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Can Armenia Hold Fair Elections without Interference? Philippe Raffi Kalfayan Has Some Thoughts

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN/PARIS — Earlier this year, a new organization came to be in Armenia, called the International Observatory for Democracy in Armenia (IODA), an independent, ad hoc monitoring body which has tasked itself with observing, documenting, and reporting on political and institutional developments before the June 7 parliamentary elections in Armenia.

The pre-election period has made waves with opposition figures being rounded up by the authorities.

The coordinator of the IODA executive board is the Paris-based international lawyer Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, a veteran observer of human rights in Armenia and many other locales around the world. (Kalfayan has been a longtime columnist for the *Mirror-Spectator*.) Kalfayan is a lecturer/researcher at the Paris Pantheon Assas Univ./Paris Human Rights Center. He is an Assistant Judge HCR at the National Court for Asylum Rights. He served as Secretary General of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) from 2001 to 2007 and as a Legal Expert for the Council of Europe's Directorate General for Human Rights and Rule of Law since 2003.

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Berklee Armenian Musicians Bring College Students to Their Feet With HyeVibes at Baikar

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The Berklee College of Music Armenian Student Association assembled an amazing nine-member ensemble to perform a variety of music for the Armenian undergraduate and graduate students in the greater Boston area on Friday, April 17 at the Baikar Building in Watertown. The Berklee students and recent graduates are professionals who perform frequently in various venues. The evening was sponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter and the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Northeast District as part of ongoing efforts to bring together the university-age Armenian population socially and connect them with their culture and community.

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Public domain

Leaders attending a European Political Community summit in Yerevan pose for a photo, May 4, 2026.

European Summit Gets Underway in Yerevan

By Karlen Aslanian & Heghine Bunitatian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The leaders of European Union member and partner states met in Yerevan on Monday, May 4, for their latest European Political Community summit that underscored the Armenian government's efforts to forge closer ties with the West.

The participants included French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. They were joined by the EU's top officials as well as Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz skipped the summit, citing a busy schedule. Neighboring Turkey sent its Vice-President Cevdet Yilmaz to the gathering while Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev was due to address it via video link.

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111th Anniversary of Armenian Genocide Commemorated at Mass. State House

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — The 111th anniversary commemoration of the Armenian Genocide took place in the Chamber of the House of Representatives of the State House on Friday, April 24.

Master of ceremonies State Rep. David Muradian (of the 9th Worcester District, including Grafton, Northbridge and Upton) invited Archbishop Richard Henning, Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, to offer the invocation. Archbishop Henning said, "I want to note with joy, really, the history of the close collaboration between the Armenian community and the life of my Catholics of the Archdiocese."

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At Armenian Heritage Park, Young and Old Connect Through Historic Wounds



(Ken Martin photo)

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ARMENIA

Artsakh Residents In Armenia Struggle To Hold On

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NEW YORK

Times Square Commemoration Gathers Notables

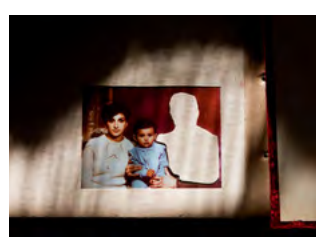
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WATERTOWN

Diana Markosian's 'Father' to Make U.S. Debut at Armenian Museum of America

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenia Moves to Abolish Age Limit for Public Service

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Armenian government has proposed legislative amendments to abolish the maximum age limit of 65 for holding public office across multiple sectors.

The reform follows earlier changes to the Labor Code in 2023, which removed age as a legal basis for terminating employment contracts. However, age caps have remained embedded in several sector-specific laws.

The proposed amendments would revise a range of statutes, including those governing public, civil, customs, and community service, as well as regulations related to parliamentary staff, non-commercial state organizations, vocational education, and personal data protection.

Armenia Signs Defense Deals with French Firms

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia's Ministry of Defense on May 5 signed agreements with French companies SOFEMA Group and Airbus Helicopters, under which transport helicopters and modern military equipment will be delivered to Armenia.

The move is aimed at strengthening the mobility and logistical capabilities of the armed forces, according to Radar Armenia.

At the same time, in the civil aviation sector, FlyOne Armenia has signed an agreement to purchase two new Airbus A321-200NX (Neo) narrow-body aircraft to expand its fleet.

Earlier, Armenia and France signed a joint declaration establishing a strategic partnership, during French President Emmanuel Macron's state visit to Armenia.

Former Artsakh Ombudsman Warns Against 'Peace Built on Blood'

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Former Artsakh Human Rights Defender Artak Beglaryan insisted that lasting peace in the South Caucasus cannot be achieved by disregarding the rights of Karabakh Armenians as European leaders gathered in Yerevan on May 4.

Speaking during a protest outside the Karen Demirchyan Sports and Concerts Complex, Beglaryan accused the Armenian government of misrepresenting the situation to European officials. "We are sending a message to European leaders that the reality is not what Armenia's authorities present. The reality is that the rights of Artsakh Armenians are being neglected," he said.

Beglaryan warned that attempts to build peace "on our rights and our blood" would not bring stability to the region. He also accused the government of authoritarian tendencies.

Can Armenia Hold Fair Elections Without Interference? Philippe Raffi Kalfayan Has Some Thoughts

ELECTIONS, from page 1

Joining him on the executive board of IODA are several international figures, including Kenneth Roth, a visiting Princeton School of Public an international affairs professor, former executive director of Human Rights Watch for 30 years, as well as a columnist for the Guardian; Sarah Leah Whitson, executive director of DAWN and former executive director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa Division; Jose Aranaz, a lawyer from Spain with vast international experience as a high-ranking officer at the UN High Commissioner Office for Human Rights; William Bourdon, an internationally noted attorney in France active in defending human rights and founder of SHERPA; Mark Jones, a UK-based barrister focusing on human rights and Bryan May, a former Canadian member of Parliament who chaired the Canada-Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group.

Kalfayan explained, "IODA's idea is simple and drawn from our experience: election day monitoring is certainly necessary to detect certain traditional forms of fraud, which are thankfully becoming less frequent, but generally speaking, intergovernmental organizations specializing in election observation, such as the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] or the Council of Europe, which conduct such observations, never question the election results a posteriori.

"What is important to assess is the pre-election environment and the democratic conditions before the elections themselves, because it is during this period that imbalances arise," he said.

Kalfayan added that one factor that is motivating him is the current government using its resources for its re-election to get around the funding limits.

"All political parties are legally limited in their spending (800 million drams) during the month-long campaign, which officially begins on May 8. Even before the campaign starts, enormous sums have already been spent. Pre-campaign spending is also legally limited to the parties' annual budget (1 billion drams). But it is other measures that are truly disrupting the political landscape: the 30-percent increase in retirement pensions on April 1, 2026, and the opaque distribution of generous bonuses to government members and certain senior officials. These two measures were not included in the budget for 2026, which was adopted in December 2025. This clearly demonstrates that the executive is operating within an anti-democratic (disregarding parliamentary prerogatives) and opaque system," he said.

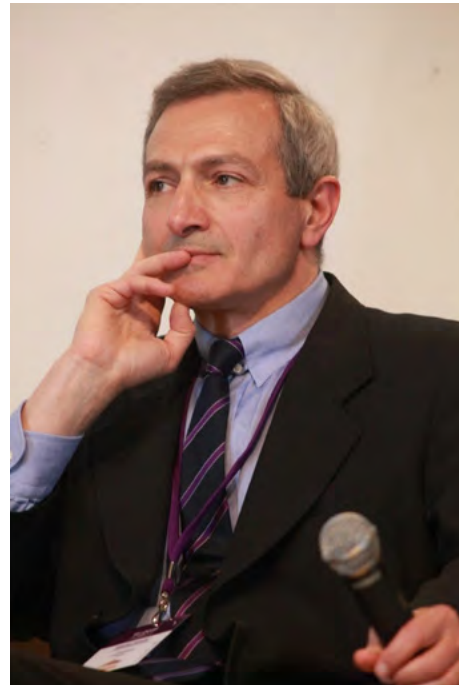
In a recent interview, he was asked why IODA came to be. He said he took part in the project "as a result of conscience only, because it is time-consuming and adds a heavy workload to my already busy days filled with my professional activities and other pro bono activities for Armenians. As one can see in the press and on social media, the diaspora is weary and fatalistic. Personally, I am more inclined to act than to lament."

Specifically, he added that there are two main reasons why he wanted to develop the project.

"The first is that I am genuinely concerned about the choices made by the current government regarding foreign policy, its conception of the state, and its approach to justice. I have developed my analyses through articles and interviews on this subject. This is a concern widely shared in the diaspora as well as in Armenia.

Therefore, I attach particular importance to ensuring that these elections take place under the best possible conditions, that is, with respect for the principles of fairness, freedom, and pluralism," he said. "The two major objectives are to ensure that all opposition parties, without exception, can participate freely and equally in these elections, and that if these conditions are violated, the state apparatus and the judiciary can act as independent bodies from the government."

He added that his second reason was Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's statement that "I will not allow the opposition to return to power."



Philippe Raffi Kalfayan

"I considered this a challenge to democracy. One cannot promote democracy abroad and declare at the same affirmatively that the opposition will not come to power. His words alerted me: the incumbent ruler was prepared to use any means necessary to achieve this goal," he explained. "These elections are crucial for consolidating a fragile democracy. Yet they are tainted by regional and international geopolitical competition. The number of actors directly interfering in these elections is staggering — Turkey, Russia, Azerbaijan, the European Union, the USA. They are trying to steal these elections from the Armenian people."

One of IODA's stated goals is the monitoring of human rights in Armenia. He explained that by human rights, the organization is referring to the independence of the judicial system and its potential manipulation and thus possible disregard for the nation's constitution.

"I anticipated very early (back in 2019) the gradual slide from a state governed by the rule of law to a state ruled by a single party. The Prime Minister's stated objective is to perpetuate the current regime in which the parliamentary minority has no real existence: whether it opposes or proposes, the governing party adopts the laws it wishes to pass. Two amendments to the electoral law have been proposed and adopted within 24 hours by the ruling majority since the beginning of 2026. Parliamentary debate has been usurped. This is no longer a parliamentary democracy," he noted.

Armenia's constitution, he said, is being neglected by the government, Kalfayan said. He cited the "totally unprecedented" violation of the separation of church and state, specifically with regard to the increasingly harsh attacks on the Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II as well as the arrest of opposition members.

He referred to the "politically motivated

arrests and detentions of political opposition figures, including Strong Armenia political party leader Samvel Karapetyan, Archbishops Bagrat Galstanyan (head of the Tavush Movement), Mikayel Ajapahyan, Arshak Khachatryan and Bishop Mkrtich Proshyan, in some cases involving the excessive use of harsh and disproportionate police force and often involving prolonged and unnecessary pretrial detention; the summary dismissal of judges on apparently politically motivated grounds, and suggestions of political bias in the appointment of judges to hear cases involving political opponents; the excessive misuse of vague penal code provisions that criminalize speech offenses including allegations of "hooliganism," a reminiscent soviet terminology, and "calling for the overthrow of the government," to prosecute members of parliament, political opposition, and the media; and finally, the apparent weaponization of the judiciary and security forces by the government against political opponents."

IODA has no authority to enforce its finding. The all-volunteer organization, he explained, hopes to bring its combined years of judicial expertise to shine light on the situation.

"Unlike most Armenian or international NGOs, we are not linked to any financially supported program. Our observations and reports are not influenced by sponsors or governments. Our only means of exerting influence is through professional work, producing and disseminating notes and reports, and conducting advocacy with international institutions (OSCE, European Union, Council of Europe), the Armenian government, and foreign governments, particularly European ones," he explained.

The government of Prime Minister Pashinyan's complaints about possible Russian interference in the upcoming election has received support from the EU. He has accused the Catholicos of All Armenians as well as opposition figure oligarch Samvel Karapetyan of being part of that interference.

He explained, "First, the 'hybrid threat' is a political concept that the Council of the European Union intentionally made 'flexible' in order to accommodate allegations of Russian hybrid threats. Consequently, a double standard is emerging in Armenian public discourse: when the authorities interact with Russian actors, this interaction is often presented as part of a broader policy of 'foreign policy diversification.' The Russian threat is readily exploited by the government and sham NGOs to obtain substantial financial aid and in-kind support to combat the alleged risks, but also to convince the public that Pashinyan is the only one opposing this threat. The entire opposition is intentionally labelled pro-Russian, even though the Prime minister himself maintains good relations with Russia."

Kalfayan said the government is conducting mass wiretapping and has concluded agreements with META (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp) so that the Central Election Commission could more easily track paid political promotions. In addition, he said, the European Union has provided a digital tool to certain Armenian state agencies to track online activity.

Added Kalfayan, "IODA reported that it is certainly possible that Russia could try to influence the election of a more favorable candidate, but there is currently no evidence of widespread Russian interference. Putin said that all the political parties, including the 'pro-Russian' ones must be

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INTERNATIONAL

Wildberries and OZON Suspend Sales to Armenian Trading Companies

By Marut Vanyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Wildberries and OZON, the largest Russian online retailers, with annual revenues of around \$1.89 billion, are the equivalents of the Russian eBay and Amazon. Since May 2, Armenian entrepreneurs involved in these businesses have been raising the alarm about the impossibility of selling their products on the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) market.

While Armenian exporters complain that they cannot export their products, buyers confirm that they do not face any obstacles when purchasing goods. It turns out that it is possible to buy EAEU goods, but not to sell Armenian goods.

Comments on social media confirm that many are worried that Armenian goods cannot be exported on the site, noting that the excuse of a technical glitch or backlog is just that, rather than reality.

However, Wildberries explains that this situation is “due to the large number of accumulated orders.”

A statement it issued says: “Unfortunately, due to the large backlog of orders, we are forced to temporarily suspend shipping new orders from Armenia to customers in other countries. Customers within Armenia will be able to continue placing orders as usual. However, customers in other countries will not see products located in Armenia in search results for now, as they will be unable to order items that cannot be delivered quickly. Please note that future deliveries to EAEU countries may require documents confirming the origin of the goods and their correct registration.”

A political subtext is perceived in Armenia, where people are voicing opinions that Russia has begun punishing Armenia on the eve of the 8th European Political Community Summit which takes place in Yerevan.



Wildberries delivery point in Yerevan (photo Marut Vanyan/Armenian Mirror-Spectator)

Edmon Marukyan, leader of the Bright Armenia party posted: “The Minister of Economy has issued a statement saying that two opposition forces in Armenia are behind the problems related to Wildberries and OZON [probably referring to Samvel Karapetyan and Robert Kocharyan]. I expect the Minister of Economy to deal with the problem instead of making empty statements. I have information that greenhouse farms are also facing problems: they have been informed that they can no longer sell their products in the EAEU [and], in particular, in the Russian Federation. Therefore, representatives of the authorities should deal with their direct duties and resolve these problems, because the daily bread of many people depends on it.”

At the same time, the Armenian Minister of Economy Gevorg Papoyan told reporters that “everything is okay.”

