culture, language and history. Yet across Armenia and diaspora communities worldwide, thousands of older adults face growing barriers to care, particularly in regions impacted by displacement, limited healthcare infrastructure, and economic instability.

“Caring for our elders is a deeply rooted value in Armenian culture,” said Wendy Segrest, executive director of AWWA. “Through this program, we are supporting organizations that ensure older adults are not only cared for, but truly seen, valued, and connected.

AWWA continues to mobilize diaspora resources to address global elder care challenges. The international grant program is part of the organization’s broader annual commitment of up to \$300,000 in funding dedicated to elder care initiatives.

In addition to its international work, AWWA also supports elder care locally through a Boston-based grant program. In 2025, AWWA awarded funding to FriendshipWorks, a nonprofit focused on reducing isolation and supporting older adults in the Greater Boston area. A new cycle of local funding is expected to be announced later this year. The competitive, discretionary grant will support one-year projects beginning July 1, 2026.

Applications are open from April 1 through April 30, 2026, and will be reviewed by AWWA’s Board of Directors based on impact, sustainability, fiscal responsibility, and alignment with the organization’s mission.

Eligibility Requirements: Verified nonprofit organizations in good standing; Programs serving Armenian populations aged 65 and older; Organizations operating in Armenia or regions outside the United States with significant Armenian populations.

For more information and to apply, visit: [projects/https://awwainc.org/international-elder-care-](https://awwainc.org/international-elder-care-)



COMMUNITY NEWS

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 St. Vartan Camp



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Heritage Walk to Honor Armenian American Legacy April 24-25

LEGACY, from page 5

traditions of the Armenian church, surrounded by handmade carpets, pomegranate imagery, and sacramental objects that instilled in him a deep reverence for handcraft and the storytelling potential of objects.

Dr. James Philip Bagian is an engineer and physician whose career has been defined by a focus on safety and human performance in high-risk environments. His 1989 NASA Space Shuttle flight marked the first time an individual of Armenian heritage traveled into space. His commitment to public service was shaped by his father, Philip Bagian, a first-generation American who served as a highly decorated fighter pilot during World War II, providing an early example of dedication and discipline.

Prior to his appointment to Hyatt's Board of Directors and being named President and Chief Executive Officer of Hyatt Hotels Corporation in 2006 and, most recent-

ly, Chairman of the Board, Hoplamazian served as president of The Pritzker Organization, LLC, (TPO), the principal financial and investment advisor to certain Pritzker family business interests. During his 17-year tenure with TPO, he served as advisor to various Pritzker family-owned companies, including Hyatt Hotels Corporation and its predecessors.

Major General Stephen J. Maranian, U.S. Army (Retired) was born in Boston. The son of Jacob Jack Maranian and (the late) Alma Khachadourian Maranian, he and siblings Jennifer and Ara were raised in the Armenian church, attending Sunday school and services at St. James Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown, Mass. Following graduation from Natick High School in 1984, he studied at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, PA, earning both a Bachelor of Science in business administration and a commission as second lieutenant in the

regular army through Bucknell's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program in 1988.

Edele Hovnanian serves as president and Chief Executive Officer of the H. Hovnanian Family Office, based in New Jersey, which handles the assets of three generations, including a commercial real estate division, a land development division, and an investment portfolio. She joined the family business in 1987 where she was mentored by her father, Hirair Hovnanian, for two decades prior to taking full control of operations in 2006. She also is the president of the H. Hovnanian Family Foundation, which currently donates over \$10 million a year to various causes.

Katherine Sarafian has been an integral part of the success and growth of Pixar Animation Studios, holding a variety of key leadership positions that have led to her current role as Senior Vice President, Production. Sarafian produced Pixar's Academy Award®-winning feature film, "Brave" (2012), before moving into her role on Pixar's executive leadership team.

Peter Vosbikian is widely recognized as

an accomplished executive in the household products industry as well as a dedicated advocate for Armenian heritage and community engagement. He has also carried on the legacy of his parents who survived the 1895 pogrom of Armenians living in Turkey, and the 1915 Genocide perpetrated by the Turkish government. Through perseverance, resourcefulness and determination, his father Bedros immigrated to the United States and built a new life that would inspire future generations of the Vosbikian Family.

Sona Movsesian, who will host the gala, is a former executive assistant-turned best-selling author, podcaster, and media personality who rose to national recognition alongside Conan O'Brien. Since 2009, she has been a beloved on-air presence, including her unforgettable trip to Armenia with Conan for "Conan Without Borders" — a moment of pride and joy for Armenians everywhere. Today, she co-hosts the wildly popular "Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend" and is the author of the instant New York Times bestseller *The World's Worst Assistant*. Her second book, *The World's Worst Mom*, arrives in fall 2026.



NEW YORK CITY ARMENIAN GENOCIDE COMMEMORATION



**SUNDAY
APRIL 26, 2026**

1:30PM

TIMES SQUARE

7TH AVE & 46TH STREET





Arts & Culture

Exhibition Showcases Artistic Career Of Fr. Garabed Kochakian

By Harry Kezelian

DETROIT — Faith was on exhibit — in a very literal sense — these past few weeks at St. John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit in Southfield, Michigan.

The community celebrated the career of emeritus pastor, Fr. Garabed Kochakian, who is celebrating the 50th anniversary of his ordination this year. But while other clergy may have their sermons printed or their humanitarian works memorialized, Fr. Kochakian's legacy is being commemorated with an art exhibition. Organized by the church's Fine Arts Committee and entitled *The Great and Holy Week: The Easter Story Through Armenian Sacred Art*, the exhibition's March 13th opening attracted over 200 attendees and was presided over by his Grace, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

The reason? Before Kochakian discerned a calling to serve the Lord, he already had a calling as an artist — an avocation he has combined with his priestly ministry and has continued to today. The exhibition is in fact, a retrospective of his work.

Kochakian was born on April 24, 1945, in Salem, Mass., to Roopen and Mary Kochakian, and baptized with the name Daniel. Young “Danny” was keenly aware of his Armenian and Christian heritage his entire life — his family had strong roots in Kharpert, historic Armenia, and his parents took the family to a local church every Sunday, regardless of the fact that there was no Armenian church in Salem (on major holidays, they made the trek into Boston to attend badarak at Holy Trinity Armenian Church). Later, the family became regular attendees at the former Holy Cross Armenian Church in Lawrence, where Kochakian got involved with the choir, the ACYOA, and playing the organ.

Kochakian developed an interest in music and art, taking piano lessons, playing trombone in the Salem High School marching band and entering local art competitions. Before joining the ministry, he took art school courses at both the Vesper George School of Art and the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts. But what began as a talented youthful endeavor would blossom into a full-fledged life's mission when he combined those skills with his priestly calling.

In 1966, Kochakian enrolled in Iona College in New Rochelle, NY, as a pre-seminary student, earning a bachelor's degree in Classics. After graduation, he spent the summer of 1970 studying Armenian language and history at Echmiadzin's Gevorkian Seminary. At the same time, he met his future wife, Detroit native Roberta Carman, who was a participant in the

see EXHIBITION, page 13



Marta (left) and Ani Aznavoorian with flowers that they had been given after their performance (photo Aram Arkun)

Aznavoorian Sisters Captivate Armenian Museum Audience in Concert

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The Aznavoorian sisters — cellist Ani and pianist Marta — captivated the audience at a performance at the Armenian Museum of America on Saturday, March 28. While both have performed separately in the Boston area in the past, this was the first time they appeared together as a duo.

The program included four popular works by Gomidas Vartabed, and Johannes Brahms' *Sonata for Cello and Piano in F major*, Opus 99. After intermission, the two premiered *Mount Ararat*, a work commissioned for the sisters from contemporary composer Peter Boyer (b. 1970), followed by Soviet Armenian composer Alfred “Avet” Terterian's *Sonata for Cello and Piano*. The program closed with a showpiece, deemed a “show-off” piece by Ani, by Italian composer and violinist Niccolò Paganini — *Variations on Theme from Rossini's 'Moses'* — which indeed allowed Ani to show off her virtuoso skills.

After fervent applause, the sisters came back and performed Alexander Arutunian (Harutyunyan)'s *Impromptu* as an encore.

see SISTERS, page 17



Nancy R. Kolligian (photo Natalie Nigito)



Marta Aznavoorian (photo Natalie Nigito)

From Spain With Love

By Karine Armen

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GLENDALE — The Armenian American Museum, in collaboration with Instituto Cervantes Los Angeles, sponsored a piano recital by award-winning pianist and mathematician Dr. Laura Farré Rozada on Wednesday, March 25, at the Glendale Presbyterian Church. The concert was free and included a reception.

