THE ARMENIAN MIRROR-SPECTATOR
SINCE 1932

Volume LXXXXIII, No. 47, Issue 4936 JUNE 13, 2026 $2.00

Armenia's Ruling Party Declared Election Winner

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his Civil Contract party won Armenia's weekend parliamentary elections with just under half of the vote, according to their preliminary official results rejected by the two main opposition contenders.

The Central Election Commission (CEC) said Civil Contract garnered 49.8 percent of the vote, enough to extend Pashinyan's eight-year rule. Billionaire Samvel Karapetyan's Strong Armenia bloc came in a distant second with 23.3 percent, followed by former President Robert Kocharyan's Hayastan alliance (almost 10 percent) and businessman Gagik Tsarukyan's Prosperous Armenia Party (just under 4 percent).

The 14 other parties running in the elections also failed to clear the 4 percent legal threshold for winning seats in the Armenian parliament. The combined 17 percent of votes polled by them and Prosperous Armenia (BHK) will be proportionally distributed, in the form of bonus seats, among the three groups that will be represented in the new National Assembly. Civil Contract will get most of those seats and thus retain its parliamentary majority.

Strong Armenia rejected the official vote tally as fraudulent. A spokeswoman for Karapetyan's bloc, Marianna Ghahramanyan, accused the authorities of illegally forcing many public sector employees across the country to vote for Civil Contract and alleged many other irregularities on election day.



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan voting, Yerevan, June 8, 2026

"In these circumstances, the published figures cannot reflect the real picture," she wrote on Facebook.

"Strong Armenia's campaign headquarters is currently busy analyzing the situation and clarifying the true picture of voters' expression of will, after which we will present our position and further steps," added Ghahramanyan.

Hayastan also brushed aside the official results, with Kocharyan saying that they were seriously affected by "widespread government pressure, arrests of oppositionists, unprecedented use of administrative resources, and electoral violations."

"We will challenge the election results," the ex-president said in a statement. "We are currently discussing further steps with our partners in the opposition camp."

see ELECTION, page 2

Russia Condemns Election Result, While EU Hails Pashinyan Victory

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — On Monday, June 8, Russia and the European Union offered diametrically opposite statements regarding the parliamentary elections in Armenian on June 7, each reflecting on Armenia's apparent pivot away from Russia and toward the West.

Underscoring its deepening rift with the Armenian government, Russia said on Monday, June 8, that the weekend parliamentary elections in Armenia were not democratic and exposed a "noticeable" decline in public support for Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Unlike European leaders, Russian President Vladimir Putin was in no rush to congratulate Pashinyan despite the release of preliminary official results giving victory to the country's ruling Civil Contract party.

"We are waiting for the final results," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

see RESULTS, page 5

Russia Hints at Possible EAEU Membership for Azerbaijan amidst Rift With Armenia

By Aytan Farhadova

Russia has noted its readiness to allow Azerbaijan into the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) shortly after the bloc called on Armenia to choose between its membership in the EAEU or EU accession. The statements came as Moscow continues to enforce trade restrictions on Yerevan ahead of the Armenian parliamentary elections.

On the sidelines of the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum on June 4, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Galuzin said that Russian businesses could be involved in restoration projects in Nagorno-Karabakh and other regions that came under Azerbaijan's control after the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020.

Galuzin also discussed the intergovernmental declaration between Russia and Azerbaijan, adopted in February 2022, saying that Moscow is now "focused on fully utilizing the rich potential of this document."

He also touched on an economic cooperation meeting held with Azerbaijan in mid-April, where they signed a protocol and a roadmap for the implementation of investment projects in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

see EAEU, page 6

Karabakh Armenians Send Appeal to ECHR for Seized Properties



Karabakh Armenians are leaving their homes, Stepanakert 2023 (photo Marut Vanyan/The Armenian Mirror-Spectator)

By Marut Vanyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Karabakh Armenians have sent 600 applications to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on the grounds of Azerbaijan's seizure of property of Karabakh people.

The former Karabakh Ombudsman and State Minister Artak Beglaryan issued a statement this week, which said, "The Artsakh Union, in cooperation with the Ara Ghazaryan law office, the Artsakh Ombudsman and the Center for International and Comparative Law, continues to accept applications for submission to the European Court of Human Rights. The applications refer primarily to the property claims of the people of Artsakh, on the basis of Azerbaijan's seizure of the property of the residents of Artsakh, which is related to

see APPEAL, page 3

MASSACHUSETTS

AIWA New England Hosts Two Events

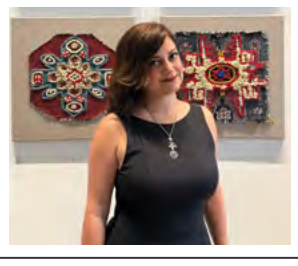
Page 11



CALIFORNIA

Exploring Memories And Identity in 'Interconnection'

Page 13



ANNUAL SUMMER VACATION

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator will close for two weeks for its annual summer vacation.