“We have solved much more difficult problems, everything is okay. There is no any problem. Russia is our partner. We will work better with Russia. Relations with Russia have never been as good as during our rule,” Papoyan declared.

For a long time now, many experts have been making predictions and warning that if the current authorities of Armenia worsens relations with Russia, the next step will be a ban on the export of 50,000 tons of apricots and 1.3 million bottles of Jermuk water to Russia, with the final step being a halt in gas exports, which will lead to economic collapse for Armenia.

Armenian trading companies increased sales volumes on the Wildberries marketplace by 122 percent in 2025. The number of sellers from Armenia on the Wildberries marketplace increased by 106 percent during the year.

Mother See Condemns Destruction of Armenian Shrines

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin has strongly condemned a statement by the Caucasus Muslims Board, which it says attempts to justify the destruction of Armenian spiritual and cultural heritage in Artsakh, particularly the demolition of the Holy Mother of God Cathedral in Stepanakert.

The Mother See also called on international organizations to take concrete steps to “halt Azerbaijan’s planned policy of destroying Armenian culture.”

“The desecration, appropriation, or destruction of holy sites cannot be justified by any political, administrative, or false legal wording. Labeling churches built during Artsakh’s period of independence as ‘illegal constructions’ is unacceptable, and destroying or razing them on that basis is a blatant violation of international principles for the protection of religious and cultural heritage and constitutes cultural genocide.

The accusation by the Caucasus Muslims Board against the Armenian Church of obstructing peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan is clearly unfounded and false. Peace is undermined by the distortion of historical truth, violations of the rights of forcibly displaced Armenians of Artsakh, appropriation of Armenian heritage, and the systematic erasure of Armenian presence.

The Mother See called on international religious and human rights organizations, as well as all bodies responsible for protecting cultural heritage, to take effective steps to stop Azerbaijan’s planned policy of destroying Armenian culture,” the statement reads.

Recently, two churches in Stepanakert were completely demolished one after another: Saint Hakob Church and the city’s main sanctuary, the Holy Mother of God Cathedral.

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given the chance to compete for the elections.”

“The most blatant example of orchestrated exaggeration is the rumor that circulated that 80,000 Armenian citizens living in Russia were offered financial assistance to travel to Armenia and vote on June 7. This information originated with the FIS (Foreign Intelligence Service), a new intelligence agency created with the help of Western agencies and headed by a young, inexperienced individual loyal to the Prime Minister. It was then disseminated by an NGO of dubious neutrality,” Kalfayan said.

When he and his colleagues looked into the case and approached government investigators about the numbers, the numbers were starkly different. “We were able to conclude that it involved fewer than twenty people,” he said.

The group is gaining traction slowly, he said. “Initially, the diaspora was hesitant and unresponsive, wondering who we were and why we were interested in the issue. Since our first mission and the press release that concluded it, there has been definitely interest both in Armenia and within the diaspora. Media coverage is still too limited. We have a very small team and lack the resources to hire PR specialists.”

One of the more unusual aspects of this election is that the main opposition candidate, Samvel Karapetyan, does not meet the requirements of a candidate, namely because he has not lived in Armenia for the previous for years and holds Russian citi-

zenship as well as Armenian.

“Karapetyan knows he is not eligible and recognizes it but says clearly that he will amend the constitution if his party is designated to form a government. The Prime minister, as explained before, does not respect the Constitution either on other points. Further, he claims to make adopt a new Constitution after the elections, but nobody has seen the draft. This lack of transparency is intentional since he knows that a majority of the population is not keen on changing it,” Kalfayan said.

For now, some state officials have accepted an invitation to meet with members of IODA, however, the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Constitutional Court, as well as and the Civil Contract ruling party faction at the Parliament declined repeated requests to meet.

He noted, “During the March 7-12 mission, IODA board members met a wide spectrum of non-governmental organizations, think tanks and representative of foreign foundations. IODA had constructive meetings with state bodies (Supreme Judicial Council, Central Electoral Commission, Investigative Committee, Anti-corruption Committee and Ombudsman’s Office of the Republic of Armenia). A meeting was also held with Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians.”

They also met with political factions represented in the Parliament and extra-parliamentary political forces competing for the elections, as well as a meeting with

members of Council of Europe delegation in Armenia.

When asked how he would rank the state of democracy in Armenia compared to its neighbors in the Caucasus, he replied that Europe is introducing a false equivalence in the situation and it may itself have lost its moral compass. “This question points to the argument used by Europeans to justify their position. Armenia is better rated for democracy than its neighbors, then we must support it irrespective of the democratic deficiencies. Does Europe have legitimacy to talk about principles of democracy and international law? Freedom of expression and of opinion are threatened in many of their own countries. Further, they watched passively and complicitly the genocide committed against the Palestinians of Gaza to the extent that they even refused recently to suspend the association agreement between EU and Israel. They did not act against the unlawful aggression of Iran by the US and Israel. They also blindly support Ilham Aliyev [Azerbaijan’s leader] and Recep Tayyip Erdogan [Turkey’s leader] while those are clearly dictators. In general, the West is now closing eyes on democracy preferring instead the conclusion of economic deals protecting their interests with autocracies,” he added.

The prime minister had imposed a travel ban on the Catholicos, but about a month later, the courts struck it down. Asked if this decision gave him hope, he answered, “This is just a temporary measure due to international pressure. If the ruling party

gets free hands after the election, they will take even tougher measures to remove the Catholicos. The Prime minister has clearly announced it.”

Kalfayan said the representatives of IODA have not yet met with organization representing Armenians displaced from Karabakh (Artsakh). “Meanwhile, some statistics exist: 34,576 people forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh have received Armenia’s citizenship, as reported by the Minister of Internal Affairs on March 20, 2026. What is interesting to note is the acceleration of requests for citizenship: 5,000 in the first two months and a half of 2026 compared to 4,000 over the first half of 2025. To the best of my knowledge, those new citizens have a right to vote. The question is whether their citizenship confers an automatic record into the electoral lists.”

He added, “Xenophobia and discrimination seem to be a persistent pattern fostered by statements at the highest level of the government.”

He concluded, “The Armenian population yearns to be part of Europe, but why is Europe interfering so blatantly in the elections, to the point of risking depriving citizens of a free and democratic choice? By encouraging Pashinyan to censor the main political opposition forces, supposedly pro-Russian, Europe risks sacrificing the fragile democracy and creating even further internal chaos whereas Armenia needs national cohesion more than ever to face external threats.”



Artsakh Residents in Armenia Struggle to Hold On

By Marut Vanyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Since 2023, when various social programs for forcibly displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh were launched, they have been met with vague or even hostile reactions from many in Armenia. “There are a lot of needy people in Armenia too, why should all the attention be on them?” many locals complain on social media. But do Karabakh Armenians, who have literally lost everything, actually go on vacation to the Maldives with this money? The money never stays in their pockets for a second. They must pay the locals rent for their houses.

Furthermore, while paying rent is difficult for Karabakh refugees, buying an apartment is an almost insurmountable obstacle for them.

Gurgen Baghdasaryan, a vocal coach from Stepanakert, reflected on this situation on social media: “I must say this: I don’t know how to express my anger. Dear all, have you seen the prices of apartments for sale in Yerevan and neighboring settlements? We are not in London, nor in Berlin. How can they assess ‘chicken nests’ at that price? At least tidy up your apartment and then post photos and prices. It’s a shame that you try to make money at the expense of refugees.”

At the same time, any support for the Karabakh Armenians, whether from the Armenian government, the EU, US or Russia, is politicized and often leads to hate speech. For example, a recent local post on social media that reads “I would advise you not to help these ungrateful people with anything, one thing is for sure: in the end, they will say ‘spasibo’ [thanks] Russia!”, gets a lot of likes from those who approve of the sentiments expressed.

Efforts in Armenia

The Armenian government’s rental assistance program was suspended in April 2025. With that program, the government provided 50,000 drams (\$135) per person per month, and it was really vital for them. However, the government has decided to suspend that program, and currently, only vulnerable groups are receiving 30,000 drams (\$81) (disabled people, pensioners). Anyway, all Artsakh Armenians consider themselves a vulnerable group, complaining that everyone has lost everything and is in the same status. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia announced a tender for the renovation of abandoned administrative buildings in Artashat and their conversion into social housing, including for Artsakh residents. This has caused some excitement among Artsakh residents, many of whom have no hope of acquiring apartments with state housing certificates. The government refuses to build separate settlements or buildings where the people of Artsakh can live compactly. The government explains this by saying that it does not want to settle the people of Artsakh in ghettos.

However, Narek Karapetyan, a leader of the Strong Armenia political party, recently announced that his party’s program includes the construction of a separate district in Yerevan, where Artsakh residents will live.

The Armenian government offers more money for purchasing an apartment in border settlements, 5,000,000 drams (\$13,497) per person, than elsewhere, but the majority of Karabakh Armenians have settled in Yerevan and neighboring settlements. They mainly explain this in terms of ease in finding jobs. The provinces are more rural and often offer fewer jobs.



The “Artsakh” neighborhood in Stepanakert. People worked and waited for years to get an apartment here, but unfortunately very few succeeded in living there. Azerbaijan has converted these apartments into student dormitories. September 2023 (photo Marut Vanyan/Armenian Mirror-Spectator)

On April 18, the Armenian government approved a \$240 million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which will be used to address the housing needs of internally displaced persons from Karabakh.

European and US Aid

“The European Union and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, jointly with partner financial institutions (PFIs), are supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) established by displaced Karabakh Armenians through dedicated credit lines to help them overcome business-related challenges, foster growth, and enhance competitiveness. This support has two main objectives: to assist SMEs that wish to re-establish themselves in Armenia, as well as local businesses whose activities contribute to the economic integration of displaced persons. The support is provided in the form of both financing and business advisory services. Incentive grants of up to 35 percent of the loan amount are available to eligible MSMEs to reduce investment costs and facilitate the integration of displaced persons. Capacity development for MSMEs is also provided through a Small Business Advisory Programme,” the European Union announced in Armenia.

The US government also announced \$11.5 million in aid for those displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023 and in 2024 Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced support for Karabakh Armenians. “We plan to provide over \$65 million in assistance from our FY23 budget funds. And we will continue to support the 100,000 ethnic Armenians displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh.”

Assistance has also been provided by diasporan organizations, like the Tufenkian Foundation from the US (see the January 15, 2026 article by this author in the Mirror-Spectator titled “Refugees Try to Make a New Life in Svarants”).

Daron Acemoğlu in his book *Why Nations Fail* beautifully describes how little aid from international organizations and donors reaches the real recipients (the IDP’s, the people affected by conflicts etc.). He explains that as a result, proxies (authorities, NGOs) benefit more than the people for whom the program and donations were intended.

In one case, while there are no statistics

on how many Karabakh Armenian entrepreneurs received loans with 35-percent interest, banks offer insurmountable conditions, and there are very few applicants. There are suspicions that the loans are provided not to Karabakh Armenians, but to local organizations, NGOs, on the condition that they provide jobs to Karabakh refugees. This is not a violation of the rules, but this loophole allows banks to deprive Artsakh residents of direct and direct support. This EU program, which can really be a salvation for many, needs monitoring and public reporting to avoid corruption and other risks.

“The program is so complicated that there is almost no chance to become a beneficiary. So much bureaucracy, so much paperwork that I have to hire a lawyer, an accountant, and an HR employee to do all this for me. It feels like some kind of program that was created in advance for only a few people,” a Karabakh Armenian ironically states.

On the other hand, the EU does not have mechanisms to directly provide money to Karabakh Armenians. Therefore, the EU supports Karabakh refugees either through the Armenian government or local NGOs.

In Karabakh, Armenians used to have two homes, one usually in the capital Stepanakert, where they lived permanently, and the other known as the grandmother’s home, which was located in the village where they were originally from and which they usually visited for the holidays in the summer. Today they are deprived of both. Moreover, they watch online how they are being demolished or “being resettled” by Azerbaijan.

Thus, three years later, Karabakh Armenians continue to face social issues and injustices in Armenia. The only thing left for them to do is complain on Facebook groups, which no one cares about.

What Is Russian Aid About?

Today, all eyes are on the Strait of Hormuz blockade and everyone has forgotten about Nagorno Karabakh’s nine-month-long siege in 2023.

Recently, the Russian autonomous nonprofit organization Eurasia invited Karabakh Armenians to their representative office in Yerevan to provide them with assistance. This usually includes hygiene items, vermicelli, canned goods and buckwheat, and those in need, who are many,

gathered there to receive their share. “Russia Is with You” is what this support program is called.

The Eurasia and Russian Humanitarian Mission autonomous nonprofit organizations, within the framework of the “Russia Is with You” project implemented under the auspices of the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad, and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo), promised to provide more than 140 tons of humanitarian aid from July 31, 2025, to forcibly displaced persons from Nagorno Karabakh who have settled in Armenia.

It is indeed humiliating for the Karabakh refugees, but out of necessity, people accept this aid. Many will remember how during the blockade Russian peacekeepers distributed similar aid to pregnant women and recorded it on their phones. At the time, Ombudsman Gegham Stepanyan condemned such behavior by Russians, but again, what was left for hungry people to do but accept the aid?

Armenia has refused Russian humanitarian aid intended for Nagorno Karabakh refugees, citing a ban on donations and charitable assistance during pre-election periods. Parliamentary elections in Armenia are scheduled for June 7.

It is obvious that this aid has a political subtext, which is evidenced by the statement of the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova about this refusal. According to Zakharova, Moscow became one of the first to provide humanitarian aid to the Karabakh people living in Armenia, but Yerevan refused to accept it.

Earlier, the Fact Investigation Platform (FIP) reported that Eurasia was involved in meddling in election processes in Moldova. Its investigation found that “In 2025, during the parliamentary elections in Moldova, [Moldavian oligarch Ilan] Shor again promoted Russian propaganda narratives through Eurasia NGO and the pro-Russian opposition Victory political bloc, and coordinated funding to influence the political situation in the Republic of Moldova.”

A man eats his own bitter food with more appetite than the honey given by his neighbor, goes the Karabakh proverb. If you ask any Karabakh Armenian, they will say that they don’t need any help. All they want is to be in their own home.



INTERNATIONAL

Why Isn't the Nagorno-Karabakh Chapter Being Closed?

By Marut Vanyan

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

YEREVAN — The EU Parliament adopted a multi-part resolution on Armenia on Thursday, April 30, which included points on Nagorno-Karabakh which Armenian state media “bypassed,” focusing more on issues of democracy and support for upcoming elections in Armenia, which are also mentioned in the resolution.

The resolution read as follows: “Reiterates its support for the rights of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, including the protection of their identity, property and cultural heritage, and their right to a safe, unimpeded and dignified return under appropriate international guarantees; calls for those responsible for the destruction of Armenian cultural and religious heritage to be held accountable, and for an international assessment mission;

“Condemns Azerbaijan’s unjust detention of Armenian prisoners of war, detainees and hostages; demands their immediate and unconditional release; notes the steps taken so far and calls for further confidence-building measures; calls for full respect for international humanitarian and human rights law.”