The recital featured works by Komitas, Alan Hovhanness, Arno Babajanian, and Gayane Chebotarian.

“My interest in Armenia grew by getting to know its music. When I first listened to Komitas music, I felt mesmerized, and this feeling continued when I discovered other Armenian composers,” said Farré Rozada. “Armenian music deeply impressed me with how emotional and profound it is. It feels like the perfect combination of wisdom and sensibility.”

She was born in Vilanova i la Geltrú near Barcelona, Spain. She had concerts in Armenia. In 2025, she released an album titled “Araspel”



Dr. Laura Farré Rozada performing (Karine Armen photo)

as a tribute to Armenia's musical heritage, which earned multiple international awards in the United States, the United Kingdom, Armenia, and Europe. Throughout her career, she has performed across five continents in renowned venues including Carnegie Hall in New York, the Southbank Centre in London, and the Cafesjian Center for the Arts in Yerevan, with broadcasts featured on BBC Radio 3, France Musique, and international public radio networks.

She received the American Classical Young Musician Award in 2022.

see PIANIST, page 13



ARTS & CULTURE

Exhibition Showcases Artistic Career of Fr. Kochakian

EXHIBITION, from page 12
first ACYOA Armenian Studies Program that summer in Yerevan.

As a student at St. Nersess Seminary and the affiliated St. Vladimir's, from which he earned his MDiv in 1973, his love of art continued, as he wrote his master's thesis on "Religious Art in Armenian Theology" under the encouragement of his mentor, Eastern Orthodox theologian John Meyendorff. His dissertation, in which he analyzed the teachings of Vrtanes Kertogh (7th century) and other Armenian church fathers in support of sacred art and against the Byzantine movement of "iconoclasm" (destruction of images), was published in book form by the Eastern Diocese in 1995 as *Art in the Arme-*

M.A. in art history in 1999.

He has been tasked by the Eastern Diocese with writing a number of publications on sacred art (among other subjects) and he holds a seat on the Diocesan Liturgical Arts and Architecture Commission, which advises on the artistic aspects of new church construction. Such works as the bronze doors of St. Vartan Cathedral in Manhattan were designed under his artist's brush and his approval. He continues to paint as well as to teach young Armenians the tradition of Armenian sacred art from the earliest manuscripts to today. (See his articles on the Instagram page "Armenian Orthodox Theology" https://www.instagram.com/p/DIti_XLKz70/)



Ribbon-cutting for the exhibition: L to R, Yn. Roberta Kochakian, Fr. Garabed Kochakian, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Fr. Aren Jebejian (photo Matthew Yessian)

nian Church: Origins and Teaching.

After graduating, Kochakian spent a year studying at the AGBU Melkonian Institute in Cyprus and St. James Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem, following which he married and was ordained to the priesthood in 1976. During these travels, he documented and photographed religious art and iconography, continuing his lifelong study of art history. Even while serving as a priest of the Armenian Church, he completed coursework and a dissertation through the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, receiving his

The current exhibition, which began on March 13 and was planned to stay up until March 29, has proved so popular that the church has decided to leave it up until April 24, when a large crowd is expected for a Martyrs' Day commemoration attended by all four Metro Detroit Armenian churches.

The opening was presided over by Eastern Diocese Primate, Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan as well as Archbishop Paren Avedikian of Holy Echmiadzin (former pastor of St. John in Detroit) and the Very Rev. Aren Jebejian, current pastor of St. John.



Painting from exhibit by Fr. Garabed, "Christ Washing the Feet of His Disciples" (photo credit Matthew Yessian)

Following a welcome in the St. John Cultural Hall by Dr. Raffi Belian, chairman of the Fine Arts Committee, and short remarks by the presiding clergy and the honoree, Fr. Garabed Kochakian, attendees were treated to a short video documentary on Kochakian's artistic career, produced and narrated by local composer and arts personality Dan Yessian, a close friend of the artist.

Next, those present processed to the St. Vartan Room where the ribbon-cutting ceremony took place, unveiling for the first time to the general public the artwork of the past 52 years of Kochakian's career. As the attendees were ushered back into the main hall for refreshments and Armenian wine, many remarked they had been unaware of the extent of Kochakian's artistic output and talents. Although most community members are aware that Kochakian has always had an avocation as an artist, he has been relatively humble in promoting himself and his work. In fact, he subscribes to the traditional Eastern Christian notion that the purpose of sacred art is not "self-expression" as in modern Western art, but rather to "open a window to heaven." As a messenger of his faith through his canvas, Kochakian has become an accomplished master in the art of opening the eyes of the heart to the spiritual life through works of visual artistry. The current exhibition is a fitting tribute to his career and ministry.

Spanish Pianist With Love

PIANIST, from page 12

Currently she serves as an associate professor at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia and the Catalonia College of Music. Her work explores

musical memory, performance psychology, and the ways patterns shape human expression.

The Armenian American Museum is located in Glendale. It is in its final phase of construction and is expected to open this year. The groundbreaking took place in 2021. The Armenian Genocide Centennial Committee adopted the museum as its official landmark project. Over the last few years, the museum has hosted several cultural events and galas leading up to its official opening.

Berdj Karapetian, the Executive Chairman of the museum, welcomed the audience and shared the importance of bringing cultural events to the public.

During a post-concert interview, Farré Rozada said, "I just found out that I received an important music award for my CD 'Araspel' that is dedicated to the refugees of Artsakh." She added, "Spain has not recognized the Armenian Genocide. I am using my CD and the musical platform to promote Armenian music and bring knowledge about the history of Armenia." Her CD is her third album and has received 8 awards.

Her next project is a new record focusing on music by Armenian women composers.

Tekeyan Cultural Association & UCLA Armenian Music Program's

Vem Ensemble

2026 Tour



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Khachaturian,
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Schubert*

Prof. Movses Pogossian violin, Ally Cho violin,
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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.

APRIL 13 — Monday. Saint James Men's Club Dinner & Fellowship with Knights of Vartan Guest speaker; Dr. Al Sacco, Jr. former NASA astronaut and former navy seal, his honors include, NASDA Space Flight Medal, AICHE Lifetime Achievement Award, New England Institute of Chemist Distinguished Chemist Award [2010], member of the International Academy of Astronautics. He holds four honorary doctorates. 6.15 p.m. mezza, 7 p.m. Dinner Losh kebab and Kheyma. \$25.per person, all are welcome. 465 Mt. Auburn St. Watertown.

APRIL 15 — "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. 7 p.m. Parlin Memorial Library 410 Broadway Everett.

APRIL 16 — Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA) hosts "Dove of Peace: Art Treasures and History from the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association" as CYSCA celebrates Records into the Cambridge Public Library's Archives and Special Collections. Guest speaker Gary Lind-Sinianian, Collections Curator of the Armenian Museum of America. In the Community Room at the Cambridge Public Library (Main), 449 Broadway, Cambridge. Free and open to the public. Program starts promptly at 7, doors open at 6:30 PM, food reception follows the program. Registration required at <https://bit.ly/yerevandove>. For more information, email info@cambridgeyerevan.org

APRIL 16 — "My Armenia (1999-2008)" by Winslow Martin on view April 16 to May 30, 2026 at Project Save Photograph Archive, 600 Pleasant Street in Watertown, Gallery hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2-5:30 p.m., Saturdays from 12-4 p.m., and by appointment. Directions and more details at projectsave.org or 617-923-4542. Opening reception Thursday, April 16, 6:30-9 p.m.

APRIL 17 — NEW DATE! The Tekeyan Cultural Association of Boston and AGBU New England District present HyeVibe. All Armenian Students' Association Clubs and university students are invited from 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 though Venmo: @Tekeyan_Boston.

APRIL 23 — Eldad Ben Aharon, "Israeli-Turkish Relations at the End of the Cold War: The Geopolitics of Denying the Armenian Genocide." 7.30 p.m. At the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont. Presented by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) / Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues. Hybrid event.

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 25 — "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. 2-4 p.m. Community Room Saugus Public Library 295 Central St, Saugus

APRIL 26 — "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. 2-4 PM Brookline Public Library 361 Washington Street, Brookline Village.

APRIL 26 — The Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee of Merrimack Valley hosts a commemoration. Celebration of Divine Liturgy by the combined Armenian Churches of Merrimack Valley, Saint Gregory Armenian Church, 158 Main St., North Andover, 10 a.m. Youth program during church services. Following Divine Liturgy, prayer service at Church's Martyr's Monument. Luncheon and Musical performance featuring violinist Haig Hovsepian and pianist Ani Hovsepian.