The last issue will be that of June 27, while the first issue back is that of July 18. No newspapers will be published on July 4 or 18.

To our readers, please enjoy a safe and happy summer.

ARMENIA

NEWS *from* ARMENIA

Pashinyan Calls for Early Elections in Gyumri

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has stated that early elections should be held in Gyumri as soon as possible, commenting on the condition of the city's neighborhoods and courtyards.

According to the prime minister, rapid measures should be implemented even before early elections are called, if necessary bypassing local self-government bodies in order to address urgent issues.

Gyumri Mayor Vardan Ghukasyan has been in custody since October 2025. He denies the charges against him and describes the case as politically motivated.

Rubio: US Looks Forward to Working With Armenia

YEREVAN (ARKA) — The United States looks forward to continuing to work with Armenia to ensure peace, stability, and prosperity in the South Caucasus and beyond, said U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio on June 9.

On social media, Rubio congratulated Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on victory in the parliamentary elections.

"The United States supports Prime Minister Pashinyan and Armenia in their pursuit of peace and is committed to advancing the goals of the historic Washington Peace Summit, including the implementation of the Trump Roadmap for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) initiative," Rubio noted.

He emphasized that the US looks forward to continuing to work with Armenia in this direction.

Opposition Leader Accuses Authorities of Vote Manipulation

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Edmon Marukyan, the leader of the opposition Bright Armenia Party, accused Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's government of manipulating vote counts in Sunday's parliamentary elections, alleging that official tallies erased ballots cast for his party.

In a video posted on social media on June 9, Marukyan presented precinct records from Gegharkunik Province showing Bright Armenia received between one and six votes, while the Central Electoral commission (CEC) reported zero.

He claimed similar discrepancies occurred at about 2,000 polling stations nationwide, arguing that the omissions were intended to keep Bright Armenia below the 2 percent threshold required for state funding.

"This system has become an instrument of electoral fraud," Marukyan said. "They've falsified the election, and everyone must answer for it — personally, you too, Nikol. I am showing the evidence in my hands."

Armenia's Ruling Party Declared Election Winner

ELECTION, from page 1

It was thus not clear whether Strong Armenia and Hayastan will take up their seats in the new parliament and/or challenge the official results in the streets.

The BHK lacked a tiny fraction of a percentage point to enter the parliament. Tsarukyan's party suggested that this was the result of "trickery" by the CEC before initiating ballot recounts in many polling stations. The party spokeswoman, Iveta Tonoyan, said some of the recounts have already exposed glaring discrepancies between the numbers of BHK votes shown in precinct protocols and the CEC tally.

Tonoyan also called into question the overall results reported by the CEC, citing "the huge scale of electoral violations" witnessed by BHK proxies.

Strong Armenia, Hayastan and the BHK alleged numerous irregularities throughout the voting and ballot counting accompanied by continuing arrests of their members or supporters accused of vote buying. Karapetyan and other opposition leaders cried foul after Pashinyan claimed a "historic victory" overnight when less than one-fifth of the ballots cast were counted by election officials. They accused him of trying to rig the election results through the CEC, which is dominated by his loyalists.

Pashinyan declared in the morning that he and his party have "crushed" their main election challengers again described by him as a "three-headed party of war."



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan speaks during a news conference in Yerevan, June 8, 2026

And he again vowed to jail their leaders.

"This will be one of the most important agendas of the political majority and the government, which we must implement without delay and with very decisive steps," he said.

Despite its election victory, Pashinyan's party fell short of a two-thirds majority in the parliament, which is required for enacting a new Armenian constitution demanded by Azerbaijan. The constitution drafted by the Armenian Ministry of Justice earlier this year needs to be approved by the parliament before being put on a referendum.

Kocharyan's Bloc to Challenge Election Results in Court

By Astghik Bedevian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Former President Robert Kocharyan's Hayastan alliance said on Tuesday, June 9, that it will ask Armenia's Constitutional Court to annul the official results of Sunday's parliamentary elections that have also been rejected as fraudulent by other opposition groups.

According to the preliminary results released by the Central Election Commission (CEC), Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party won the elections with 49.8 percent of the vote. Billionaire Samvel Karapetyan's Strong Armenia bloc came in a distant second with 23.3 percent, followed by Hayastan which got almost 10 percent.

The official figures also showed that none of the other major opposition forces won at least 4 percent of the vote needed for being represented in the country's new parliament. Gagik Tsarukyan's Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) fell just several dozen votes short of that legal threshold.