As could be expected, this resulted in a vote the very next day, May 1, by the Azerbaijani Parliament to cut ties with the body, as well as the summoning of the EU’s Ambassador to Azerbaijan Marijana Kujundžić.

By the way, while authorities in Armenia and Azerbaijan assure that peace is being established between the two countries and roads are being opened, the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry website can’t be accessed in Armenia.

While Armenian authorities does not want to talk about Nagorno-Karabakh, diaspora organizations welcome the European Parliament’s resolution.

For example, the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD) welcomed the European Parliament resolution demanding the Armenian authorities guarantee full respect for opposition rights, judicial independence and

freedom of expression and demanding justice for Artsakh Armenians and the hostages in Baku.

On April 30, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, during a meeting with journalists, again considered the discussions on Nagorno-Karabakh dangerous and a cause for a new conflict.

“What are we going to do? Are we going to provoke a conflict again? Are we going to continue the Karabakh movement?”, he asked.

With the recent destruction of churches



Monument specialist Slava Sargsyan takes a photo of a khachkar in the forests of Nagorno-Karabakh (photo Marut Vanyan)

in Stepanakert, the Armenian authorities made it clear that Nagorno-Karabakh is the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan and it can do whatever it wants there – in other words, it is none of Armenia’s business, which is also what Azerbaijan says.

The fact that these churches were built in the 2000s is cited, as if there are no centuries-old khachkars [cross-stones] and monasteries in Nagorno-Karabakh. Wherever you go in the village forest and pull up the leaves, you will definitely find a khachkar. There is no a single village in Nagorno-Karabakh that does not have its

own centuries-old chapel, the fate of which no one knows today.

It’s as if the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh is a dormant volcano that wakes up whenever it wants. Sometimes, Russian President Vladimir Putin reminds us of it. Sometimes we are reminded when churches are being demolished and sometimes when the EU or Canada reminds us. It seems strange, but even Azerbaijan is unsuccessful in closing the Nagorno-Karabakh chapter, which it wants the most, though Armenia stubbornly wants to close it.

And what should the Karabakh Armenians do? Should they settle in Armenia, as Pashinyan urges them, run from one bank to another for a mortgage, think of where to find money to pay to the landlord at the end of the month in Yerevan, hold on to the hope that one day they will return to their homes, and miss their loved ones’ graves?

What should they do? The 8th Summit of the European Political Community takes place on May 4 in Yerevan. Would European leaders be willing to hear such questions?

INTERNATIONAL

Pashinyan, Rutte Discuss Armenia-NATO Ties

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Within the framework of the European Political Community summit, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, discussing issues related to the current state and future prospects of Armenia–NATO cooperation, on May 4.

Pashinyan emphasized the importance of continuously deepening the partnership, highlighting efforts in democratic reforms and the development of defense capabilities.

The two also touched upon initiatives aimed at ensuring international and regional stability.

EU Allocates €2.5 Billion For Armenia Investment Plan

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the European Union has already allocated €2.5 billion for Armenia under its investment program, speaking during a meeting with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at the first Armenia–EU summit.

She noted that Armenia and the European Union are closer than ever.

“There has always been a special connection between Armenia and Europe, rooted in myths and ancient civilizations. But it is not only our shared history and culture that unite us—future opportunities do as well. Armenia and the European Union are indeed closer than ever. We are making good progress toward visa-free travel between Europe and Armenia, which will help facilitate investment flows. €2.5 billion has already been allocated under our ‘Global Gateway’ investment program,” the European Commission president said.

Genocide Memorial in Stepanakert Destroyed

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Caucasus Heritage Watch (CHW) has determined that the Armenian Genocide memorial in Stepanakert has been destroyed by Azerbaijan.

Erected on the 100th anniversary of the 1915 atrocities, the white marble bell tower once housed a reliquary containing human remains from Der Zor, the Syrian desert town where hundreds of thousands of Armenians perished.

Satellite imagery shows that the monument was destroyed between July 14, 2025, and April 25, 2026.

“This cannot be considered an isolated incident,” said Hovik Avanesov, Artsakh’s cultural heritage ombudsman. “It is a deliberate act aimed at erasing historical memory and Armenian identity.” He added the lack of accountability encourages repetition of such acts.

Avanesov noted that the removal carries significant political and ideological weight, aimed at reshaping the historical narrative.

European Summit Gets Underway in Yerevan

SUMMIT, from page 1

The semi-annual summit initiated by France following Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine focused on “hybrid” threats and other political and economic challenges facing wider Europe. Addressing its participants, EU Council President Antonio Costa said the gathering “places Armenia in the heart of Europe, which is exactly where it belongs.” He also said the choice of the summit venue was made possible by Armenian-Azerbaijani peace agreements reached last year.

“The fact that Armenia is hosting this summit is a powerful illustration of the country’s courageous geopolitical path, a path that Armenia and the EU are walking together,” Costa told a news conference later in the day.

Most of the participants will attend a separate summit between the EU and Armenia on Tuesday. According to a draft of its concluding statement seen by RFE/RL’s Armenian Service, the EU leaders will pledge to continue “bringing Armenia closer to the European Union” but stop short

of promising the South Caucasus nation’s eventual membership in the 27-nation bloc. Nor does the document promise additional economic assistance to Yerevan.

The EU’s foreign and security policy chief, Kaja Kallas, would not be drawn on Armenia’s membership prospects. She indicated only that they depend on the outcome of the Armenian parliamentary elections slated for June 7.

“Armenia is making their own decisions and in Armenia we have elections coming in two months,” Kallas told journalists in Yerevan. “So the European perspective is also on the table. But eventually the Armenians will decide.”

Amid heightened tensions with Russia, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s government enacted last year a law calling for the “start of a process of Armenia’s accession to the European Union.” Russian officials have since repeatedly warned that Armenia risks paying a heavy price for this policy. Moscow stepped up those warnings in the run-up to the Yerevan summits. Zelenskyy’s arrival in the Armenian capital could only

add to the Russian-Armenian tensions.

The summits are seen by the Armenian opposition as a show of Western support for Pashinyan ahead of the upcoming elections. In a weekend statement, the Hayastan alliance, one of the main opposition election contenders, accused the EU of effectively meddling in “Armenia’s internal political processes.”

“We regret to note that statements made by representatives of the European Union’s executive branch only increase our concerns that the manipulative actions of the Armenian authorities appear to be receiving European support,” it said in a statement.

“It is vital to strengthen Armenian democracy and fight external interference and misinformation,” Costa said in this regard.

Earlier this year, the EU decided to send two new missions to Armenia tasked with helping Yerevan cope with “hybrid threats” emanating from abroad, presumably Russia. A similar EU mission was deployed in Moldova ahead of last September’s parliamentary elections won by the former Soviet republic’s pro-Western leadership.

Community News

Armenian Genocide Commemoration at Duke Reunites North Carolina's Armenian Community

DURHAM, N.C. — It started with an idea and a lot of persistence. In 2024, Duke University undergraduate Vincent Hovsepien, a current junior from Los Angeles, CA, set out to build what did not yet exist at Duke University: a home for Armenian students at one of the country's leading universities. The road to official recognition was not easy.

For months, Hovsepien, along with sophomore, Madison Mikayelyan, navigated the university's student organization approval process, determined to establish a permanent Armenian presence on campus. In January 2026, Armenians at Duke was officially recognized by Duke University — the first official Armenian student organization in the institution's history.

The organization wasted little time making its mark. Just weeks before receiving recognition, Armenians at Duke hosted its inaugural event in December 2025: "Little Armenia," a celebration of Armenian culture open to the entire Duke and Durham community. Over 70 attendees explored Armenian food, music, and history. The club has since grown to nearly 30 members, and together with the NC State University Armenian Student Association, the two organizations now serve as the center of Armenian student life across the Triangle.

On April 24, the 111th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, Armenians at Duke reunited the Durham community once again — this time for a solemn evening of remembrance, testimony and advocacy. More than 45 students, faculty and members of the North Carolina community gathered at Goodson Chapel on the Duke campus for a candlelight commemoration that drew prominent voices in support of Armenia.

Program Highlights

Hovsepien, founder and president of Armenians at Duke, served as the master of ceremonies for the evening. He opened the program with welcoming remarks on behalf of both student organizations, reflecting on the diaspora community's growing presence in North Carolina and calling on all those gathered to embrace the spirit of remembrance and advocacy: "Let's demand, together, that the world not look away — that justice isn't optional, but owed."

Davit Melikian, North Carolina State Chair for the Armenian Assembly of America and a longtime advocate who came to Durham from Gyumri, Armenia, as a child, opened the program with a historical overview of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, grounding the evening in the historical record of the 1.5 million lives lost.

Five students — Nelly Garces, Isabel Khachatryan, Jack Khachatryan, Madison Mikayelyan (Vice President, Armenians at Duke), and Victoria Danielyan (President, NC State Armenian Student Association) see DUKE, page 7



Associate Provost at Worcester State University (WSU) and Vice Chair of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, Dr. Henry Theriault (Photo credit: Harout Barsoumian-Bars Images)

Times Square Commemoration Gathers Notables

NEW YORK — Hundreds gathered on Sunday, April 26, in Times Square to commemorate the 111th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide at the long-running genocide commemoration event spearheaded by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan. The theme of this year's event, "Carrying the Past and Claiming the Future," resonated throughout the day's speeches and performances, paying homage to ancestral Armenian roots and looking towards the future of Armenian advocacy on Capitol Hill and beyond. Masters of Ceremonies Lucine Beylerian, Chantelle Nasri, and Nairi Diratsouian led the event.

Beylerian opened the program and acknowledged the clergy present, including Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Very Rev. Simeon Odabashian, Vicar of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, and Bishop Mikael Mouradian of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Nareg, before introducing the speakers.

The crowd observed a moment of silence for the Armenian martyrs and all those who are victims of genocide, violence, and persecution. Those in attendance also paid homage to the cultural landmarks destroyed and hostages held captive by Azerbaijan.

Nasri thanked Vartan Abdo of the Armenian Radio Hour of New Jersey for livestreaming the event. Classical singer Karina Vartanian kicked off the event with a performance of the Armenian and American national anthems, surrounded by Homenetmen Scouts proudly waving Armenian and Artsakh flags.

Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian gave the invocation, highlighting the significance of the Times Square Commemoration: "There has been no end to such see TIMES SQUARE, page 11



New Jersey Congressman Rep. Frank Pallone (Photo credit: Harout Barsoumian-Bars Images)

Republican Rep. Fine Criticized for Saying Armenians Shouldn't Serve in Congress

By Nate Ostiller

Republican member of Congress Randy Fine has received widespread backlash after saying that "we don't want Armenians to serve in Congress."

Fine is facing an already contentious primary challenge from Dan Bilzerian, a controversial figure known for his association with the so-called "manosphere," as well as for his increasing dive into antisemitism and denial of the Holocaust. Bilzerian is an ethnic Armenian and has dual citizenship.

In an interview with the Jenny Beth Show on April 30, Fine was asked about Bilzerian, and described him as a "little Armenian" and a "terrible antisemite."

Fine further added that Bilzerian had said, "President [Donald] Trump was a pedophile rapist who should be impeached. That's not a winning argument. It may work in Armenia, where he's from [sic], but that's not an argument. That's not gonna work in the United States."

Bilzerian was born in Florida, and only obtained Armenian citizenship in 2018.

"We don't want Armenians to be able to serve in Congress. But I'm not gonna lose too much sleep about it," Fine concluded.

In response, Gev Iskayjan, the advocacy director for the prominent lobbying group the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), said that Fine's comments were "not just racist" but "disqualifying."

"Saying Armenians shouldn't be allowed to serve in Congress is blatant bigotry. No elected official who traffics in this kind of hate should be running for office."

Following the initial round of backlash, Fine appeared to double down in a post on Twitter on Sunday, May 3.

The spat was the latest incident in an already nasty primary campaign.

Earlier, Bilzerian called Fine a "fat Jew," and has based much of his campaign around attacking Israel and Jews, as well as Fine's staunchly pro-Israel positions. He has also denied the Holocaust and suggested Jews were behind the 9/11 attacks and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. One of the eight "plans" listed on Bilzerian's campaign website is to "End Jewish Supremacy."

For his part, Fine has a long history of making bigoted comments about Muslims, and suggested in 2025 that nuclear weapons should be dropped on Gaza. He has also used racist and Islamophobic language towards Muslim politicians in the US, such as New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, whom he called "little more than a Muslim terrorist," adding that his citizenship should be stripped and he "should be deported to the Ugandan shithole he came from."

Fine was first elected in 2025 and is heavily favored to win the primary scheduled for August.

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



COMMUNITY NEWS

Local Navy Doc Who Served on Artemis II Moon Mission Medical Team Witnesses History

By Robin Chapman

LOS ALTOS, Calif. (*Los Altos Town Crier*) — Lt. Cmdr. Martin Manoukian, MD, stood on the deck of the USS John P. Murtha just after 5 p.m. April 10 scanning the skies for the Artemis II space capsule Integrity as it raced through the atmosphere at 25,000 miles per hour, headed for splash-down in the Pacific Ocean.

On board the capsule were four astronauts returning from their mission around the Moon — the farthest journey into space taken by humans from planet Earth.

Manoukian, a Navy physician who grew up in Los Altos Hills and a 2009 graduate of Saint Francis High School, was on board the warship to lead one of two special emergency surgical teams that night.

“With helicopters in use, possible flaming debris from the capsule, divers and boat teams in the water, we knew we had serious damage potential,” Manoukian said. The two medical teams set up operating rooms on the Murtha and spent a year rehearsing with NASA scenarios that might require their medical intervention.

Manoukian, 35, earned his medical degree at UC Davis. He’s also the grandson of

local orthopedic surgeon Dr. Manasseh Manoukian, who died in 2009. Dr. Manasseh Manoukian’s son, Superior Court Judge Socrates Peter Manoukian, a 1968 graduate of Los Altos High School, bought the family home from his father in 1994 and he and his wife Patricia, a recently retired California Appeals Court Justice, raised their three boys there. Martin is their youngest.

Middle son Michael attended Santa Clara Law School and works as an employment attorney at Lathrop GPM. Oldest son Matthew graduated from the University of Arizona and, after the attack on America Sept. 11, 2001, enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. As an officer, he joined the newly-created Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) — the elite Marine Raider unit. Captain Matthew P. Manoukian was killed in action in Afghanistan Aug. 10, 2012 in Operation Enduring Freedom. He was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross, the Navy’s penultimate decoration for valor, second only to the Medal of Honor. Saint Francis High School now hosts an annual scholarship dinner in his name.

Martin said the loss of his brother was a factor in his desire to serve. His grandfather’s work as a physician and his immi-

gration from Lebanon to the U.S. in 1950 also played a part, as did the work of two uncles and an aunt, who were also doctors. This family journey led Martin to the deck of the Murtha on that April night, watching the skies for the Artemis II space capsule. Too young to have known the Apollo Space program, he stood by to aid four 21st-century astronauts if they needed his help.

The sea was calm. The wind was light. The skies were clear. The deck was silent as the men and women on the Murtha waited and watched. Manoukian’s wife Elizabeth, and their two boys Leon, 3, and Anthony, 9 months, saw the drama unfold on television at home in San Diego.