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.

APRIL 30 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter will present an Armenian Cooking Demonstration Mortadella + Mushabak with Rita Balyozian and Roubina Davidian. Series coordinator Rita Balyozian. Thursday, Baikar Building, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, 7 p.m. \$30 includes reception. RSVP Required @ Sossy Yogurtian, 617-281-1647 or syogurtian@comcast.net. Pay cash or Venmo <https://venmo.com/u/Tekeyan-Boston>. Add note: CookingClass

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.

MAY 2 — Annual Armenian Spring Food Festival 12-6 PM. Holy Archangels Armenian Church, St. Michael & St. Gabriel. Delicious Armenian Food! Chicken Kebab, Losh Kebab and Kheyma Dinners; Cuisine & Pastry Tables and Jingalov Hat. Summer Baskets Raffle, 1280 Boston Rd., Haverhill, MA 01835. For additional information, call (978) 372-9227 or email admin@archangelsarmenianchurch.org

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.

MAY 3 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association, Boston's Holy Trinity Armenian Church, and UCLA's Armenian Music Program present a concert by the UCLA Vem Ensemble, led by Prof. Movses Pogossian, as part of its 2026 Tekeyan tour, including works of Komitas, Khachaturian, Toumajan, Suni, Gazarossian, Schubert and Saryan. Sunday, 2 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Free admission, freewill donations appreciated. For more info, email tcadirector@aol.com

MAY 3 — "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. 2-4 PM Wellesley Public Library 530 Washington Street, Wellesley.

MAY 30 — The Armenian Friends of America will host a special spring Dinner Dance on Saturday, with 100% of proceeds benefiting Artsakh refugees. The evening will feature Mal Barsamian, Leon Janikian, Bobby Raphaelian, Ken Kalajian, and Jason Naroian, with vocals by Jason Naroian and John Arzigian. Their extraordinary talent and devotion to Armenian music promise an unforgettable night of culture, community, and celebration. Concert titled Helping Our Homeland - AFA Benefit for Artsakh Refugees, 6:00 PM - 11:30 PM, DoubleTree by Hilton, 123 Old River Road, Andover. Ticket Information (Advance Purchase Only) • \$100 per person, \$950 for a table of 10 (single check required). Tickets may be purchased online at www.ArmenianFriendsofAmerica.org, or by contacting any of the event organizers: Linda Doherty (603-760-8328), Mary Ann Janigian (603-770-3375), Kathy Geyer (978-902-3198), John Arzigian (603-560-3826), Lisa Apovian (508-662-8395), or Lu Sirmaian (978-314-1956)

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



ARTS & CULTURE

Aznavoorian Sisters Captivate Armenian Museum Audience in Concert

SISTERS, from page 12

Marta Aznavoorian before performing Gomidas's works reflected on the Armenian Museum as a setting for the concert, declaring: "It's quite profound to be performing in a space like this, with artists such as [Arshile] Gorky, and modern-day artists such as [Serj] Tankian, where art is memory and is visible, and it is preserved. Tonight, let's hear what memory sounds like."

The Aznavoorian sisters provided some background to each piece before playing it, and afterwards usually gave each other a sororal kiss of congratulations. Ani noted proudly that her cello was crafted in the year 2000 by their father, Peter Aznavoorian, a chemist who loved classical music and later in life changed careers to become a maker of cellos and other string instruments.

The Aznavoorians expressed their happiness at being able to perform for an Armenian audience. Their connection to the Armenian heritage is deep. Their first public performance, at the ages of 4 and 8, was at an Armenian church in the Chicago area.

Marta stated after the performance that

"Armenian music, to me, isn't just something we perform — it's a doorway into who we are. It carries our history, our loss, our joy, and our resilience in a way that words often cannot. When people hear it, they are not just listening to a tradition; they are stepping into the emotional and cultural heartbeat of Armenia."

The sisters have won the National Foundation for the Arts Award, which led to performances at the Kennedy Center and the White House. Their debut CD, "Gems of Armenia," reached number 4 on the list of top 10 Most Coveted Releases of 2022. Both sisters have toured widely and won many awards in recognition of their artistry.

Museum Executive Director Jason Sohigian served as the master of ceremonies. The concert was part of the Music in Color Program, sponsored by Nancy R. Kolligian, for the second year at the museum. Museum Development Director Sarah Hayes said a few words of appreciation at the end of the evening, as did sponsor Nancy Kolligian, who praised the caliber of the performance of the "koyrigs" (sisters) and thanked them for their artistry.



Ani Aznavoorian, at left, and Marta Aznavoorian (photo Aram Arkun)

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MICHIGAN

APRIL 24 — Friday, 4 p.m., University of Michigan Center for Armenian Studies Community Event: 4th Annual Shared Memories: "The Armenian Experience Through Objects and Stories," at University of Michigan, Weiser Hall, 500 Church St., Ann Arbor, MI. Organized by the University of Michigan Center for Armenian Studies and cosponsored by Armenian Students Cultural Association and Multidisciplinary Workshop for Armenian Studies and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

MAY 9 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association, UCLA Armenian Music Program, Saint John Armenian Church and Music Guild of St. John Armenian Church present a concert by UCLA's Vem Ensemble as part of the latter's 2026 Tekeyan Tour, including works of Khachaturian, Komitas, Toumajan, Suni, Gazarossian, Schubert and Saryan. Vem members, led by founder Prof. Movses Pogossian on violin, include Ally Cho on violin, Damon Zavala on viola, Niall Tarō Ferguson on cello. There will be several guest speakers. Saturday, 7 p.m. St. John Armenian Church, 2001 Northwestern Hwy, Southfield. Free admission, freewill donations appreciated. For info, call Diana Alexanian 248-505-6159 or Madisen Lundquist 503-758-8805,

MAY 10 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association, UCLA Armenian Music Program, and University of Michigan Center for Armenian Studies present a concert by UCLA's Vem Ensemble as part of Vem's 2026 Tekeyan Tour, including works of Khachaturian, Komitas, Toumajan, Suni, Gazarossian, Schubert and Saryan. Vem includes founder Prof. Movses Pogossian on violin, Ally Cho on violin, Damon Zavala on viola/violin, Niall Tarō Ferguson cello. Guest speakers Melissa Bilal, Ronald Suny, Anoush Suny. Sunday, 3 to 5 p.m. Helmut Stern Auditorium at the University of Michigan Museum of Art, 525 S. State St., Ann Arbor. Free admission. For info, email armenianstudies@umich.edu

MONTREAL

MAY 8 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association and the UCLA Armenian Music Program present a concert by UCLA's Vem Ensemble as part of its 2026 Tekeyan Tour, including works of Khachaturian, Komitas, Toumajan, Suni, Gazarossian, Schubert and Saryan. Vem, led by founder Prof. Movses Pogossian on violin, includes Ally Cho on violin, Damon Zavala on viola, Niall Tarō Ferguson on cello. 8 p.m. Tekeyan Armenian Community Center, 825 Manoogian St., Ville Saint-Laurent, Québec. Ticket \$35, contact Tekeyan Center at 514 747-6680.

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.

MAY 1 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association, UCLA Armenian Music Program, and Villanova Armenian Students' Organization present as part of the UCLA Vem Ensemble 2026 tour, a concert with works of Khachaturian, Komitas, Toumajan, Suni, Gazarossian, Schubert and Saryan. Vem members, led by Prof. Movses Pogossian on violin, include Ally Cho on violin, Damon Zavala on viola/violin, and Niall Tarō Ferguson on cello. Friday, 7:30 p.m. Cinema at Connelly Center, Villanova University. Tickets \$20. For more info/tickets call Vahe at 215-908-9502 or Sira at 267-902-0700

RHODE ISLAND

APRIL 25 — Armenian Genocide Remembrance Service and Concert. Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church, Providence, RI. 70 Jefferson St., Providence. Saturday, 7 p.m. Program includes Armenian Genocide Remembrance Service and Memorial Concert by Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island

APRIL 26 — The Armenian Martyr's Memorial Committee is presenting a program commemorating the 111th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Sunday, North Burial Ground in Providence at 12.30 p.m. Featuring Special Guest Speaker Dr. Asya Darbinyan, the executive director of the Center for Holocaust, Human Rights and Genocide Education (CHHANGE) at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, NJ. She also serves as vice president of the Society for Armenian Studies. In case of inclement weather, the program will be held at Armenian Evangelical Church Sanctuary, 180 Oaklawn Ave., Cranston.