“We heard the two sonic booms first,” Manoukian said. “Then we could see the capsule as a small dot grew bigger and bigger. We all sort of held our breath. It seemed to take two or three minutes before we saw the first parachute deploy and then a pause and the other chutes popped.” The capsule hit the sea at a gentle 19 miles per hour and the crowd on deck let out a cheer. The four astronauts returned to our troubled planet and reported “four green” on board. That’s NASA-speak for four astronauts home and safe without a scratch.

Manoukian said of his adventure, “Of all



Martin Manoukian with pilot Victor Glover, pilot of the Artemis II, during training. Manoukian holds a picture of himself as a child in Los Altos, wearing an astronaut costume, which Glover has just signed (courtesy of Martin Manoukian)

the scenarios we practiced for, this was the optimal one.” That’s Navy-speak for a perfect evening.

(Robin Chapman is a longtime journalist, a Los Altos native, and the author of

Armenian Genocide Commemoration at Duke Reunites North Carolina’s Armenian Community

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— shared their families’ personal stories of survival from the Genocide. Isabel Khachatryan, Jack Khachatryan, and Madison Mikayelyan who recently traveled to Washington, D.C. as part of the Armenian National Committee of America’s Rising Leaders Program, were among four North Carolina students who met with congressional offices to advocate for North Carolina’s Armenian-American community.

Dr. Lisa Gennetian, Pritzker Professor of Early Learning Policy Studies and Professor in the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University, spoke to the Armenian-American experience and the legacy of resilience carried forward across generations. Raised in Watertown, Massachusetts — one of the earliest Armenian-American settlements in the country — Dr. Gennetian serves as faculty advisor of Armenians at Duke and was instrumental in the organiza-

tion’s path to university recognition.

Former Congressman David Price, who represented North Carolina’s 4th Congressional District for over three decades and previously served as a professor of political science and public policy at Duke University, delivered the keynote address. Congressman Price led a US Congressional delegation to Armenia in October 2022. He was awarded the Medal of Honor by the Armenian Parliament for his work championing democracy and US-Armenia cooperation. His remarks centered on the enduring importance of advocacy for Armenia in the face of continued threats to the republic’s sovereignty.

The evening concluded with a candle-light vigil and prayer led by Reverend Father Norayr Kazazian, pastor of St. Sarkis Armenian Church of Charlotte, NC, as guests passed flames from candle to candle in a moment of collective remembrance.

Reflecting on the significance of the night, Hovsepian remarked, “In a quieter and less-known pocket of the Armenian diaspora, we must stay united and join in spaces like these to celebrate our existence, remember our past, and advocate for our future.”

About Armenians at Duke

Armenians at Duke is a student organization at Duke University founded by Hovsepian in November 2025. It has grown to nearly 30 members and is dedicated to



Davit Melikian, Armenian Assembly State Chair, delivers remarks on the Armenian Genocide

bolstering Armenian student presence in the Triangle, sharing Armenian culture, and advocating for Armenian issues locally and nationally. It partners closely with the NC State University Armenian Student Association, together forming the hub of Armenian student life across the Research Triangle. They are active on Instagram @dukearmenians.

Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter presents

An Evening with Director of Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts Pierre Terjanian

The Ann and Graham Gund Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

June 4

7 p.m. SHARP

Baikar Building
755 Mt. Auburn Street
Watertown, MA

(use Norseman Ave. entrance)

Free admission, reception • RSVP tcadirector@aol.com



Members of Armenians at Duke at their inaugural event. Featuring (left to right): Vincent Hovsepian (President), Davit Kavkasyan, Jack Khachatryan (All-ASA Representative), Isabel Khachatryan (Treasurer), Emma Kavcioglu (Secretary), Nelly Garces (Social Media Chair), Madison Mikayelyan (Vice President), Dylan Matian (Events Chair), Arthur Aghayants, and Dr. Lisa Gennetian (Faculty Advisor).

At Armenian Heritage Park, Young and Old Connect Through Historic Wounds

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — Under brilliant blue skies and a chilly wind, about 500 assembled at the Armenian Heritage Park on April 26 to commemorate the 111th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

Tragically, since 2020, Armenian Genocide commemorations have been twinned with the tragedy of Karabakh (Artsakh) and the removal of its native inhabitants by Azerbaijani forces. The three speakers at the Heritage Park — Nina Shahverdyan Argine Harutyunyan, Aspram Israyelyan — are all young women who hail from Karabakh and whose families have been



MC Raffi Barsamian (David Medzorian photo)

forced to say goodbye, perhaps forever to their homes. However, another standout fact about the three young women is that all three are currently attending Ivy League schools in the US — Columbia for Shahverdyan and Harvard for Harutyunyan and Israyelyan.

It is especially sad to hear the messages of yearning and pain the diasporan Armenian community has transmitted from previous generations through literature, songs or history lessons, be expressed by these young persons in their 20s, who have seen images like those from more than a century ago.

In her speech, Shahverdyan said, “As a child, it was hard to connect the reality on the ground with my father’s horrific stories about the Armenian Genocide. When you are a child, the number 1915 stands way too far in history, too far to impact you now, right? And it took me 16 years to realize that what happened in 1915 had not finished yet. It was April 1, but it was not a joke. Bombs exploded on the frontline, louder than the shootings we were used to. The war had started. It was my first war.”

Shahverdyan, who will receive her mas-

ter’s degree from Columbia’s Teachers’ College in international education, focusing on education in emergency situations, went on to speak about her second encounter with war. “Walking in Stepanakert resembled walking through a hall of memory, where the portraits of perished soldiers constantly looked over you from above.”

By 21, she had moved to the frontline Artsakh village of Aghavno, teaching young children. Classes were often canceled because of Azerbaijani attacks, and yet, there was a feeling of camaraderie. “The mayor of that village was a wonderful Lebanese-Armenian man, a descendent of Genocide survivors, Andranik, who sheltered me along with his six kids at their house when there were shootings at night,” she said.

Soon, she recalled, members of the Russian peacekeeping units told them that they would leave and the village would be handed over to Azerbaijan. “I carefully collected all the cards and handmade gifts from my students into a small suitcase, and I left, never to come back, because that village does not exist anymore. Every single house is torn down and a new settlement is built instead, erasing our presence,” she said.

By age 23, she was living under the blockade, hungry and scared. She and members of her family were scared against a large, well-armed and badly-intended enemy. “My homeland got totally occupied



Nina Shahverdyan (David Medzorian photo)

by Azerbaijan’s Turkey-backed forces and yet, both sides were guilty of the crisis. The Azerbaijani government assured us that it will be safe and we can live together peacefully. I did not believe them. We did not believe them. We all got forcefully



Members of the clergy at the Armenian Heritage Park (Ken Martin photo)

displaced,” she said. Only about 10 people chose to continue living in Karabakh after the Azerbaijanis took over the land and they soon requested permission to move to Armenia.

She then spoke about the trials and convictions of the 19 Armenians who had served in leadership positions in various posts in Karabakh going on now. “Described by international human rights



Argine Harutyunyan (David Medzorian photo)

membering; we owe them the struggle,” she said.

Also speaking was Argine Harutyunyan, a freshman at Harvard. Like Shahverdyan, she tied what had happened 111 years ago to what happened to her people in Artsakh.

“It was a deliberate and systematic war on culture, identity and memory. More than a century after the Armenian genocide, Azerbaijan, fully backed by Turkey, carried out ethnic cleansing against the indigenous Armenian population, forcing us to flee our homeland,” Harutyunyan said.

She referred to the blockade on Karabakh, which though decried by some human rights groups, was ignored by most governments.

“In a matter of days, we were violently uprooted from our homeland,” she said. “Villages were emptied, communities collapsed and people had to leave behind everything they had built over generations.”

The images of the human and automobile traffic jam heading from Artsakh to Armenia are haunting. Experiencing it firsthand was even worse, as Harutyunyan recalled the chaos.

“There was absolute chaos on around. There were people dying, parents whose kids were missing. The screams of starving children were everywhere. Along the road, Azerbaijani forces were beating innocent people, stripping them of dignity in every possible way. I still vividly remember holding a small lemon from our garden, in my hand. One of the soldiers noticed it and demanded that I give it to them. I handed it over. He took the lemon, threw it on the ground, crushed it under his feet and then gave it back to me,” she recalled.

“We owe our ancestors more than re-

continued on next page



Aspram Israyelyan (Ken Martin photo)



COMMUNITY NEWS



A young girl puts a flower on the abstract monument at the Armenian Heritage Park (Ken Martin photo)

from previous page

She then referred to anti-Armenian actions in Azerbaijan, in Baku, Kirovabad and Sumgait, saying the pattern had been set in the 1980s and continued to this day.

“Over the following decades this pattern continued and intensified because those responsible faced no real consequences,” she said.

Now, with the people removed from the land, the Azerbaijani authorities are expending their energies on destroying all monuments which point to evidence of millennia of Armenian life in Karabakh.

“Everything that shapes our identity, everything that makes Artsakh Armenian, is currently being destroyed. Azerbaijan’s goal is to erase Artsakh from history, to destroy its culture, to eradicate its Armenian presence. If this is not genocide, then what is genocide,” she asked.

She praised Armenian resilience. “No power can truly destroy a nation until and unless the nation itself decides to let go. No matter our circumstance, by knowing our history, who we are and what we have contributed to civilization, we can find a path forward through collective action and unwavering commitment. It is our responsibility, to ensure that if not us, then our descendants, will one day have an independent Artsakh.”

The third speaker, Israyelyan, a master’s candidate at Harvard, added her expression of pain about the recent loss of Artsakh.

“I learned the word ‘home’ before I understood that a home could be taken away,” she recalled. Tying her experience to those of a century ago, she recalled, “At 10, I recited poetry in Western Armenian, the language carried by the survivors of Genocide and their descendants. The poems were beautiful but heavy. They spoke of villages, exile, silence, loss and return. I used to ask my mother why these poems were so full of sadness. She would not give me a single answer, maybe because Armenian history is not only something you learn, but something you slowly grow old enough to understand. In 2016, I began to understand.”



Nina Shahverdyan and Aspram Israyelyan (David Medzorjian photo)

Added Israyelyan, “The Armenian Genocide teaches us that violence does not end when the killing stops. It continues when denial continues, when truth is questioned, when suffering is minimized and when the world learns to look away. That is why Artsakh belongs in this remembrance,” she said. “When denial becomes a policy and silence becomes convenient, erasure can return in new forms.”

She decried the neutral language adopted by many countries and institutions when it came to the Azerbaijani attack on Artsakh, which ended with its ethnic cleansing, such as “When forced displacement is called relocation, when ethnic cleansing is called conflict, when a people’s homeland is treated as if it never belonged to them.”

(Fuller coverage of her speech can be found in the coverage of the commemoration program at the State House on this page.)

Raffi Barsamian served as master of ceremonies. Several members of the clergy representing Armenian Churches in the region opened the program, offering a prayer invoking the now sainted martyrs of the Armenian Genocide.

There were several artistic components in the program. Vocalist Lia Sarkisyan and keyboardist Arno Melkonyan offered two songs and young dancers from Armenia Dance Studios of Waltham performed two dances. In addition, 7-year-old Anahit Melkonyan recited a poem by Paruyr Sevak.



Dancers from the Armenia Dance Studios (Ken Martin photo)

Tekeyan Cultural Association & UCLA Armenian Music Program’s

Vem Ensemble

2026 Tour

Performing works of
*Komitas, Suni,
Toumajian,
Gazarossian,
Sargan,
Khachaturian
and Schubert*



Prof. Movses Pogossian violin,
Ally Cho violin, Damon Zavala viola,
Niall Tarō Ferguson cello

Philadelphia
Friday, May 1, 7:30 p.m.

Co-sponsor Villanova Armenian Students’ Organization
Cinema at Connelly Center
Villanova University
Tickets \$20. For more info/tickets call Vahe at 215-908-9502 or Sira at 267-902-0700

Boston
Sunday, May 3, 2 p.m.

Co-sponsor Holy Trinity Armenian Church
145 Brattle St., Cambridge, MA
Free admission.
For more info, email tcadirector@aol.com

Montreal
Friday, May 8, 8:30 p.m.

Tekeyan Armenian Community Center
825 Manougian St.,
Ville Saint Laurent, Québec
Donation \$35, contact Tekeyan Center at 514-747-6680

Southfield, MI
Saturday, May 9, 7:00 p.m.

Co-sponsors: Saint John Armenian Church, Music Guild of St. John Armenian Church
St. John Armenian Church Cultural Hall
2001 Northwestern Hwy, Southfield, MI
Free admission. For info, email agop45@sbcglobal.net or call Diana Alexanian 248-505-6159 or Madisen Lundquist 503-758-8805

Ann Arbor, MI
Sunday, May 10, 3-5 p.m.

Co-sponsor University of Michigan Center for Armenian Studies
Helmut Stern Auditorium at the University of Michigan Museum of Art
525 S. State St., Ann Arbor, MI
Guest speakers: **Melissa Bilal, Ronald Suny, Anoush Suni.**
Free admission. For info, email armenianstudies@umich.edu

Altadena, CA
Sunday, May 17, 5 p.m.

TCA Beshgeturian Center
1901 N. Allen Ave.
Free admission. For info, email tcawestcoast@gmail.com

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COMMUNITY NEWS

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Times Square Commemoration Gathers Notables

TIMES SQUARE, from page 6
atrocities,” he said. “The genocide continues today through the actions of Azerbaijan.” He also paid tribute to the atrocities committed against Armenians in Sumgait and Baku, and the 120,000 Armenians forcibly exiled from Artsakh in 2023. “The act has not only been against people. It is also a cultural genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh, which peaked in 2005 with the destruction of thousands of khachkars, most recently with one in Stepanakert.” He highlighted that the Armenian cause is no different than the cause of all minorities worldwide, and that denial, distortion, and oppression will not hold us back. “Our endurance is deeper than oceans and higher than mountains,” he stressed. “We should expect Turkish generations, those who are scouting us right now, to become aware of the facts of history.”

Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) shared the latest legislative work he is sponsoring in Congress in support of Armenians, such as the Armenian Strategic Partnership Act. After discussing the continued importance of justice for Artsakh and the right to return, he outlined his plan to strengthen the relationship between America and Armenia through better military, humanitarian, and economic assistance. As a founding co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, Congressman Pallone has been a staunch advocate for the Armenian people, both in the United States and in Armenia. He was instrumental in U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide and has supported pro-Armenian legislative actions in Congress. “We can’t backtrack,” he stressed, touching upon President Trump’s refusal to use the word genocide. “It is important to continue to speak out,” he said. “People should be able to go back to Artsakh, and there should be reparations.” He urged the crowd to contact their members of Congress to co-sponsor the Armenian Strategic Partnership Act.

Times Square Alliance board member and chair of community board 4, Leslie Boghosian Murphy, shared her family’s own story of the genocide. “When I stand here among you, I’m reminded that every Armenian carries their own version of this story and the same thread of endurance,” she shared. “I am not speaking about a distant tragedy,” she reminded the crowd. She remained steadfast in her proud Armenian advocacy, “When we acknowledge the truth, we affirm the dignity of us as people.”