MAY 3 — Concert "Jazzical Komitas", features world-renowned pianist and composer Joel A. Martin with guest singer Anahit Zakaryan, laureate of international competitions. Sunday, 5:00 pm. @ Belcourt of Newport, 657 Bellevue Ave., Newport, Suggested donation: \$40. Advance tickets only (no tickets at the door): 401-272-7712. Presented by the Cultural Committee of St. Sahag & St. Mesrob Armenian Church in collaboration with Belcourt of Newport. Refreshments and complimentary wine to follow.

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



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Barbara Hansen's Chashushuli, an Easy Beef Stew from Georgia

LOS ANGELES — Barbara Hansen, an esteemed James Beard Award winner, and pioneering food writer, passed away on January 28, 2023. Renowned for her extensive food writing at the Los Angeles Times, Hansen made significant contributions to recognizing international cuisines in Los Angeles. Throughout her four-decade tenure at the Los Angeles Times, she was a vibrant voice, dissecting the nuances of diverse culinary traditions brought to the city by various immigrant communities. Her work lives on through her insightful articles and social media presence, where she continued to share her passion for food until her final days at the age of 90.

“In the mid '60s, Hansen was recruited by Los Angeles Times food editor Jeanne Voltz to help out with the section. Hansen's insatiable curiosity predated even the arrival of cilantro in Los Angeles, an ingredient she eventually found in Chinese markets labeled ‘Chinese parsley.’ In the decades that followed, Hansen's precise, deep reporting documented waves of immigration to Los Angeles: Thais, Armenians, Koreans, Indians, Oaxacans, and Salvadorans, whose cuisines she embraced. In 1969 alone, Hansen wrote about Israeli consulate dinners, soul food, Egyptian cuisine, Colombian food, the regional antojitos of Central America, and Filipino restaurants, to name a few.”

Here is one of Hansen's stories in her own words about Chashushuli, an amazing Georgian meat and tomato stew featured in *Tasting Georgia* by writer/photographer/cook Carla Capalbo:

Chashushuli--I can't pronounce it, but I love it.

Chashushuli, or ‘stewed’ in Georgian, is a satisfyingly rich meat and tomato stew resembling European goulash. Combining veal, beef, chicken, or pork with tomatoes, onions, garlic, and a generous seasoning of herbs and spices to simmer in broth or water renders an intense, flavorful, and aromatic dish – ideal for chilly evenings. It is important to first fry the meat before adding to and stewing with the other ingredients; alternatively, substitute meat for mushrooms for a vegetarian version. Soak up the stew with a side of fresh-baked bread of your choice.

What is it? A beef stew from the country of Georgia that's like no beef stew I've ever tasted. It's full of fresh herbs, stirred in just before serving. And it contains an ingredient that I haven't seen in other recipes--ground fenugreek. This is easy to get, if you are anywhere near an Indian market. Just ask for methi seeds--they're an Indian staple--then powder them in a spice grinder and enjoy the delightful celery like aroma they produce.

Where did I have chashushuli?

In my own kitchen, thanks to the recipe in *Tasting Georgia*, an extraordinary book by writer/photographer/cook Carla Capalbo. A travel guide as well as a cookbook, *Tasting Georgia* tells what to see, where to stay, where to eat, what to drink and introduces you to local cooks. The subtitle is “A Food and Wine Journey in the Caucasus.”

Be aware that after reading it, you're likely to scrap your vacation plans and go to Georgia instead of to the beach. Capalbo's stunning photos alone are enough to convince you. Chashushuli is in a section that covers the route toward Georgia's southern borders with Turkey and Armenia. The recipe was inspired by a beef and tomato stew served at Valodia's Cottage, a hotel near the cave city of Vardzia. Ca-

palbo tested this and the other recipes at her home in London but gives American equivalents to the metric and Imperial measures.”

The Georgians have a unique way of eating that's a direct reflection of their legendary — and seemingly boundless — sense of hospitality. The place to best experience this is at a supra, or Georgian feast, where food, wine and music come together as the quintessential expression of Georgian culture.

At a supra, the table is laden with food before anyone sits down. The center of a long table hosting, say, 20 people will be set with at least seven or eight cold dishes – from stuffed aubergines/eggplants and vegetable medleys to cheeses flavored with mint and fermented blossoms – each of which will have been divided into four or five plates and positioned along the table so guests won't have to reach far to get them. Diners are given small plates and serve themselves from the dishes close to them. Even tables laid for just four or five people are treated this way. Once everyone is seated and has started eating, other dishes — including hot stews, stuffed breads, dumplings and barbecued meats — begin to arrive, and are placed beside (and sometimes even on top of) the first set of foods.

If a serving plate is emptied, the dish is not removed but replenished by the attentive hosts. The diner's plate is changed once or twice during the meal: they're encouraged to make a fresh start on the food without the remains of the first round. This abundance holds true at all levels of society, including in simple, rural households whose water may still be pumped by hand from a well in the garden. When it comes to hosting and feeding guests, the Georgian table is always generous.

On my first try — and there will be more — chashushuli worked like a dream. It's especially congenial to California cooks, with its striking use of cilantro--a small bunch is plunged into the center of the stew (above) and more is stirred in at the end, along with basil, parsley and raw garlic. There's a speck of heat from chili too.

Capalbo cooks the stew in the oven but says that Georgian cooks would probably simmer it on top of the stove. I tried that alternative and it worked just fine, but the oven might be handy if you are making a large amount for a party. There's much more in this book, including instructions on how to make the famous Georgian cheese-filled bread khachapuri. It's available in my area, but I have yet to try it.

BEEF AND TOMATO STEW (Chashushuli)

From *Tasting Georgia* by Carla Capalbo

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 1/2 cups chopped onion
- 1 pound stewing beef, cut into 1 1/4-inch cubes
- 1 teaspoon ground fenugreek*
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 cups water or plain meat broth
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup tomato pulp, fresh or canned (without juice)
- Finely chopped medium-hot fresh chili to taste
- 1 ounce cilantro, tied into a bunch

To finish:

- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- 1/4 cup chopped basil, purple and green
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley

PREPARATION:

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

In a heavy, cast-iron or other ovenproof casserole, melt half the butter. Stir in the onions and cook over low heat until translucent, 7 minutes.

Turn the onions onto a side plate and add the remaining butter to the pan. Stir in the meat, raise the heat and brown the beef on all sides. Add the onions, the fenugreek, and half the garlic. Cook for a minute more. Add the water, salt and tomato pulp and bring to a boil. Add the chili. Remove from the heat, pushing the bunch of coriander into the middle of the stew. Cover the casserole and place in the center of the preheated oven. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 70 to 90 minutes or until the meat is tender but not dry.

Remove the stew from the oven. Pull out the cilantro bouquet, squeezing it against a spoon to extract all the flavor; discard. Stir in the chopped cilantro, basil, parsley and the remaining garlic and allow to stand for 5 minutes before serving.

Makes 3 to 4 servings

* Fenugreek is used in cooking as seeds, dried leaves (kasuri methi), or fresh leaves (methi), adding a unique bittersweet, maple-like flavor, especially popular in Indian, Middle Eastern, and North African dishes for curries, lentil stews, pickles, and flatbreads like paratha.

Tasting Georgia, A food and wine journey in the Caucasus. Text and photographs by Carla Capalbo with 70 recipes.

Tasting Georgia is the first food, wine and travel book about this wonderful country in the Caucasus Mountains. It includes 70 easy and delicious recipes and lots of beautiful photographs of people, places and food.

Purchase at: <https://www.tastinggeorgia.com/store> or go to: <https://www.amazon.com/Tasting-Georgia-Food-Journey-Caucasus/dp/1566560594>

Winner: Guild of Food Writers Food and Travel Award 2018

Winner: Best Food Book of 2017 UK Gourmand International Cookbook Awards

“The definitive cookbook on Europe's great unsung cuisines... Carla Capalbo's *Tasting Georgia* shows off the culinary gem of the Caucasus... [It] is without question the best book ever written in English about Georgian food and wine... Every dish is brought to life by colorful, intimate photography.” –Saveur

neer-food-journalist-barbara-hansen-dies-tasting-notes

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
SINCE 1932



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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

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755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA
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FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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Why Did Pashinyan Head To Moscow?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On April 1, negotiations took place between Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, who visited Moscow on a working trip. The meeting followed upon a press release distributed by the Kremlin.