The commemoration commended Kathy Hochul’s proclamation of April 24th as Armenian Genocide Commemoration Day. Beylerian also acknowledged New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani’s affirmative statement on “X” acknowledging Turkey as the persecutors of the genocide, the expulsion of Armenians from Artsakh as “continuing the genocidal campaign that had begun over 100 years prior,” and “the right of all people to freedom, safety, and self-determination,” which drew applause and support from the crowd.

The MCs read statements on behalf of Congressman Mike Lawler (R-NY) and, later, Congressman Tom Kean (R-NJ).

Vartanian performed a powerful rendition of *Groong* by Komitas, and Bishop Mouradian offered his prayers. “We are the voice of our ancestors,” he said. “The blood of our martyrs was not shed in vain. We do not stand as mourners, we stand as builders of the future.” He posed the question: “In a world that struggles with violence, the martyrs challenge us. Will we choose silence, or will we choose courage?” He looked out to the crowd and concluded: “The future we envision is not one of revenge but one of justice.”

Shogh Tarpinian of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party stressed the importance of remembrance. “The time has come for a renewed way of thinking, one rooted in unity,” she shared. She reminded the crowd that we should focus on building a future worthy of such sacrifice.

Dr. Jesse Arlen, Director of the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center at the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, began with a quotation from the 11th century describing invasions of Armenian lands, echoing memories more familiar to genocide survivors centuries later. His statement reflected upon the history of Cilicia and the brave Armenians who rebuilt cultural institutions of their homeland on foreign soil. But he then asked: “What about us today?” He reminded the crowd that most Armenians came to America as migrant workers who planned to return home, and this longing for home remains true. The scholar emphasized investing in Armenian resources and cultural institutions here in the United States, especially as Armenian culture is still under threat. He discussed his late sister, Tenny Arlen’s book, *To Say with Passion: Why Am I Here?* — the first American-born Armenian to produce an Armenian-written work of creative literature. He ended



his segment by posing the question: “Can we build a new Armenian Cilicia here?”

The Armfolk Group was brought to New York through the International Arts Fund, as a part of a larger 21-state US tour, supported by the International Youth Cultural Exchange. The Armfolk dancers performed a graceful tribute, paying homage to Cilicia. Following the somber tribute, kanoun performer Yelena Torosyan delivered a vibrant arrangement that echoed throughout Times Square. The dancers returned, clad in forget-me-not dresses, to perform again. Set to an English-language poem recounting the history of the genocide, the performance evolved into a group dance. The performance ended with the dancers unveiling scarves spelling out ‘Armenia 1915.’

Nasri introduced the sponsor and organizer of the commemoration, the Knights of Vartan and its sister organization, the Daughters of Vartan. The Grand Chairwoman of the Daughters of Vartan, Lily Sarkissian, shared remarks. She reminded the crowd of Adolf Hitler’s reference to the Armenian genocide, which led to the Holocaust, paying tribute to her own ancestors who were killed in the genocide.

Grand Commander of the Knights of Vartan Bob Avakian then commended Mayor Mamdani’s statement. He also reminded the crowd of the importance of Armenian genealogy, which creates new bridges of evidence to the genocide. He made note of the Turks who participated in Hrant Dink’s funeral march, acknowledging the Turkish people’s rejection of their government’s denial of the genocide. He shared Taner Akçam’s statement about a path towards the total acknowledgement of the Armenian Genocide.

Sarah Leah Whitson of the Armenian Bar Association highlighted the importance of accountability in her remarks. “We are awash in genocide,” she said. She acknowledged the Palestinian genocide in Gaza and the potential impending genocide in Iran. She condemned the use of the Armenian genocide as a political bargaining chip. She also condemned former mayor Eric Adams for his ties to Turkey and the coinciding corruption and bribery, and also condemned Azerbaijan: “We are horrified that Azeri forces destroyed the largest Armenian church in Stepanakert,” she said. “We have a duty to fight the scourge of racism and hatred, not just for Armenians but for people worldwide. We must seek change and accountability first here at home.” She acknowledged the continued persecution throughout Gaza and Lebanon. She concluded, “We are a symbol of the survival and struggle of our people.”

Bryan Ardouny, executive director of the Armenian Assembly of America, followed: “We stand to honor the unbreakable will of those who survived. Remembrance alone is not enough. In 2023, the world watched as Armenians were ethnically cleansed.” He stressed: “We say, never again means never again, now.” He called upon elected officials to stand for justice — and pointed to the Armenian Assembly Advocacy summit earlier this year, which was a testament to the future in the hands of young Armenians.

Diratsouian spoke on behalf of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA). She proclaimed, “Without universal recognition, the cycle of brutality continues unabated.” She highlighted the destruction of cultural

heritage sites and the enduring efforts to perpetuate denial. She noted that though the congressional recognition in 2019 was a step, it remains vulnerable to denial and revisionism: “The survival of the Armenian people is never guaranteed.” She emphasized the role of local, state, and federal government — all critical to the battleground mobilizing communities. “The legacy of our ancestors shapes the future we’re building,” she said. She also advocated for Armenian genocide education, including the passage of the Armenian Genocide Education Act, and for sanctions against Azerbaijan.

Aren Kabarajian, co-chair of the AGBU Young Professionals of Greater New York, touched upon the resilience of Armenians. He highlighted that the strength of Armenians lies in our unity, connecting this thread to the history of the AGBU, sharing the work the AGBU accomplished in the aftermath of the genocide. He also advocated for the documentation of the first post-genocide Armenian generation’s stories. He emphasized spending time with our community elders is more crucial than ever: “Remember the cultural identity you have. Let us focus on channeling their strength and endurance. Each of us is here because of our collective history.”

Aram Arkun, executive director of the Tekeyan Cultural Association and grand recorder of the Knights of Vartan, touched upon the importance of being the voice for those who are silenced. He pointed to the Turkish demonstration behind the commemoration. “Never again remains just a phrase,” he said. “The struggle not only helps our fellow Armenians, but makes us better people.”

Dr. Henry Theriault, associate vice president for academic affairs at Worcester State University and a leading academic specializing in genocide studies, reminded the crowd of the other ethnic minorities facing similar persecution: “We are also remembering Assyrians and Greeks. The Native Americans, Rwandans, Ukrainians, Bangladeshis, and all the other people who have suffered genocide,” he stressed. “Let’s not forget the Palestinians, the Black Sudanese, those in Brazil, and those in northern Europe suffering the same ways we have.” He discussed the political impacts of genocide, first saying that “Genocide, by its nature, is political,” and then stressed, “Genocide is at the core of the Turkish Republic.” He reminded the crowd that the destruction of Artsakh was explicitly the continuation of the Armenian genocide by the leader of Turkey.

Armenian Evangelical Church pastor Obed Bazikian then encouraged the crowd to get involved in local Armenian churches and communities. He offered a prayer to remember the Armenian martyrs.

Andranik Manukyan of the Gata Band gave a lively solo performance, which brought the crowd to their feet. To accompany the spirited performance, a blend of Armenian folk and pop music, the crowd gathered in dance.

Armfolk returned in new costumes with traditional Marash patterns to perform one final time. The crowd joined in clapping and singing along before Very Rev. Odabashian took the stage. He offered a prayer to remember the souls of martyrs and to protect Armenian soil. He also prayed to preserve the name of Artsakh and ended with the *Hayr Mer* prayer.



COMMUNITY NEWS

111th Anniversary of Armenian Genocide Commemorated at Mass. State House

ANNIVERSARY, from page 1

He declared, “The Armenian people have brought to Boston and to the whole world a rich Christian faith and a treasure house of artistic, literary, and musical works, as well as the legacy of scientific achievements, international trade networks, and great works of architecture. Armenian monasteries and scholars ... were critical to preserving the knowledge that might have been lost to many civilizations.” The archbishop mourned those lost to senseless genocidal violence and invoked the intercession of the saints and martyrs of Armenia during his invocation.

Muradian gave a welcome address following the pledge of allegiance and singing of the American and Armenian national anthems by the children of St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School and Erebuni Armenian School.

He called for a moment of silent reflection in the memory of Jack Keverian and Robert Serabian, two extraordinary members of the Armenian community who passed away prior to this year’s commemoration, before stressing the obligation of both honoring the victims of the Genocide and fighting for justice and recognition.

Rep. Dave Rogers (24th Middlesex County District, including Arlington, Belmont and Cambridge), who currently serves as chair of the Joint Committee on Higher Ed-



The clergy at the Massachusetts State House (photo Jirair Hovsepian)

with the colors of the Armenian flag, quoted the words of the late Vartan Gregorian, president of Owens’ alma mater, who said, “We cannot and must not lose our sense of history and our memory, for they constitute our identity.” He went on to read the pro-

clamation of Governor Maura Healey of Massachusetts designating April 24, 2026, as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day.

Sen. Will Brownsberger, whose district includes parts of Watertown, Belmont, Cambridge and Boston, and is the president pro tempore of the Senate, presented joint resolutions commemorating the achievements of veter-

eran educators Vicky Kherlopian, Armine Manukyan Humphrey, Mayda Melkonian and Ardemis Megerdichian.

Keverian Scholarship

Rep. Owens invited Kenneth Keverian to present the Honorable Speaker George Keverian Public Service Scholarships on behalf of the Keverian family. Keverian, nephew of the former speaker, noted that last month Jack Keverian, brother of the former speaker, passed away. The parents of Jack and George, Nazar and Eliza Keverian, were immigrants who worked hard to build their futures as part of the American Dream, he said. Now the family awards annually two scholarships to young people who hopefully will be leaders in the future.

The first winner, Emma Perry, is an outstanding student at Everett High School in the top 5% of her class who will be pre-law at Hofstra University and pursuing a career in public service. As she is travelling abroad, Dr. John Braga, the principal of Everett High School, and Alfred Lattanzi, a former Everett City councilman and close friend of the Keverian family, accepted the award on her behalf.

The second award was given to Aram Baghdasaryan, who was born in Stepanavan, Armenia, and now is a junior at Harvard University, majoring in statistics and gov-



Kenneth Keverian, and behind him, from left, Rep. Dave Rogers, Rep. David Muradian and Sen. Will Brownsberger (photo Jirair Hovsepian)



Rep. David Muradian (photo David Medzorian)

ucation, declared, “No matter your background or whether you trace your lineage to Armenia, our job as elected officials is to oppose injustice and oppression wherever it’s found.”

Rogers recognized the guests, elected officials and human rights groups present, including former Rep. and now Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian of Middlesex County, State Auditor Diana DiZoglio, State Rep. Priscila Sousa, Rep. Mike Soder, Rep. Joseph McGonagle, Rep. Donald Wong, former Governor’s Councilor Marilyn Devaney, Didier Moise, the president of Belmont against Racism, Christelle Moise, student volunteer for Belmont against Racism, Courtney Fahlin, the Community Engagement Program Manager of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston, Matt Taylor, chair of the Belmont Select Board, Taylor Yates, vice chair of the Belmont Select Board, Lisa Feltner, Watertown Town Councilor for District B,

He noted that though Rep. Kate Lipper-Garabedian couldn’t be present, her office helped in organizing the commemoration. (Later in the event Rep. Muradian also noted the support of Rep. John Lawn, who similarly could not attend.)

Rep. Steven Owens (29th Middlesex District including parts of Cambridge and Watertown), as in the past wearing a tie



Archbishop Richard Henning (photo David Medzorian)

ernment. President of the Armenian Student Association at Harvard and president of the Harvard Boxing Club, Keverian said that Baghdasaryan has worked on projects related to development of his motherland and is looking to build a career in public policy and international affairs.

Jermaine McCalpin Delivers Keynote Speech

Brownsberger introduced the keynote

speaker, Dr. Jermaine O. McCalpin, who is an Associate Professor of Africana Studies at New Jersey City University and a leading scholar of genocide studies, transitional justice, and the politics of memory. For more than 20 years, his research has focused on the history, denial, and enduring global implications of the Armenian Genocide. Dr. McCalpin has shared this work in

continued on next page



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

Armenia and across the Armenian diaspora in Glendale, New York City, Worcester, Boston, New Jersey, Toronto and Quebec, and has presented on Capitol Hill to advocate for national and international recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Brownsberger said that his scholarship and public engagement continue to advance critical conversations on truth-telling, recognition, and reparative justice, making McCalpin a respected voice in the ongoing effort to honor the victims and uphold human dignity.

McCalpin recalled that he first heard about Nagorno Karabakh as an elementary school student in Jamaica through reading a history textbook in 1986 and this childhood memory resurfaced when he began scholarly work in 2005 on reparative justice.

McCalpin called for “recognition [of the Armenian Genocide], not simply as acknowledgement, but as acceptance of a long historical wrong as the precursor to repair.” McCalpin stated that “a genocide denied is a genocide continued.” In other words, “Denial is an act of sustained violence. And so recognition is not just symbolic, it is a form of justice. You see, recognition restores dignity.” He said that his work has shown that denial rewrites documents, erases testimonies and reframes atrocities as ambiguity, so that “to confront denial, is to defend the very idea of evidence documentation and research.”

He said that reparation is about repairing the future, declaring, “Genocides destroy



The St. James Armenian Choir, directed by Deacon Asatur Baljyan and accompanied by pianist Anahit Karchikyan (photo David Medzorian)

A musical interlude was presented by the St. James Armenian Choir, directed by Deacon Asatur Baljyan accompanied by pianist Anahit Karchikyan, including the pieces *Ov Hayots ashkharh* [O Land of the Armenians] composed by Makar Yekmalian, and the famous Armenian folksong of longing *Dle Yaman*, as arranged by Aleksandr Harutyunyan.

Aspram Israyelyan's Reflections

Rep. Muradian introduced Aspram Israyelyan, a graduate student at Harvard



Aspram Israyelyan (photo Ken Martin)

worrying daily whether her family had enough to eat, and final ethnic cleansing of Artsakh in September 2023. Israyelyan continued, “And, I believe, this is where commemoration becomes responsibility. Because genocide remembrance is about understanding what the Armenian Genocide taught us to recognize: that erasure is not only the violence itself. It is also what makes that violence possible, and what later tries to justify it.”

Denial became policy and so, she said, “That is why Artsakh belongs in this remembrance: not as a comparison, but as a continuation of the questions Armenian history has never stopped asking. What happens when a people are removed from their land, and the world debates the vocabulary? What happens when suffering is visible, but responsibility remains negotiable? What happens when survival itself is used as proof that nothing irreversible happened?”

Remembrance must become refusal to allow the erasure and denial, she emphasized. Moreover, she said, “But I believe that with truth, justice, and memory, return is never impossible. Until that day, it lives in the dialect I speak, in the memories I carry, and in the responsibility I refuse to set down. A homeland is not erased when its people are forced out. It is erased when the world agrees to forget who lived there, who prayed there, who buried their dead there, and who still carries the right to return. I refuse to forget.

Հիշում ենք. We remember.”