The talks covered the current state and prospects of Russian-Armenian relations within the framework of strategic partnership and alliance, integration cooperation in the Eurasian space, and topical issues on the regional agenda — particularly the development of economic and transport-logistics ties in the South Caucasus.

Pashinyan had previously stated that he understands the nature of Russia and other great powers and actively seeks meetings with them. This suggested that the meeting was largely initiated by the Armenian side. The issues discussed were significant, covering a range of topics addressed in my earlier analyses.

First, the Russian side placed the current state of bilateral strategic relations on the agenda, signaling that Armenia was expected to reaffirm its commitment to relations with Moscow. The second major point concerned Eurasian integration processes, primarily within the Eurasian Economic Union. The

represented critical and comprehensive topics requiring discussion at the highest level. The Russian side may also have sought clarification regarding the so-called “hybrid war” it is allegedly conducting against Armenia — a claim frequently made by Armenian authorities — which could have become part of the discussion. Likewise, Russia likely outlined its own interests and priorities to the Armenian leadership.

While the range of issues at such meetings is always broad, the recent phone conversation between the Russian and Armenian leaders likely served as the occasion for Pashinyan to request the meeting and specify the issues he wanted to discuss. These priorities subsequently appeared in the Russian press release.

There were also other important circumstances. Due to developments surrounding Iran, Russia and the war in Ukraine had somewhat moved to the background, and in the United States, the war in Ukraine was no longer the central topic of public attention. Instead, focus shifted to the conflict involving the United States and Israel against Iran.

As a result, and also considering the reduction of aid to Ukraine, including military assistance, Russia gained a certain opportunity to become more active, including in the South Caucasus. Taking into account that US involvement in the TRIPP project could encounter obstacles, and that Iran might view TRIPP as a threat, Russia likely aimed to take advantage of this moment to advance its national interests.

Finally, Pashinyan’s visit also had a pre-election dimension. His team, preparing for upcoming elections, could not present to the Armenian public that relations with Russia were strained, as this would call into question his foreign policy and diplomatic capabilities — a situation the current authorities were unlikely to allow. The elections itself was also discussed with Putin, as mentioned in the press release following the meeting.

Of course, in addition to all these topics, the leaders of Armenia and Russia also discussed a number of other important issues, the key one being the disagreements surrounding the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). During the public part of their meeting, both sides presented their positions regarding the CSTO. During the meeting in Kremlin the Armenian side attempted to place the responsibility for Armenia’s problems with the CSTO on Russia, while the Russian side, in turn, tried to shift that responsibility onto Armenia, stating that the CSTO’s position was conditioned by Armenia’s stance on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, particularly the fact that Armenia recognized Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan.

It is true that there are many accumulated issues and problems in Armenian-Russian relations. However, this does not mean that Armenia is trying at all costs to break away from Russia and distance itself. Moreover, Armenia has not taken any concrete anti-Russian steps so far, aside from statements, calls, and discussions.

(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.)



discussions indicated that Armenia was unlikely to leave the union and move toward EU integration, as sometimes portrayed by Armenia’s authorities, but might instead deepen its engagement within Eurasian frameworks and institutions.

Logistics issues in the South Caucasus were addressed, particularly regarding the Russian railway, part of which Armenia hopes to privatize for use in the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) project. Discussions about the relevant section of the Armenian railway had been ongoing for some time. Because it is part of the Russian railway system, separating a segment is complicated both logistically and geopolitically. Pashinyan likely attempted to secure Russian agreement in Moscow, though it remained difficult to imagine Russia consenting without ensuring its own interests. Russia had also repeatedly stated that it could participate in the TRIPP project and maintain a presence throughout the logistics chain.

Russia has not abandoned the trilateral statement of November 9, 2020, which addresses logistical and transport connectivity issues. This meant Russia approached the discussion with its own calculations, especially given the challenges created by the US-led war against Iran over the past month, which increased regional risks associated with implementing the TRIPP project.

All three directions highlighted in the Russian press release

Denationalizing the ‘Map’ (Reflections on the ‘Real Armenia Ideology’)

By Vahan Zanoian

[Note: The bulk of this article is taken from the Appendix of a book entitled *The Armenian Condition: 2018-2025*, which is a collection of my articles and selected interviews during the last several years, published in July 2025, in Yerevan.]

It is said, ‘that which bends does not break.’ It is a wise saying, applicable to all walks of life, including to the foreign policy strategies of sovereign states. The foreign policy of the Republic of Armenia since the 2020 44-day war has been all about bending, presumably in order not to break. Preempting an ostensibly imminent Azerbaijani invasion last spring was a wise move, since Armenia was in no way ready to defend itself. It still is not, which makes continued “bending” seem like a wise policy in the eyes of many both in Armenia and the diaspora.

However, what makes this policy most ominous is the fact that it is not, as often portrayed in the Armenian political discourse, merely a short-term tactical move aimed at securing the survival of the state, but an attempt to fundamentally transform and de-nationalize the collective memory and consciousness of the Armenian nation.

There is no other way to explain the host of unilateral concessions made by the Armenian government which go way beyond what would have been necessary to avoid another unequal war. These are by now well known, but it is worth giving a partial list again: marginalizing and even questioning the Genocide; formally and officially renouncing the pursuit of historical justice; neglecting our compatriots in the dungeons of Baku and excluding their plight from the peace negotiations; constantly focusing on the peace agenda while the “Western Azerbaijan” rhetoric from Baku intensifies, over 200 sq kms of sovereign Armenian strategic heights remain occupied by Azerbaijani forces, and our compatriots are given life sentences in the sham trials; erasing our millennia-old national symbols like Mount Ararat from our images, even without any connotations of territorial claims against our neighbors, and, more recently, subverting the oldest Armenian institution of all time, the Armenian Apostolic church.

Interestingly, the Armenian government does not hide its aim to extinguish the traditional Armenian ethos. It has been promoting what it calls a new “National Ideology” or the “Ideology of the Real Armenia,” which it claims represents an even “bigger revolution” than the “Velvet Revolution” of 2018, in how we think about our statehood and nation. Those who follow events in Armenia are familiar with the image of the Prime Minister waving a golden cut-out of the map of today’s Armenia, all 29,743 square kilometers of it, and declaring that it, and only it, represents both the State and the Motherland. The “Real Armenia Ideology” is centered exclusively around and within that map.

Scholars and historians haven’t bothered to respond to the specific assertions made in this new ideology, and there has not been any significant public feedback or debate about it. Yet, the phenomenon needs to be taken seriously, because by mixing basic truths with unrelated and unfounded conclusions, it could disseminate anti-national ideas which would seem logical and appealing to an important segment of the unsuspecting Armenian public, both in and out of Armenia.

A summary of selected tenets of the new ideology include:

— **The motherland is the state:** The subtext is ‘and only the state.’ The ideology of “Real Armenia” identifies the Armenian motherland as the internationally recognized state — the current Republic of Armenia. So, if you love your motherland, love and strengthen today’s republic. Here too, the implied subtext is, “and nothing else.” It further claims that the adoption of a new Constitution by popular referendum is critical, because all previous referendums that created the current Constitution are not legitimate, because they belong to a system left over from a stateless people, whereas now Armenia seeks to transform into a state-building people.

There are so many flaws in this argument that it is impossible to do justice to all of them. But first, let’s highlight its “basic truth,” which is the importance of statehood. That is the lure, because it is universally accepted, even — and especially — by the fierce opponents of this government. But loving the State and loving part of the motherland which happens to fall outside today’s state are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

Statehood is, and should be, the ultimate and absolute value for the Armenian nation, which has been deprived of it for far too long. But the exclusion of all national interests, history, heritage, causes, indicators of historical identity and symbols of Armenian spirituality that fall outside the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Armenia from the notion of the Armenian “motherland” is not “ideology,” it is extreme minimalistic denialism.

There have been longer periods of statelessness than periods of statehood throughout the history of the Armenian nation. Had the nation not survived during these periods of statelessness, there would be no Armenian State today. Today’s Republic owes its very existence to the resilience of the Armenian nation. So, the notion that a “constitution left over from a stateless people” not only has no legitimacy and rings hollow, but can be even taken as an insult to the stateless Armenians who maintained their national identity against all odds for centuries, and thus kept not only the dream, but also the distinct possibility of having a state one day, alive.

— **Nation versus population:** The “nation,” composed of the members of ethnic Armenians, does not have political or legal agency, whereas the population of Armenia, composed of its citizens, is endowed with political and legal capacity. Non-Armenian citizens of Armenia are part of its population, whereas non-citizen Armenians are not.

Here, the “basic truth” that acts as the lure is the technical/legal correctness of the statement. Citizens are in fact defined through legal and political terms, whereas members of an ethnicity are not, unless the country they reside in and have citizenship of has made special provisions for their rights as a minority. But, as in the first point above, the implications of that technically correct statement are to strip the state of its national heritage and character, precisely the features that the nation strived to keep and protect while it was stateless.

— **The state as a tool for prosperity:** The popular Armenian saying “stay where the bread is” is invoked, the idea being that if the “bread,” i.e., prosperity is secured in Armenia, people will stay and not emigrate in search of a more prosperous life elsewhere. The state is the product of people’s search for prosperity, and prosperity is the necessary condition for achieving happiness. A corollary tenet is “Get rich and enrich.” Living well, another popular Armenian folk saying, is the ultimate objective. Individuals, society and the state should be engaged in getting rich and enriching each other, of course all within a legal and just economic and social environment.

In these tenets, the “basic truth” and lure is the compelling call for “living well,” which is acceptable to any rational being, and, as mentioned above, is part of the Armenian popular psyche.

Equally true is the importance of a strong and developed economy. Armenia must get rich if it hopes to survive, let alone compete, in this neighborhood. But to say that “the state is the product of people’s search for prosperity” not only reveals a total lack of understanding of how states are founded, but also, like the previous points, contains a subliminal message for people to forget national causes, rights, history, self-determination, independence and dignity, and focus on living well.

The first Republic was not the product of its founders’ search for prosperity. It was the product of their quest for self-determination, independence, and freedom to be Armenian in their own state rather than second-class citizens in someone else’s. It emerged from the ashes of the Genocide, against all odds, with almost superhuman courage and vision and national purpose. The search for prosperity was probably the furthest thing from the minds of the people who founded the First Republic in the thick of the existential struggle in 1918, and, at the most, prosperity may have been looked upon as a welcome side-effect of Independence, not the incentive to reach it.

Even though the current republic did not achieve its independence through the herculean struggle of the first, it is nonetheless the successor of the first. To reduce it to the product of the search for prosperity is not only factually wrong, but it also robs the statehood of its historic significance as the first Armenian state after 543 years of statelessness.

— **Man is the highest value:** This principle makes it immediately clear that its central point is the primary needs of man — i.e., back to living well. It bluntly downplays “high politics” and “high values,” whereby, it claims, often the more basic needs of man get neglected. This section hastens to add that, in addition to the basic needs, man also has spiritual and cultural needs and pro-

ceeds to list a set of national values of the Armenian people — meaning the national values of the citizens of the Republic of Armenia. Many of the listed values are subject to interpretation, in the sense that they can be brought to the fore or sent back as a given situation may require. For example, “Pan Armenian potential, Armenian diaspora” is listed as one of the national values of the population of Armenia, along with the country’s biodiversity and cuisine, but it is not clear how the diaspora’s status as a national value of the citizens of Armenia manifests itself.

— **Reflection:** Perhaps one of the most baffling assertions in the new ideology is about transformation and reflecting on everything. “The truth that has not been reflected upon is no longer the truth, the goal that has not been reflected upon is an end in itself, the conviction that has not been reflected upon is an impression left over from the past, the ideal that has not been reflected upon, is incomplete.”

These are not harmless thoughts meant as an innocuous philosophy of life. They constitute the preamble to question all national values, aspirations, goals, convictions, historical facts, historical rights, including facts such as the Genocide. The truth, if it is truly the truth, is the truth whether anyone reflects on it or not. It is one thing to question premises and theories and subject them to the rigorous test of scientific validation, and an entirely different thing to try and validate or negate a documented historical truth by simply “reflecting” on it. What exactly is an “incomplete ideal”? And how exactly does one make an incomplete ideal “complete” by reflecting on it?

— **The concept of independence** — defined as dependence over many instead of dependence over few — is actually interesting, and in line with the requirements of being a member of an integrated, interdependent, global community. It also suggests a strategy of diversifying strategic alliances, which Armenia needs and is correct to pursue. The only word of caution here is to emphasize the need for nuanced and competent diplomacy in order to avoid burning bridges while diversifying alliances from few to many.

— **Peace and Security.** Finally, probably the most serious shortcoming of the Real Armenia national ideology is in its notion of peace and security. I will not go over all the assertions made in this section, but will focus on just one claim, namely, “Peace is the most reliable guarantee of security.” Nothing could be further from the truth. Peace has rarely, if ever, guaranteed security. The opposite is true—i.e., once national security is guaranteed through a comprehensive and advanced defense system, peace can be achieved. Peace is the result of security, not its cause or its guarantor.

The most common justification given for these policies is national security, based on the fact that the government is negotiating peace with two militarily very strong neighbors. This justification simply does not hold water, because a lot more is being conceded than is necessary to avoid another unequal war, and, as stressed earlier, these policies are not simply short-term tactical moves that aim to strengthen national security, but have the ultimate objective to permanently transform and de-nationalize the collective Armenian self-awareness.

Paradoxically, the “Real Armenia Ideology” is being promoted while the public is lulled by a series of successes unrelated to that ideology. It is effective because it is like making suggestions to people under hypnosis. The hypnotizing successes include advances in education, healthcare, science and technology, most of which are driven to a large extent by diasporan initiatives; certain visible infrastructure projects such as road construction; advances in cooperation with the United States; and the promise of a yet to be formalized peace.

It is important to note here that the above are real and positive trends which could have been achieved equally well if not better without adopting the anti-national tenets of the new “ideology,” yet both the government and the gullible segment of the public associate the two and see it as a package deal. One of the consequences of this association is to create self-doubt about all traditional values and aspirations.

The ultimate purpose of sovereignty is self-determination, in its broadest and deepest sense — that is, self-determination by the nation’s own internal natural evolution and dynamics, unimpeded by external pressures and influences. Thus, self-determination and de-nationalization cannot coexist. The latter negates the former. Sovereignty without genuine self-determination is a farce. And therein lies the internal contradiction of the “Real Armenia Ideology.”



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan Jokes with Putin in the Kremlin: ‘Armenia Has Too Much Democracy’

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has repeatedly misled the Armenian public by making false promises since coming to power in 2018.

To preserve his seat, Pashinyan has used three ploys:

- 1) Promise the gullible people a rosy future using the slogan, “There is a future” (abaka ga);
- 2) Exploit the naïve public’s blind trust by making false promises;
- 3) Blame all his errors and the country’s current problems on former leaders, even though he has been in charge for eight years.

Whenever anyone points out his mistakes and deceitful promises, Pashinyan either denies ever making such statements or dodges the question. His excuse is that, since the people elected him, he can do whatever he wants, even though he never told his electors that he would hand over Artsakh to Azerbaijan and relinquish part of Armenia’s territories to the enemy state.

Since the parliamentary elections are scheduled to take place on June 7, Pashinyan is once again busy misleading the public. He and his ministers exaggerate their accomplishments, and act as if Armenia did not exist before 2018, when they came to power.

In order to fool the public, Pashinyan described in 2020 what his imaginary Armenia would look like in 2050, knowing full well that neither he nor his political party will be around by then. He called the plan “A Development Strategy for Armenia until 2050.”

His plan for 2050 is no different from many of his other fake promises. According to the well-known saying, “Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.” Armenia’s citizens must finally wake up and realize that they are being deceived repeatedly by their incompetent but cunning leader.

Here is the list of Pashinyan’s 18 unrealistic goals to be accomplished by 2050:

- Increase Armenia’s population to at least five million.
- Create 1.5 million jobs.
- Overcome poverty through work.
- Increase Armenia’s GDP 20-fold.
- Increase the average salary seven-fold.

- Make a healthy lifestyle a national characteristic; increase life expectancy to 90 years.
- Have the world’s most combat-ready army per capita.
- Have one of the 10 most efficient intelligence services in the world.
- Make learning a national way of life.
- Have at least three universities among the world’s top 200 ranked universities.
- Turn Armenia into a high-tech industrial country.
- Have at least five high-tech companies valued at \$10 billion or more and at least 10,000 operating startups.
- Ensure a healthy environment; make Armenia climate-resilient and energy-efficient.
- Double Armenia’s forested areas.
- Win 25 Olympic gold medals.
- Make the Armenian national football team the winner of the European and/or World Championship.
- Win the title of world individual chess champion.
- Increase to 15 million the annual number of tourists visiting Armenia.