Muradian in his closing remarks reminded those present that “remembrance is not passive. It is a responsibility – a responsibility to speak the truth, to confront denial, and to ensure that future generations understand not only what happened, but why it must never happen again.” Part of this, he said, “is getting involved. It is educating. It is having those difficult conversations. It can look completely different to



Dr. Jermaine O. McCalpin (photo Ken Martin)

not only life, but livelihood. Armenians lost homes, land, businesses, churches, and entire communities. And so, I think of reparation in a three-pronged way. There is material reparation, which includes the restitution of confiscated properties, compensation for economic loss, and support for Armenian cultural and educational institutions. These are not acts of charity, they are acts of justice. The second type of reparation is cultural reparation. In my research on cultural memory, I have seen how genocides target language, ritual, and identity. Reparation culturally must therefore protect the Armenian language, Armenian religious life, Armenian historical sites, and Armenian cultural production. To safeguard culture is to safeguard survival. Third is political reparation. That means ensuring that Armenian communities in Armenia and the diaspora have the security, sovereignty, and international support needed to thrive. It also means acknowledging ongoing threats, including those faced by Armenians in Arkansas.”

He concluded, “May our pursuit of justice, whether for Armenians, or for the descendants of the enslaved, or for any people denied their humanity, ... bring us closer to a world where dignity is not deferred, but dignity is delivered.”

University specializing in political science with a focus on Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Born and raised in Artsakh, her work is deeply shaped by personal experience with conflict and displacement. Muradian observed that she focuses on regional security, geopolitics, and post-Soviet affairs, and has conducted research and policy analysis with institutions including the United Nations and the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard.

At the start of her clearly heartfelt and moving talk, Israyelyan declared: “For many, Artsakh is a political question. For me, it has been the place where I learned my first words, my first songs, my first sense of belonging. And that is why today, as we commemorate April 24, I do not speak about memory as something distant. I speak about memory as something I inherited, and then lived.”

She said that she initially thought that the Western Armenian poetry that she learned and recited as a child reflected loss and emotions that belonged to a different generation, but “then 2020 came. War was no longer inherited memory. It was names I knew. Classmates my age. Cousins I lost.”

This was followed by the 2022 blockade, which she followed from outside,



Veteran educators Vicky Kherlopian, Armine Manukyan Humphrey and Mayda Melkonian (photo David Medzorian)

each and every one of us, but we owe it to our Armenian martyrs to keep their memories eternal.”

An excellent meal was offered after the formal event by Arsen Karageozian of Noor Mediterranean Grill, while flowers were from Stapleton Florist and bus transportation to and from the State House was provided by Ararat Lodge No. 1.

Arts & Culture

New Book Focuses on Gharadagh

By Karine Armen

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GLENDALÉ — The organization Research on Armenian Architecture (RAA) hosted a vibrant book presentation on the ancient Armenian district of Gharadagh (alternately spelled Karadagh), including its five regions, at the Armenian Society of Los Angeles on Sunday, April 26, and it was nothing short of inspiring. From fascinating stories to rich architectural heritage, the evening brought the past to life and sparked meaningful conversations.

RAA was founded in 1982 in Germany by Prof. Armen Hakhnazarian. Its mission is to research, document, comprehensively study and publicize the monuments of Armenian culture throughout the territory of historical Armenia and in historical diaspora settlements. RAA expanded its reach with purpose and vision, establishing branches in Glendale, in 1996 and in Yerevan in 1998. Building on this growth, RAA Armenia became a formal foundation in 2010, with its headquarters in Yerevan.

The 6th volume of the RAA 36-volume series, *History of Armenia*, published in 2025, focuses on the Gharadagh district in the Paytakaran province of Greater Armenia, now in Iran. The book is filled with color photographs, family trees, graphs, demographic information, and a well-researched list of monuments. The hardcover edition also includes a separate, detailed map of Gharadagh.

Previously published volumes of this series are dedicated to Hayots Dzor, Salmast, Artske, Mravkank and Khnus.

The authors are the late Samvel Karapetyan — a towering figure in Armenian cultural preservation, historian, researcher, and expert in medieval architecture specializing in the monuments of Historical Armenia, Artsakh, and the broader South Caucasus — and his wife, Emma Abrahamyan, who, following his passing, brought it to completion.

The volume, published under the patronage of Janet Mirzayan, presents the history and architectural monuments of the villages of the Gharadagh. The pre-publication work for the volume was carried out with support from the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of Armenia, the Hovnanian Family Foundation, and the United States branch of the Research of Armenian Architecture.

Jora Manouchehrians, president of RAA/USA, on behalf of the Board of Directors, welcomed the guests and conveyed his appreciation to the committee members, as well as to the Armenian Society of Los Angeles, for their support.

He noted, “RAA has archived approximately 690,000 photographs and documents in digitized form, creating

see GHARADAGH, page 17



Diana Markosian, “The Cut Out,” one of the images by Diana Markosian that will be featured in the Father exhibition running May 29 to Sept. 13 at the Armenian Museum of America.

Diana Markosian’s ‘Father’ to Make U.S. Debut at Armenian Museum of America

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America will present “Father,” a deeply personal and visually compelling project by acclaimed artist Diana Markosian. This exhibition marks the US debut of the work, offering an intimate exploration of family, memory, and identity.

The exhibition will run from May 29 to September 13 in the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian Galleries of the Armenian Museum of America, which is located at 65 Main Street, Watertown, MA. It is curated by Anahit Gasparyan and co-produced by Les Rencontres d’Arles and Foam, Amsterdam, and is sponsored by the JHM Charitable Foundation.

When she was 7, Markosian immigrated to the United States with her mother and brother, leaving her father behind. Fifteen years later, Markosian traveled to Armenia in search of him — a man who had become a stranger. “Father” traces this emotional journey to rediscover and rebuild a lost relationship, unfolding through photography, archival materials, video and text.



shaped as much by loss and distance as by presence and reunion. Father offers a powerful meditation on the complexities of family and the enduring search for connection, inviting audiences to reflect on their own histories and relationships,” stated Curator Anahit Gasparyan.

A private Member Preview (RSVP required via Eventbrite) will take place on Thursday, May 28, at 6 p.m., featuring a conversation between Markosian and curator Gasparyan followed by a reception. This special discussion will offer audiences deeper insight into the making of the artist’s personal journey, and the curatorial vision behind the exhibition.

Markosian (b. 1989, Moscow) is an American artist of Armenian descent working across photography, film and installation. Her book *Father* (Aperture) accompanied the project and was recognized with the Madame Figaro Prize at the Rencontres d’Arles in 2025. Markosian’s work has been exhibited at leading international institutions and is held in prominent public and private collections. She is widely recognized for advancing a nuanced dialogue between documentary practice and staged narrative within contemporary art.

All for the Soul: Abraham Terian’s Phrasing the Arts

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

“Mine is the realm of the beautiful,” avers the speaker boldly in “Touch of Greek Inspiration,” a poem in Abraham Terian’s recently published anthology, *Phrasing the Arts* (The Press at California State University, Fresno, 2025). Indeed, the whole spectrum of the arts — music, dance, painting, sculpting — populates the pages of Terian’s “little book.”

Sibelius, Mendelssohn and Dvorak are ever-present. “Dear Vincent is always in my mind.” Terian seduces with his elegant language and images



that delight with their sudden twists: “I see the light of setting suns/Here’s the ashtray,” “I’m waiting like a catcher with a mitt/for the sinking sun,” “You have high moments, even when low/just like the waves.” What holds the reader captive, however, is the almost shocking relevance of his words to real life, their bearing on the “unknowable pain” buried in the heart. In “Sinai Lunaris,” “It’s a dead-end even here” whispers the moon, with tearful eyes, to the pilgrim ascending Mount Sinai “unmoved,/its granite heart untouched,/unaware of the thousands/on the upward move —”

Terian’s poems reach into something profound. The beautiful artifacts and the various arts the speaker experiences carry him far into the reality of the soul, their enduring beauty prompting him to ponder the truth about humankind “roaming aimlessly,” like Moses, “in pathless places.” The Picasso painting at The Art Institute of Chicago shifts his attention to “the puzzled crowd/moving through the hall.” The violin chords of the Mozart Requiem he hears in “On a Walk in the Neighborhood” sound like “Someone was baring her soul . . . sounds from without and within.” As he further contemplates the “shattered pieces [of the] broken hoofs still kicking” of the marble frieze at the British Museum, “the guard/won’t let [him] touch,” he discerns what the sculptor touched but “never saw — your mortal wounds.” The whole collection can, in fact, be seen as the poet’s attempt to reveal the soul. “Hold nothing holier than the human soul,” reads the notice in his “Nursing-Home Notice.”

see TERIAN, page 16



ARTS & CULTURE

Berklee Armenian Musicians Bring College Students to Their Feet With HyeVibes at Baikar

VIBES, from page 1

Jeanine Shememian welcomed guests on behalf of the Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter and the AGBU Northeast District. She pointed out that the Baikar Building served as the headquarters of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, the only East Coast English-language Armenian newspaper still having a print edition, as well as the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada.

She thanked the Berklee student musicians for making this evening possible and declared that Tekeyan was ready to support and promote talented Armenian youth like them, as well as to offer the Armenian university students an opportunity to network with each other and the Armenian community of greater Boston.

Shememian suggested that any students with ideas for future projects that Tekeyan might support should contact the organization, whose Boston chapter has Facebook and Instagram sites (or email teadirector@aol.com).

Pianist, composer and guitarist Arno Melkonyan, who is treasurer of the Berklee Armenian Student Association (ASA), introduced the band members, which included two “Armenians in spirit.” Three sets were led consecutively by singers Angelina Nazarian, Léna Maire and Lia Sarkissian (Berklee ASA president). Alex Mirzabeigi (Berklee ASA executive adviser) performed on drums, JJ Gutierrez on guitar, and David Cervantes on bass. Elisa Fleur Sarkissian, Berklee ASA vice president, played the keytar and in between sets DJ’d. Daniel Gevorgyan was also a DJ in-between sets.

Angelina’s set included the contemporary songs *Heartbreak Anniversary* (by GIVEON – Giveon Dezmann Evans), *Don’t Start Now* (Dua Lipa), *Undressed* (Sombr – Shane Michael Boose), and *Blinding Lights* (The Weeknd – Abel Makkonen Tesfaye).

Léna presented songs of famous French-Armenian singers Michel Legrand (*Les Moulins de Mon Cœur*) and Charles Aznavour (*Comme ils disent, She, Hier Encore and La Bohème*).

Lia included a wide variety of Armenian and non-Armenian music, including ABBA’s *Money Money Money*,



The Berklee Armenian Student Association band: from left, Daniel Gevorgyan, David Cervantes, Léna Maire, Alex Mirzabeigi, Angelina Nazarian, JJ Gutierrez, Lia Sarkissian, Arno Melkonyan, Elisa Fleur Sarkissian (photo Aram Arkun)

Stevie Wonder’s *I Wish*, Miles Davis’s *Nardis*, French-Armenian group Ladaniva’s *Kef Chilini*, *Nare* by Armenia’s Nemra, and *Get Lucky* by Daft Punk.

Between the sets of live music, the DJ’s performed both Armenian and non-Armenian dance music which got the young audience to the dance floor.

The Performers

Angelina Nazarian, 20, is a singer and songwriter based in Boston and Michigan, creating pop ballads infused with rich R&B and soul influences. Armenian by heritage and born in Ann Arbor, Mich., her global upbringing has deeply shaped her artistry. Having lived in six countries, the US, China, Russia, South Korea, Armenia, and the United Arab Emirates, Angelina has performed in every place she has called home, developing a sound and perspective that transcends borders.

At 14, she released her debut EP, “Underwater,” featuring entirely original music and marking the beginning of her professional journey. By 17, fresh out of high school, she took the stage on national television as a contestant on NBC’s “The Voice,” Season 24. She is now a vocalist studying professional music at the Berklee College of Music.

Lia Sarkissian is a singer-songwriter and jazz vocalist from Los Angeles. She began singing at the age of 3, inspired early on by legendary jazz artists like Nina Simone



Angelina Nazarian sings with the Berklee students (photo Aram Arkun)

and Ella Fitzgerald. Her music blends jazz, soul, and contemporary pop, reflecting her rich vocal tone and improvisational style. She is currently studying at Berklee College of Music, majoring in songwriting and vocal performance. Driven by her goal of becoming a recording artist, Lia continues to develop her craft by writing and co-writing original music with fellow Berklee musicians.

Elisa Fleur Sarkissian is a songwriter, producer, and composer working across contemporary pop, electronic music, and film scoring. She began studying music at age 6 and writing songs at 12, cultivating a passion for storytelling and composition. She is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Music in songwriting (Production Track) at Berklee College of Music with a minor in electronic performance and film scoring, while serving in Student Government as the Professional Writing and Musical Technology Representative and incoming president of the DJ Club (Spring 2026). Raised in Los Angeles, Elisa trained at Lark Conservatory and Glendale High School, performing piano, flute, marimba, and keytar, and earning instrumental music awards. At 15, she scored the film “Dybbuk,” showcased at the Glendale International Film Festival. A Grammy Camp alum and Chuck Lorre Foundation Scholarship recipient, Elisa draws on her French-Armenian-American heritage to use music as a tool for cross-cultural collaboration and community-building.

Arno Melkonyan is a composer, pianist, and guitarist from Yerevan, whose work weaves Late Romantic lyricism, jazz-fusion harmonies, and Armenian folk and sacred chant into emotionally direct, story-driven music. Now based in Boston, he writes concert music for a variety of chamber and orchestral ensembles and performs internationally as a soloist and collaborator in cross-cultural projects that spotlight Armenian musical heritage in contemporary forms. Recent credits include a featured appearance in the 40th Musical Armenia Concert at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, where he performed a series of his chamber works, including the world premiere of his solo piano suite “In Memory of Artsakh.”

He continues to develop projects that center Armenian stories and sounds, creating programs that pair his original works with reimagined traditional material. Melkonyan currently studies composition and game scoring at Berklee College of Music, where he is the recipient of the Berklee World Tour, AGBU Performing Arts and Edward Hosharian Scholarships. He serves as vice president of Berklee’s Society of Composers as well as treasurer of the Armenian Student Association, actively shaping artistic initiatives within the Berklee community.

Alex Mirzabeigi, born in Burbank, developed a passion for music at age 2, beginning with Kids Drum Circles at the REMO Recreational Music Center. He later studied percussion, piano, clarinet, and guitar at the Colburn School of Performing Arts and the Pasadena Conservatory of Music, participating in jazz and percussion ensembles, youth orchestras, and community outreach programs. He has performed at prestigious venues like Disney Concert Hall and Zipper Hall, and has worked with renowned instructors including Peter Erskine, Aarón Serfaty and Nick Mancini.



Elisa Fleur Sarkissian, at left, with Lia Sarkissian (photo Jeanine Shememian)

A graduate of Flintridge Preparatory School, Alex now is pursuing a double major of music production and engineering, and music business at Berklee College of Music and will be graduating this month.