Many of these 18 goals are unattainable. Six years after Pashinyan’s announcement, there has been hardly any progress. Even though there is nothing wrong with having personal or national goals, to achieve them one needs to take the following steps:

1) Set realistic goals with a reasonable chance of success. Rather than getting up on a stage and saying whatever comes to mind, there needs to be an in-depth study before making haphazard public announcements.

2) Ask experts to develop a detailed, realistic, and achievable plan of action. The head of government must first consult specialists in various fields to develop a roadmap for getting the country from here to there.

3) Provide a timeline and incremental milestones. It is not enough to state what you want to achieve by 2050. The government must have a detailed plan that specifies actions to be taken each year until 2050.

4) Include the public in setting national priorities. The Prime Minister should not ignore the will of the people and singlehandedly decide what is best for citizens. He should organize local conferences in each region to ask the public what they would like to see accomplished by 2050. The government should also conduct public polls to obtain reliable data about citizens’ interests.

5) Most importantly, ensure competent leadership now. Before worrying about 2050 — or even 2026 — the country must have a competent leader. Armenia’s citizens have the opportunity in this June’s parliamentary elections to decide who can best lead the country now. Otherwise, they may not have a country by 2050.

Let the Memory of the Lebanese Never Fade into Darkness

By Baydzig Kalaydjian

BEIRUT — In September 1974, with the wounds of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus still raw, my parents sent me to the Melkonian Educational Institution to continue my studies. I was only eleven or twelve — an age when a child’s world should be filled with play, not the horrors of war. Yet at Melkonian, war was no longer a distant story on a screen. It was alive. I heard my classmates’ firsthand accounts of life in refugee camps, saw the exhaustion etched on the faces of displaced families, and felt the quiet tension surrounding the peacekeepers who guarded a fragile and uneasy peace.

I remember Mrs. Hermine Bekarian, a teacher with a heart full of warmth, who shared her kindness both in the classroom and through her work with the Girl Guide movement. In our free time, she thought us to knit woolen hats for the soldiers standing watch at the borders. To our young hands, it was only knitting; but to our young hearts, it was something more — a quiet act of gratitude for those who protected a wounded land. The war had ended, yet the soldiers remained at their posts, defending their country with courage and dignity, guarding not only borders but the fragile hope that peace might endure.

Fifty-two years have passed since those days. Time has softened some wounds, but the memories endure. Thanks in part to the peacekeeping forces of the United Nations, Cyprus has been able to breathe, rebuild and live in relative peace. Its flag still rises proudly against the invader — an enduring symbol that even after suffering and loss, a nation can stand again.

Let it be remembered that beyond the smoke of war, beyond the tears of exile and loss, there is always the promise of dawn. Nations that refuse to surrender to despair can rise once more — stronger, wiser and more determined to safeguard the peace their children deserve.

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For almost a 1.5 month, the joint US–Israeli war against Iran has cast a dark shadow over Lebanon, pushing this small and fragile country deeper into a dangerous abyss. Day after day, Israel expands its relentless bombing campaign, while openly threatening to extend the war further into the south.

According to Lebanese authorities, at least 980 people

have been killed — among them 91 innocent children whose lives ended before they had the chance to truly begin. Following evacuation orders, more than 1,500,000 people have been forced to abandon their homes, their memories, and the ancestral lands where generations of their families once lived.

Across Beirut and throughout the country, displaced families wander in search of shelter wherever it can be found — schools, stadiums, public squares and even the beaches. Ambulances race endlessly through shattered streets, day and night, carrying the wounded away from neighborhoods reduced to rubble.

For many Lebanese, this heartbreaking reality feels painfully familiar.

It is a scene the country has witnessed before — a sorrow engraved in its collective memory. The same fear in the eyes of children, the same grief in the hearts of parents, the same long road of exile that first began during the Lebanese Civil War in 1975.

And once again, a nation stands wounded, asking the same question it has asked for generations: How many more times must Lebanon endure this tragedy before it is finally allowed to live in peace?

In two months, Lebanon will mark the 51st anniversary of the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War — a date that still echoes with pain in the memory of our nation. For more than half a century, this small country has endured wars of every kind, many of them not even its own, yet fought on its soil, among its people, through its cities and villages. We believed we had already seen the worst that war could bring. Yet today we find ourselves facing something even more merciless.

This so-called “technological war” has revealed a new face of brutality. Destruction is now announced in advance. Entire communities are told that their neighborhoods have been selected as targets. Families receive warnings to abandon their homes — their streets, their memories, their childhoods. And then, almost with cold precision, the bombs fall exactly where they were promised.

What once arrived with sudden terror now arrives with calculated notice. The tragedy is no longer only the explosion itself, but the slow agony of waiting for it — the final moments spent gathering a few belongings, taking one last look at a home built over generations, and stepping into

exile once again.

Lebanon has known many forms of war. Yet this new chapter wounds the human spirit in a different way: it turns fear into a schedule and destruction into an announced appointment. And so the question that haunts us is no longer only how wars begin — but how a people, already scarred by decades of conflict, can continue to carry the weight of them and still hope for peace.

What is unfolding is not merely displacement — it is the tearing apart of lives.

As Armenians, we carry the painful memory of deportation — the experience of being uprooted from our homes, surrendering them to the enemy, and enduring life as refugees within our own country. Homes built by grandparents, olive trees planted by fathers, fields patiently cultivated through generations, photographs, memories, laughter and tears — everything is abandoned in a matter of minutes. Decades of life reduced to what trembling hands can carry.

People do not leave because they wish to. They leave because they are told they must. Some flee on foot, crossing roads and borders with children in their arms and fear in their eyes, because they have no car, no protection, no convoy guiding them to safety — only the instinct to survive.

And so a heartbreaking scene spreads across the country: families sleeping beneath bridges, stadiums, inside cars, in schools, in churches. Mothers whispering comfort to frightened children. Elderly people staring silently into the distance, as if trying to see, somewhere beyond the horizon, the homes they were forced to abandon.

Lebanon has endured war before. Yet the sorrow of watching a people uprooted from their land, their memories, and their dignity is a wound that no technology, no strategy, and no justification can ever make less cruel.

It is a wound carved not only into the soil of the country — but into the soul of its people.

Can you imagine? The rain has already begun to fall today, and the wind howls across the land like a restless storm. And one cannot help but wonder: what about tomorrow? Beneath what sky, beneath what fragile shelter, will those people find protection? Those are truly Lebanese — not wanderers carrying borrowed identities, not those hiding behind false passports.

They are people who once lived quietly in their homes
see MEMORY, page 20



COMMENTARY

My Three States of Being Turkish

By **Taner Akçam**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

I am 73 years old. Over the course of my life, I have lived through three distinct “states” of being Turkish — three different experiences of Turkishness. What follows will be somewhat personal, but that is unavoidable. In fact, I believe that laying out these different states will help clarify what I have to say about Turkish progressives and Turkishness.

My first experience of Turkishness belongs to my years in Turkey. It was a condition I would describe as not knowing one’s own Turkishness. Turkishness was simply there — like air. It did not need to be named, explained, or defended. It was neither a question nor a burden. Precisely for that reason, it remained invisible.

My second experience took shape in Germany. There, my Turkishness was no longer invisible — it was relentlessly made visible. If in Turkey I had lived without noticing it, in Germany I was denied the luxury of forgetting it. I was reminded of it, insistently, sometimes crudely. Turkishness became something external to me, something assigned, almost imposed — less an identity I inhabited than one I was made to carry.

My third experience unfolded in the United States. I would describe this as the normalization of my Turkishness — or, more precisely, as the Turkishness I learned from Armenians. It became something unburdened by special meaning — neither imposed nor denied, but simply there. A quieter, more reflective, and ultimately more honest way of being Turkish.

First State: Not Even Being Aware of One’s Turkishness

I would describe this unselfconscious state of being Turkish with the line: “Fish that live in the sea do not know the sea.” It was a condition of not noticing — or perhaps not even being aware of — what it meant to be Turkish. But why?

Two familiar explanations come to mind — ones that everyone can recite almost by heart.

The first: we were progressives. And progressive thought was universalist. We saw ourselves as internationalists, transcending differences of religion, nation, and class. Progressives did not define themselves by ethnic origin. For that reason, I was never “Turkish.”

The second reason was the Kurds. (I am deliberately not listing Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, or Jews here — because they were already “absent,” already relegated to the status of the “other.”)