Léna Maire is a 22-year-old French singer of Armenian descent as well as a pianist, songwriter, composer, arranger and performer. Discovered in 2022 during the 11th season of “The Voice France,” she later moved to Paris to study contemporary music and jazz before crossing the Atlantic to pursue her passion at the Berklee School of Music, where she joined the prestigious Global Jazz Institute led by Danilo Pérez. Following this, she had the honor of performing at Carnegie Hall as part of a Berklee ensemble led by Dr. Lenora Helm Hammonds. She is currently working on the release of upcoming singles and an EP.

JJ Gutierrez, Berklee class of 2026, is an electric guitar principal, double majoring in music production and engineering and professional music.

David Cervantes is a bassist and music producer based in Los Angeles. David creates beats, collaborates with songwriters and produces music both for himself and other artists. David was immersed in music from a young age, growing up in church. That early exposure gave him a deep passion for music that has shaped his life ever since. In 2022, David took the next step in his musical journey by enrolling at Berklee College of Music and is graduating this month with a degree in independent recording and production.

Daniel Gevorgyan was born and raised in Yerevan. He went to the Tchaikovsky Music School for 12 years, and studied classical piano. He moved to Philadelphia to finish the last semester of senior year at George Washington High School. Afterwards he attended Temple University, where he majored in piano performance. He learned DJ’ing during his time there, recorded dialogue and foley (everyday sound effects) on movie sets, and also began doing film scoring, as his brother, Artur Gevorgyan, is a film director. Artur was the one who suggested that Daniel go to Berklee to major in film scoring. At Berklee, Daniel scored and sound-designed many student movies, as well as DJed at events that require music to dance to.



ARTS & CULTURE

All for the Soul: Abraham Terian's *Phrasing the Arts*

TERIAN from page 14

"A Stroll in Katajanokka Park," a favorite among favorites, captures many truths about human life. Its succession of images evokes the lack of connection and the weariness in the everyday lives of the woman "tired of her shopping bag," or the grandmother strolling her "toddler around/near pigeons for whom he doesn't care." The poem brilliantly evokes a life where "Dry leaves whirl with the wind/ here and there and here/there:"

An old man sleeps on a bench
victim of a restless night
the wind reads the paper he holds
pages flip
he doesn't seem to care for news
anymore.

"No one cares," not the pigeons, not "the weary pets" with "jaded looks." The brief poem, "Piece of a Chinese Vase" encapsulates the disconnectedness:

Just a shard in blue and white,
I hold it with certain regard

like a ceremonial object,
something from the Ming dynasty
with all the gravity of tradition
the sorrows of history.

like so much in life, this piece
in my mind is forever set
within a certain framework
of fragmentation and pattern,
with a myriad of pieces
where nothing is whole.

Nonetheless, the "sorrows" and the "fragments" the poems unearth coexist with the lover driving to his beloved joyfully, with "a sense of being almost home,/to be consumed in her embrace." Terian takes the reader into the "Poet's Room" where Rumi, the 13th-century Sufi mystic and poet welcomes, "You lovers of lovers,/this is your home./Welcome." His is, in his own words, an "aesthetics of fragmentation Now I'll be singing till I can't.

Terian also pays homage to his Ar-

menian heritage. The fragments of a four-millennia-old cart at the History Museum of Armenia, in Yerevan, may tell a tale of "gaps" and "layers of destruction" but they also help the viewer reach "the sublime." The "Armenian Dance" is likewise elevated to "a cosmic dance":

The men emerged like mountains before the Lord
and the women parted like waves on creation day
when angels watched a cosmic dance.

Men and women locked hands and steps,
moved their bodies with the motion of the soul
in patterns that pulsed with the rhythm of the heart.

Abraham Terian, Professor Emeritus of Theology at Saint Nersess Armenian Seminary at Armonk, NY, is a widely published scholar in the fields of classical

philosophy and early Christian and medieval Armenian literature. He is the author of the highly-acclaimed annotated translation into English of the Festal Works of the prominent tenth-century Armenian mystic, theologian and poet, St. Gregory of Narek. Indeed, part of the pleasure one derives from reading *Phrasing the Arts* comes from the numerous sacred images woven seamlessly into the poems. "Like a monk under the watchful eyes of Maria," "They burned incense to delight the saints," "my sacred music,/a supplication in the rhythm of jazz," "it will be Carnival, not Lent," and so many more," add a spiritual, a more transcendent dimension to the poems, offering the reader new insights and further enhancing the beauty of Terian's memorable lines.

As an academician, Terian's immersion in the research of Hellenistic philosophy and Biblical theology, coupled with his proficiency in literature and the arts, must be evidence that the Renaissance man is not dead, after all.

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Delish's Sweet Potato Bread

This recipe is one of 60 delicious sweet potato recipes from the Delish that was featured on July 7, 2022. You won't believe how versatile sweet potatoes can really be. Find the perfect food and drink ideas for every occasion and every season, from weeknight dinners to holiday feasts and celebrations at the Delish website.

"What's the deal with yams vs. sweet potatoes? Though in the United States, the terms are often used interchangeably, yams and sweet potatoes are not actually the same thing. Even though rough, brown-skinned yams are becoming more popular, it's likely what you are encountering in the grocery store is a sweet potato, no matter what it's been labeled. Are sweet potatoes healthy? Sweet potatoes are a nutrient-rich option and are high in antioxidants and vitamins, A, C, and B6. They're also full of fiber (keep those skins on)."

"Sweet potatoes have an amazing ability to be an attractive ingredient in both sweet and savory dishes. They're perfect in everything from casseroles to gnocchi to fries, pancakes, and pies. Go simple and roast them, then use them as the base for a hearty vegetarian sandwich or sophisticated crostini. Or go ahead and mash them for what may be the best sweet potato bread you'll ever eat. With so many versatile dishes to make and enjoy, sweet potatoes are not only associated with Thanksgiving—<https://www.delish.com/holiday-recipes/thanksgiving/>, so you can plan to enjoy them all year long."

"This Sweet Potato Bread is drizzled with a thick icing and spiced to perfection with cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, allspice, and cloves (though you can substitute 1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice as a shortcut). There's just 1 cup of sugar to keep the taste sweet enough without getting into super decadent dessert territory. Raisins and pecans are the suggested mix-ins, but any number of ingredients would taste great folded into the batter. Try chopped dates and coconut for a twist, or chocolate

chips and hazelnuts for a sweeter version. Though the drizzle on top is optional, it's highly recommended. Freeze the unglazed loaf for up to 3 months, then defrost and glaze before serving."

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup mashed sweet potato (from canned sweet potato or a 10-oz. cooked sweet potato)
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 cup pecans
- 1/2 cup golden raisins or your choice

TOPPING:

- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 4 to 6 teaspoons whole milk, plus more as needed
- 1/4 cup chopped pecans, toasted

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a 9 x 5 loaf pan with nonstick spray.

Make loaf: In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, sour cream, and sugar until combined. Whisk in sweet potato, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, allspice, cloves, and salt. Whisk in oil. Use a rubber spatula to fold in flour and baking powder until just combined. Fold in pecans and raisins.

Transfer batter to prepared loaf pan. Bake until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean, 60 to 70 minutes. Set on a rack and cool completely in pan.

Make topping: In a small bowl, whisk together powdered sugar and 4 teaspoons milk. Add up to 2 teaspoons more milk until icing is just barely runny.

Remove loaf from pan and transfer to a cutting board. Drizzle icing all over top of loaf, letting it drip down sides. Sprinkle toasted pecans on top. Slice and serve immediately.

CASEY ELSASS CONTRIBUTING RECIPE DEVELOPER

Casey Elsass is a cookbook author and recipe developer. His work has appeared on Delish, Food Network, Food52, Epicurious, Munchies, Tastemade, Tasty, and Goodful.

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ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

MAY 9 — In Her Embrace: A Mother's Day Concert. An evening of song & gratitude featuring Asatur Baljyan (baritone) and Nune Hakobyan (piano). Hosted by Holy Archangels Armenian Church, 1280 Boston Rd., Haverhill, MA 01830. For more information, call (978) 372-9227. A dream. A voice. A journey across silence and history.

MAY 15 and 16 — The Armenian Memorial Church of Watertown will hold its Annual Fair on Friday, May 15, from 4 pm to 8 pm and Saturday, May 16, from 12 pm to 7 pm (rain or shine). Both days, the Church will be serving kebab dinners and exquisite desserts. Kebab dinners complete with sauce, rice pilaf, salad and pita bread, meatless meals, paklava, kadayif, cheoreg, mante, yalanchi, tourshi, beureg. 32 Bigelow Avenue in Watertown. Admission is free. The Church is wheelchair accessible. For more information call 617-923-0498.

MAY 17 — MCMA Presents "Voices From the Homeland," featuring violinist Haig Hovsepian, cellist Suren Bagratuni and pianist Karen Hakobyan. Follen Church, 755 Massachusetts Ave., Lexington, 7 p.m. Tickets \$15-\$30.

MAY 28 — Save the Date! "Father" by Diana Markosian, art exhibition opening. "Father" traces an emotional journey through photography, video, and archival materials, exploring themes of loss, identity, and belonging. Thursday, 7 p.m., Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown.

MAY 20 — 40th Annual Membership Meeting of the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA) with guest speaker Christina Maranci, Mash-tots Professor of Armenian Studies, Harvard University, speaking on the medieval Armenian city of Ani. Business meeting at 7 p.m. for CYSCA members and others interested in becoming members, followed by guest speaker and a reception. Free and open to the public. At the Cambridge Citywide Senior Center (across from Cambridge City Hall), 806 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge. Parking nearby: on street; at Green Street Garage (260 Green St), and Central Square municipal lot #8. To RSVP or for more info, email info@cambridgeyerevan.org.

MAY 23 — Friends of Armenian Culture Society (FACS) presents the 74th annual Armenian Night at the Pops, featuring violinist Sofya Vardanyan as soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra, performing Alan Hovhaness' rarely performed Ode to Freedom for violin and orchestra, in a tribute to the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Also featured is the renown, genre-blending ensemble Pink Martini. Symphony Hall, 7:30 p.m. For tickets and information, visit FACSBoston.org.

MAY 28 — Opening Night Preview: A Conversation with Artist Diana Markosian & Curator Anahit Gasparyan. Father traces an emotional journey through photography, video, and archival materials, exploring themes of loss, identity, and belonging. The opening night preview will feature a conversation between artist Diana Markosian and curator Anahit Gasparyan, followed by a reception. Thursday, 6:30 PM, Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown. This preview event is for Armenian Museum members only. Please RSVP at www.armenianmuseum.org/rsvp. Exhibition on view May 29 – September 13, Hours: Thursday – Sunday 12 PM – 6 PM.

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)

JUNE 4 — Special evening talk and reception featuring Pierre Terjanian, director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, sponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association, Boston Chapter. 7 p.m. SHARP, Baikar Building 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. Use Norseman Ave. entrance. RSVP tcadirector@aol.com

JUNE 11 — Music in Color concert series featuring master oud virtuoso John Berberian and acclaimed contemporary artist Antranig Kzirian, this special evening brings together two generations of musicians in a dynamic exploration of sound, improvisation, and cultural expression. Sponsored by Nancy R. Kolligian. Thursday, 7 PM, Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown. **SEPTEMBER 24, 2026** — Save the Date! Celebrating Contributions! Gala to benefit the Armenian Heritage Park at the InterContinental Boston.

MICHIGAN

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

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., Watertown, MA 02472. All calendar entries must be received by noon on Monday before publication.

New Book Focuses On Gharadagh

GHARADAGH, from page 14

a truly unique collection of its kind." He further added, "The RAA building, acquired and renovated in July 2023, includes a library named in honor of Samvel Karapetyan, housing more than 20,000 books. It also features an auditorium named after Armen Hakhnazarian. Currently, the RAA Museum is under development and will house letters of recognition, medals, artifacts collected during expedition trips, and other valuable materials."

Later, a video was shown in which Emma Abrahamyan, speaking from Armenia, presented an overview of the book's content. During her presentation, she expressed her gratitude to the sponsor and the staff involved in its preparation and highlighted RAA's significant efforts.

Janet Mirzayan, who dedicated this publication to the memory of her parents, Armenoohi Aparian and Hovhanes Melik Ghassemian, sponsored its publication. She also shared her memories of Gharadagh, recalling her journey there from Tehran with her family.

Mirzayan shared several anecdotes drawn from her father's stories as well as her own visit. A gifted storyteller, she captivated the audience, even highlighting relatives of some attendees. She noted, "Students from one village would travel to another to attend school, returning home during the summer." She also spoke about how farmers worked to protect their land, yet at times the *khans* (feudal landowners) would seize their crops, bringing hardship and devastation to the people.

One of the most compelling stories that Mirzayan shared was about a relative who rescued a friend's daughter and took her to Baku. "The *khan*, having set his eyes on the young woman, demanded that she be kid-

napped. To save her, the relative came up with a plan: he pretended to be her husband, claiming she was his wife, and together they crossed the border under the pretense of attending a funeral."

Mirzayan shared that there were around 40 Armenian schools in Gharadagh. Another story she told was about when Stalin deported Armenians from Iran who did not want to become Soviet citizens and lived in Nagorno-Karabakh. "Based on my father's stories, they arrested all the Armenians, sent them to Pahlavi Port (Anzali) in the Caspian Sea," she said. Also, she noted that Karabakh (also known as Gharabagh) lies on the opposite side of the Arax River, which forms the natural boundary between Gharadagh and Karabakh.

Mirzayan ended the program by mentioning several famous and successful Armenians from Gharadagh, including the late Dr. Vartan Grigorian.

Armen Janian, one of the founding members of RAA/USA, said afterwards, "Every-

body enjoyed Janet's speech. It was interactive and fun. She had lots of memories and material to share."

Author Dr. Rosemary Harounian Cohen remarked, "This book is comprehensive and exceptionally well done. Janet has inherited a rich legacy from her parents and grandparents, which has become a profound source of depth in her work." She added, "What truly brings this book to life are the stories. Janet is deeply knowledgeable and can speak to them authentically because she has lived them. It is especially important to preserve history through the voices of those who have experienced it firsthand."

RAA Board Member Linda Sarkissian stated, "We are delighted to see such strong attendance. All 40 copies of the book available in our inventory were sold, and we also received additional orders, which will be fulfilled once the next shipment arrives from Armenia. In addition, RAA publications can be ordered online."

The program concluded with a reception.



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COMMENTARY

What Are the Potential Benefits for Armenia from the EU Summit?

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The European leaders' summit in Yerevan from May 4 to 5 drew pan-European attention. Delegations from across Europe, along with the prime minister of Canada and officials from Georgia and Turkey, convened in Armenia. The joint participation of the EU and Canada underscored their growing divergence from the United States. The presence of a NATO leader, contrasted with the absence of high-level US representation, further highlighted these differences.

The event received a wide range of reactions, from public discussions on social media to harsh statements by former Russian President Dmitri Medvedev, as well as Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's aggressive speech delivered online during the summit. All of this became the subject of further debate and criticism.

President of the European Council António Costa, together with President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen represented the EU at the summit. It was a key opportunity to further strengthen bilateral relations, in particular on connectivity, energy, transport and digital cooperation. The

family, it has not expressed any intention to join the European Union or NATO, nor to withdraw from the Eurasian Economic Union or the Collective Security Treaty Organization. The absence of such declarations suggests that EU membership is not currently a concrete objective of Armenia's foreign policy. If such a goal existed, this would have been a historic moment and platform to clearly articulate it and secure broader European support.

Without such a commitment, what tangible benefits can Armenia realistically expect from this summit beyond media visibility? Will Armenia leverage this opportunity to advance its national interests, or will it be used by the government for domestic political purposes, particularly in a pre-election context?

Personally, I maintain the view that over the past eight years, Armenia's authorities have not taken any substantive steps against Russia's vital interests, even when those interests have conflicted with Armenia's own. While rhetoric has often been tense and statements varied, one fact remains clear: at the highest level — between Pashinyan and Russian President Vladimir Putin — direct and active communication has consistently continued without interruption.



leaders discussed current global challenges, such as the latest developments in the wider region, including Ukraine and the impact of the ongoing crisis in the Middle East. They issued a joint declaration at the end of the summit and exchanged a number of signed documents essential to deepening the EU-Armenia partnership, including on the EU-Armenia connectivity partnership, six non-binding letters of intent, a new text on the working arrangement between Armenia and Frontex and the visa report.

Costa, following the meeting of the European Political Community, noted that Armenia's hosting of the summit is a powerful illustration of its courageous geopolitical path, which it is pursuing together with the European Union. He emphasized that Armenia is a close EU partner and that the EU looks forward to deepening this relationship. This first-ever summit, he continued, marks an important milestone and represents an investment in peace, security, connectivity, and prosperity in the South Caucasus.

However, no word or statement on Armenian full integration was mentioned in any form.

While Armenia is considered part of the broader European

It can be reiterated that Armenia has not acted against Russia's core interests: it has not withdrawn from the EAEU or CSTO; Russia formally remains Armenia's strategic ally; the Russian military base continues to operate in Armenia; and Russia remains Armenia's primary trading partner and a key export destination.

Therefore, if Armenia does not declare an intention to pursue EU membership even at this critical moment, it suggests that this issue is not part of its genuine foreign policy agenda. Moscow, in this regard, has little reason for concern, and discussions about EU membership are likely to remain rhetorical rather than translate into concrete action. At the same time, such narratives may serve to sustain favorable public sentiment toward Prime Minister Pashinyan and his administration.

(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.)



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Turkish Investigative Reporter Reveals Turkey's Infiltration Efforts in The US

Dissident Turkish investigative reporter Abdullah Bozkurt, who resides in Stockholm, Sweden, has exposed Turkey's multilayered and expanding operations within the United States in an article published in the Nordic Monitor titled "Turkey ramps up covert and overt influence operations in Washington."

Here is how Bozkurt summarized his findings: "Turkey has significantly expanded its lobbying and influence operations in the United States, building a solid and increasingly sophisticated network of registered agents, legal advisers, political consultants, party representatives, nonprofits and public relations firms working in tandem to shape Washington's perception of Ankara's policies."

Foreign entities are required by US law (the Foreign Intelligence Registration Act — FARA) to disclose to the Department of Justice (DOJ) when they hire US lobbying or PR firms. The DOJ website shows the contracts signed by the foreign entities with the US firms, the amount they were paid, and the details of meetings or interactions with US politicians.

Remarkably, Turkey retained a total of 105 US lobbying firms between 2001 and 2021, according to a March 9, 2026 report by the Congressional Research Service (CRS).

In addition to its lobbying efforts, Turkey has also engaged in broader influence-peddling activities. According to political activist Laura Loomer, who is a close confidante of Pres. Trump, the CIA "has hard evidence that Turkey, more specifically the Erdogan administration, has directed spending for podcasters to undermine the Trump administration's Middle East policies." She posted on X: "the CIA has evidence of this Turkish funding going to at least one female podcaster and at least one male podcaster." She concluded by writing: "Turkey is the largest financier of the Muslim Brotherhood." Bozkurt finds Loomer's claim consistent with "the well-documented track record of the Erdogan government covertly financing operations on US soil, ranging from support for Muslim Brotherhood-linked networks to espionage activities targeting Erdogan critics, such as members of the Gülen movement."

The US firms hired by Ankara "engage in a wide range of activities, including contacting US officials, arranging meetings, organizing events, writing opinion pieces [in US media], and coordinating messaging campaigns designed to promote Turkey's policy positions," Bozkurt wrote.

The FARA filing by Turken Foundation Inc., "a New York-based nonprofit controlled by family members and associates of Erdogan, reveals the scale and structure of financial flows supporting Ankara-aligned activities in the United States. The filing shows that during the six-month reporting period ending November 30, 2025, the foundation received \$2 million in funding from

Turkish-linked entities, specifically the Turkish Youth and Education Service Foundation (TURGEV) and the Muslim Brotherhood-linked Turkish Islamist foundation Ensar. TURGEV is run by Erdogan's son, Bilal Erdogan," Bozkurt wrote.

In terms of direct political lobbying, the Turkish Embassy in Washington signed on April 18, 2024, a new contract for \$1.02 million "with LB International Solutions LLC, one of the longest-standing contractors working on behalf of the Turkish Embassy to engage Congress. The firm has also expanded its portfolio to include private Turkish companies such as ONJA, which provides financial and trade consulting services" Bozkurt wrote.

The FARA filing indicated that LB International Solutions LLC is tasked with "providing lobbying and government relations services to Türkiye," including the adoption of pro-Turkey legislation "that promotes Türkiye's interests and provides a positive image of Turks, Türkiye, and the United States-Türkiye relationship."

Furthermore, the Embassy of Turkey in Washington signed in May 2025 a \$1.54 million contract with the Washington-based law firm of Saltzman & Evinch to provide "legal advice and analysis on law and policy regarding matters and developments that concern and affect US-Türkiye relations, such as current and potential litigation, pending legislation, and executive decisions and policy," according to the FARA filing. According to Bozkurt, the Wall Street Journal reported that "the Turkish government used Saltzman & Evinch to gather information on Erdogan critics living in the United States. The firm's partner, Günay Evinch, a dual Turkish-US national, also hired Rümeyşa Kalın (Karabulut), the daughter of Turkish intelligence chief İbrahim Kalın, for a period of time."

Meanwhile, the Washington office of Turkey's ruling party AKP reported in its FARA filing that \$875,534 was transferred from Turkey for the party's operational expenses in the United States, while it spent \$941,833. The FARA filing stated that the AK Party's Washington office "engaged in political, social, and cultural activities such as public gatherings and in-person meetings."

The Turkish government signed on January 31, 2025 a contract with another US lobbying firm, Skyline Capitol, for \$600,000. The FARA filing shows that "Skyline Capitol is tasked with engaging both Congress and the executive branch while also expanding Turkey's reach into state and local political systems across the United States. The firm is required to build relationships with governors, state legislators and mayors nationwide, strengthen ties with Turkish-American business communities, and engage think tanks, academia and policy institutions to shape narratives." Another US firm, Imperium Strategies LLC, has a subcontracting arrangement with Skyline Capitol.

In addition, Geoffrey Weill Associates was hired by GoTürkiye to work on an initiative of Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism to shape public perception and promote tourism in the United States. The Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) also maintains a registered presence in Washington.

Turkey spends millions of dollars each year on a variety of US lobbying firms. Naturally, it takes a lot of money to distort the facts, misrepresent the truth, whitewash the Erdogan government's massive violations of human rights, and cover up past genocides.

Building Castles on Cliffs

By Robert Avakian

There is more to life than we know. We stride across this earth everyday as it orbits, but we don't feel the movement. Indeed, we carry on setting our schedules according to our concept of time. The only way we come to know Jesus is through faith — and we Armenians certainly have our own corner therein. Man continually searches for meaning in his life even as the concept of our living in a state of flux rolls over our simple travails and plans. And the sparks of change regularly unhinge our routines and beliefs. To wit: the current widespread global unrest that is testing every family in every nation out there.

There appears to be a new feeling of helplessness ushering in new crises outside of our control. Grab that rudder and steer for the North Star brothers and sisters — these crises are increasingly daunting and we are still playing catch up. So where will the next spark ignite? Will you stoke your faith in new ways? In any case, the Knights and Daughters [of Vartan] will strive to keep the flame alive and foster good works through this cycle with diligence and faith, as ever.

Preparing for the unknown is the baseline for Armenians. We have a history of attempting to prepare for the

unknown. We have built our castles on cliffs carved out of rock walls — our fortresses were built to be impregnable, because we knew the hordes were coming. The last time we experienced a positive spark was a long time ago. We never organized pre-1915 or thereafter, though there was intelligence out there with red flags. Are we not hearing the drums again now? It seems as though we are riding two horses again. One option we have is to mount a defensive posture to address what other negative elements the secret peace accords may include.

We seem to be holding our collective diasporan breath in anticipation of dire news. We may have the news soon enough as the June elections close in and we are searching for the next cliff to build our fortress upon. Our query is will the fortress be made of American bricks or some other materials made of what we have built with before. And we have experienced internal restructuring in days past and those days may be upon us once again. Can we prepare for these eventualities? I think, in part.

The faith we hold in our Lord is the same faith that motivates us to prepare for the day when we will raise our eyes once again. We are foresighted enough to comprehend our fragile position but we lack the specific information of what demands are contained in these "secret" accords. We have heard about the territorial incursions — planned and realized for a while now — since the country's Velvet Revolution came to power. We know that the world will shift again and the spark will re-ignite and we may be required to play the role of the duntrod-den once again.

A new day and a new way may be coming when the proverbial level playing field and some creative technology will be our platform to a general reinstatement

and even reparations. The current genocidal dialogue includes the white washing of our historical evidence. These discussions of genocide are no longer on the table according to some sources. But remember the positive critical sparks of Hrant Dink and the humane Turks who marched in his funeral procession and remember the estimated 2 million Armenian grandmothers who showed

up in genealogy charts on search sites until they were banned by the government — genetic connectivity that cannot be denied. These embedded elements are re-bonding and creating new bridges for us. Our borders should not be seen as random designations and one man's signature to a document of falsehood does not bind a nation and its factual sovereignty. The historical accuracy of these truths will be irrefutable to those who challenge us. The repetitive cycle of pogroms, massacres, genocides and holocausts stain the pages of historical record and yet, they will be recognized for their relevant weight and truth — one day. And the Sainted Martyrs will march again with us and our purged Turkish brethren (who have been legitimately re-educated on the enslavement and cultural eradication plan that was used by a predecessor government). Indeed, when the clarion call sounds throughout the highlands to ring in the new day of atonement, the blessings of the Lord will rain down on Armenians once again.

Permit me to request that you look into the future for an observation by visionary Taner Akçam: If Turkey leads a future struggle to remake itself into a democratic state and eliminate its "apartheid agenda," then a total recognition of the Armenian Genocide will be possible. This is our impactful prayer of purpose.

We can carry the spark forward with His grace and our steadfast loyalty. God bless you all on our Genocide Commemoration day and may you live well and prosper and may He guide our steps now and for the ages. Amen.

(Robert "Bob" Avakian is the Grand Commander (Avak Sbarabed) of the Knights of Vartan, a prominent Armenian fraternal organization, as of 2025—2026. Based in the Boston area, he leads initiatives regarding Armenian heritage, genocide remembrance, and economic sustainability, notably speaking at events like the Newton, MA flag-raising ceremony and Times Square Armenian Genocide Commemoration on April 26.)



California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation Announces 2026 Armenian Genocide Remembrance Scholarship Winners

SACRAMENTO — The California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation (CALCF) announced recently the recipients of its 2026 Armenian Genocide Remembrance Scholarships, awarded to California high school students (grades 9–12) for outstanding submissions in the Foundation's annual essay and visual arts contests.

The scholarship program recognizes students who thoughtfully engaged with this year's theme, Reimagining California, through the lens of Armenian-American experiences, highlighting the community's cultural resilience, civic contributions, and



First prize winner Anais Joseph Lynch's work



Second prize winner Macie Gibson's submission

enduring impact on California's history and future.

For the essay contest, students were asked to explore how Armenian-American experiences, leaders, and contributions have shaped the state's culture, identity, and future, and why these perspectives matter for California today and for generations to come. The winners of this contest are, for first prize (\$1,000), Anna Nazaryan attending Burbank High School in Burbank; second prize (\$750), Sareen Guldjian attending Armenian Mesrobian School in Pico Rivera, and third prize (\$500), Francine Habacon attending Rancho Verde High School in Moreno Valley.

For the visual arts contest, students were asked to create original artwork that reimagines California through the eyes, stories, and future of its Armenian community. Submissions highlighted themes such as identity, migration, resilience, culture, and intergener-

ational connection, illustrating the Armenian diaspora's lasting contributions to California's cultural and social fabric. Winners are, for first prize (\$1,000) Anais Joseph Lynch attending Herbert Hoover High School in Glendale, CA; second prize (\$750) Macie Gibson attending Apple Valley High School in Apple Valley, CA; and third prize (\$500) Alabama Koger attending Granada Hills Charter High School in Granada Hills, CA.

On this occasion, Assemblymember John Harabedian (D-Pasadena), CALCF chair, declared: "Congratulations to the six scholarship recipients! I want to thank these students for highlighting the history of Armenian Americans in California and remembering the 111th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide to ensure it is never forgotten and never repeated."

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez (D-Pasadena) said, "I offer my congratulations to the recipients of the 2026 Armenian Genocide remembrance scholarships. Each recipient has thoughtfully demonstrated through their essay or visual art submission the strong cultural and social fabric of California's Armenian diaspora. As the State Senator representing



Visual art contest third prize winner Alabama Koger's submission

the largest concentration of Armenian Americans in California, I am thrilled to support this vital community and promote access to higher education for our future leaders."

Assemblymember Jessica Caloza (D-Los Angeles) said: "Congratulations to this year's

scholarship recipients, including our visual arts student awardee from Glendale, for their thoughtful work and powerful reflections. Their contributions honor the resilience of the Armenian community while helping to educate and uplift communities across California. I am inspired by their voices and proud to celebrate their achievements."

Assemblymember Nick Schultz (D-Burbank) said, "Congratulations to the talented winners of the 2026 California Armenian Legislative Caucus Foundation Scholarships. The work of these students demonstrates the profound ability of the arts to shine a light on one of the darkest chapters of human history, the resiliency of the Armenian community, and the critical role of genocide education in our schools."

Assemblymember David Tangipa (R-Fresno) declared: "I congratulate this year's scholarship winners for their thoughtful work honoring Armenian American history and contributions. As the representative of Fresno, a region with a vibrant and sizable Armenian community, I'm proud these students are preserving cultural memory and inspiring future leaders across our region and California."

The Friends of Armenian Culture Society

74th Annual Armenian Night at the POPS

Sofya Vardanyan, Violin
Boston Pops Orchestra
Keith Lockhart, Conductor

Saturday, May 23, 2026 at 7:30 PM
Symphony Hall, Boston

An Ode to Freedom

Sponsor a Teacher Program

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