As progressives, we knew that the dominant system in Turkey deprived Kurds of their most basic rights. The oppressors were members of a “Turkish” ruling class, exercising power in the name of Turkishness. For that reason, rather than identifying with —

or being associated with — “Turkishness,” we preferred to use the term “Turkey.”

These may seem like respectable, even innocent positions. But every story conceals another layer.

We lived in a society structured by hierarchies of religion, ethnicity, and culture — an apartheid-like order whose apex was occupied by the Sunni Muslim Turk. The foundations of this hierarchy had been laid through large-scale massacres, deportations, and systematic repression against those who did not belong. Turks were its primary beneficiaries. Whether you were aware of it or not, if you belonged to the category “Turk,” you were privileged. You automatically benefited from a system that subordinated others.

But from the moment you did not clearly name this advantage — when you concealed your Turkishness behind universalist categories — you also laid the groundwork for distrust. The other had reason to be suspicious. That is why, for example, Kurds rarely believed our universalist rhetoric. They could easily see the Turkishness behind it.

Nor was this pattern new. Historically, it was no different. Until 1913, the Young Turks — more precisely, the Committee of Union and Progress — could not openly say “we are Turks.” They took refuge in the concept of Ottomanism, presenting themselves as cosmopolitan and supra-ethnic. Yet what they practiced was, in essence, a form of Turkish nationalism. Neither Armenians nor Greeks believed in this cosmopolitanism; they could easily see what lay behind it.

Second State: Being a Minority in Germany

Here, I am speaking of a particular “state of Turkishness” experienced by every progressive who arrived in Germany as a refugee. We were forcefully reminded that we were “Turks” — not only by the German legal system, but by German society itself. Whether we considered ourselves as such or not, we were treated as Turks — and for that reason, we were excluded and looked down upon.

It must have been around 1978–79 in Munich. I realized I was Turkish the moment I noticed that when I boarded a bus, no one would sit next to me because of my dark hair.

In 1981, I took my late father to a pub [Kneipe] in Hamburg to introduce him to German culture. But no sooner had we sat down than we were thrown out — for being Turks. At the next table sat German friends from our association’s “Anti-Fascism Committee.” As we were being pushed out — almost kicked out — right in front of their eyes, they simply went on drinking their beer.

Around the same time, I was looking for an apartment. I would call listings in the newspapers, but each time, the moment my

accent was recognized, I was told the place had already been rented and the phone was hung up. A German friend with whom I was staying began lecturing me again about “class struggle,” about how “we are all oppressed,” about “universalism” and “internationalism.” I remember losing my temper. I slammed the phone down in front of him and told him to call the same number. He did. Together we learned that the apartment — supposedly “already taken” — was in fact still available.

I remember lecturing him in return: “There is no such thing as that kind of universalism. Whether you accept it or not, as a German you benefit from the advantages of this country. That is what you need to understand first.” It is in moments like these that you begin to understand, much more clearly, the Kurdish or Alevi experience in Turkey. As I said, this is a transformation every Turkish refugee passes through.

I would describe this phase of my Turkishness as an angry Turkishness, or perhaps a reactive Turkishness. Even if you have no particular desire to define yourself as Turkish, you are subjected to racist hostility and forcibly labeled as such. And with the defiance — “If I am a Turk, then I am a Turk — so what?” — you begin to reflect on the deeper meaning of being Turkish, of being a foreigner.

Third State: The Turkishness I Learned from Armenians

In my early years in the United States, I was struck by how openly people expressed their ethnic and national identities. No one concealed their cultural or national background; on the contrary, they spoke about it with ease and confidence. I remember sharing with my colleagues at the Institute in Hamburg my theoretical reflections on how “ethnicized” language was in the United States.

Then came the process of being introduced by Armenians as a “Turkish academic.” I did not fit the usual “type” of Turk they were accustomed to, but this did not prevent them from seeing me as one. Because I was not an ordinary denialist Turk, the channels of dialogue were wide open. This ease gave me the opportunity to encounter my Turkishness on an entirely different level.

A friend of mine, Ohannes, would say that everything I did ultimately served the good of Turks. By speaking openly with Armenians about what had happened to them, I may have offered not only a certain psychological relief but also a form of recognition — but what I wrote and did was, in essence, also for Turks: to help them confront themselves, to help them learn what it means to be human. Referring to Turks, he would say: “One day, they will understand that these efforts are not only for Armenians, but for their own good as well.”

Another striking example was Anna. “Whenever I heard Turkish,” she told me,

“I used to think: the language of my enemy, the language of those who brought disaster upon my people. After meeting you, when I hear Turkish, I began to think: the language of my friend.”

These experiences taught me that being Turkish is neither something to be hidden nor something that must be lived in hostility toward the other. And when one speaks it openly, the sky does not fall. The question, then, is: what made this ease possible?

I do not wish to engage here in deep sociological analyses about how identities are not static but fluid; how they do not merely express an ontological essence of individuals or groups, but are relationally constructed, shaped within narratives, and acquire meaning through them.

My answer is much simpler: a shared narrative.

What allowed my Turkishness to normalize was that, together with my Armenian friends, we began to tell a shared story about ourselves and our past. Let me be clear: by “shared,” I do not mean a single, uniform narrative. It was a narrative that recognized differences — one that acknowledged pain and responsibility. My Turkishness, within this narrative, became something constructed, shared, and normalized through mutual recognition. In a sense, my Turkishness was being reconstituted through a process of dialogue with Armenians — within a reciprocal narrative.

My advice to Turkish progressives, then, is this: they must recognize that the story they tell about themselves does not include the other. As long as they fail to construct a narrative in which Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians are recognized as subjects in their own right, they will not be able to normalize their Turkishness. The reason they feel compelled to conceal it is that they lack a story they can share with the other.

What does this mean politically? In fact, it is quite simple: instead of narrating the formation of their identity and state as a “national liberation struggle created out of nothing against imperialism — despite its flaws,” they must begin to say: what a tragedy. They must be able to say: it was a tragedy for the Kurds, for the Armenians, for the Assyrians, for the Jews of this country. They must learn to make the suffering of others part of their own story.

One answer to the question What were we, and what have we become? lies here (In a previous essay, I offered a number of observations on why Turkish progressives have largely disappeared from the cultural and political landscape in Turkey). Because the story that Turkish progressives tell about themselves and their society neither offers an answer to the most urgent question of today — how to live together, that is, how different national, religious, and cultural groups can coexist side by side on the basis of mutual recognition and respect — nor does it avoid producing a form of Turkishness so burdened and problematic that it must constantly be concealed.

Let the Memory of the Lebanese Never Fade into Darkness

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under a gentle sky. People who were content with the little they had built, stone by stone, with the sweat of their brows and the patience of their hands. Around them grew families, laughter, memories — simple lives that asked for nothing more than peace.

But today the sky has darkened. Something heavy has settled in their hearts. A silent fire of pain and anger now burns within them. Not because they were born to hate — but because war has cast its long shadow across their lives.

They hate war the way a weary soldier hates it when he is pushed into battle against

his will — because he has seen its cruelty with his own eyes, because he knows its emptiness, the way it shatters homes and steals the quiet dignity of ordinary life.

And so, beneath the falling rain and the restless wind, a wounded people stand — longing not for victory, not for revenge, but simply for the return of peace, for the quiet comfort of a sky that once felt safe above their heads.

I believe I belong to those who still hold hope that tomorrow, this land will awaken renewed. Some may call it naïveté, others utopian — but I cling to the faith that the path to a “rosy dawn” is illuminated only by

humanity.

The displaced are not slogans on banners, nor echoes in political speeches. They are people — Lebanese hearts — longing for nothing more than to live with dignity, free from humiliation to raise their families beneath a sky unscarred by fear, and to rediscover the quiet blessing of peace.

Let us, then, plant within our children, our students, and the younger generation the seeds of gratitude — gratitude for the Lebanese homeland that shelters us, and for the Lebanese Army that stands vigilant at its borders, guarding not only the land, but the fragile hope that tomorrow will indeed

shine brighter.

(Baydzig Kalaydjian, editor at *Baikar* weekly, lives in Beirut. She has been involved in Armenian journalism for decades, writing for *Zartonk* since around 1990, before becoming its editor. She is also a teacher of Armenian language and history, and has worked in educational institutions in Lebanon and Cyprus. Kalaydjian is the author of a book titled *The Eternal Lantern of Hope* about the Melkonian Educational Institute and Armenian diasporan heritage. She translated Peter Balakian’s *Black Dog of Fate* and Joumana Haddad’s *The Seamstress Daughter* into Western Armenian.)