The BHK, Strong Armenia and Hayastan and the BHK alleged numerous irregularities throughout the voting and ballot counting accompanied by continuing arrests of their members or supporters accused of vote buying. They also cried foul after Pashinyan claimed a "historic victory" early on Monday when less than one-fifth of the ballots cast were counted by election officials.

The premier's political allies deny that his statement predetermined the vote results. Kocharyan claimed on Monday, June 8, evening that they were seriously affected by "widespread government pressure, arrests of oppositionists, unprecedented use of administrative resources, and electoral violations." Ishkhan Saghatelyan, a leading Hayastan figure, echoed the claim the next day when he announced the opposition bloc's decision to appeal to the Constitutional Court.



Former President Robert Kocharyan arrives for the final campaign rally of his Hayastan bloc, Yerevan, June 5, 2026

"Despite clearly understanding who sits in the Constitutional Court, their constraints and the fact that they are clearly government appendages, we will go to the Constitutional Court with weighty facts after the publication of the final [election] results," he told a news conference. "Our legal team is working on a package."

Both Hayastan and Strong Armenia faced calls from some opposition supporters to refuse to take up their parliament seats in protest against the alleged vote rigging. They seemed reluctant to do that. Karapetyan's right-hand man and nephew Narek indicated on Tuesday that his bloc's decision on the issue depends on whether the BHK will succeed in gaining parliament seats.

Tsarukyan's party initiated ballot recounts in some electoral precincts for that purpose. It claimed late on Monday to have already found glaring discrepancies between the numbers of BHK votes shown in several precinct protocols and the CEC tally. The BHK's entry into the new National Assembly would strip Civil Contract of a 60 percent majority needed for the passage of some key laws and parliamentary confirmation of senior law-enforcement officials and judges handpicked by Pashinyan. Narek Karapetyan emphasized this fact.

Another senior Strong Armenia member, Gohar Meloyan, said Karapetyan's bloc too may appeal to the Constitutional Court. She said the decision will be made after the CEC releases the final election results on Sunday.

Strong Armenia as well as Hayastan and another opposition party led by former human rights ombudsman Arman Tatoyan have also demanded vote recounts in dozens of polling stations in and outside Yerevan. Tatoyan said on Monday that the official results released by the CEC "do not reflect the true will of the citizens of Armenia."

The Second Homecoming for a Diasporan Armenian

YEREVAN — It's one thing to hear your native language spoken in your living room in France; it's another to hear it rising from the back of a crowded bus in Yerevan.

For Silva Sardarian, that moment in 2000 — the goosebumps, the sudden realization of belonging — was a seed that took twenty years to fully bloom.

Most people at 64 are looking toward a quiet retirement, but Silva chose to listen to her daughters who had gone to Armenia to volunteer through Birthright Armenia. When one of them finally asked, "Mom, why don't you volunteer in Armenia as well?" Silva didn't have a list of reasons why she couldn't, so she just had a simple, "Yes."

In 2023, Silva traded the familiarity of France for a new mission through the Armenian Volunteer Corps (AVC). She joined the Senior Corps, a specialized program that invites experienced professionals aged 60 and above to reimagine retirement as a time of purpose. By dedicating over 20 hours per week, these volunteers contribute across sectors like education, the arts, and social services - sharing not just their professional expertise, but their humanity.

She didn't arrive in Armenia with a grand plan to change the world; she arrived with a suitcase and a willingness to be useful. During her 2023 placement, she found herself in Masis, standing in front of a group of children who were eager to learn French. Silva quickly realized she wasn't just a teacher. She was a bridge.

She watched her students' faces light up as they mastered new sounds, but the real magic happened outside the classroom. She remembers taking them to the Museum of Nature — a simple trip for some, but for these kids, it was an event. Watching them navigate the city and explore the exhibits, Silva saw the world through their eyes. It wasn't about the curriculum anymore; it was about the connection.

"No matter how much you give, you take just as much," Silva says. Through the Senior Corps, she found that at 64, she wasn't "done" — she was just starting a different chapter where her life experience was her greatest asset.

The most telling part of Silva's story isn't that she went; it's that she couldn't stay away. When her first term ended, the quiet of France didn't feel quite right. She missed the noise, the warmth, and the feeling of being exactly where she was needed. So, she packed her bags and did it all over again, returning for a second service term.

Today, if you ask her about the future, she just smiles. A third trip is already playing in the back of her mind. "Why not?" she asks. Silva's journey is a quiet reminder that "home" isn't just where you're from — it's where you decide to show up and give back.

Are you ready to say "Yes" to Armenia? To learn more, visit armenianvolunteer.org.



Silva Sardarian in traditional Armenian garb

Karabakh Armenians Send Appeal to ECHR for Seized Properties

APPEAL, from page 1

return and other rights. If you want to apply to the ECHR, you can fill out the small sheet provided with the comment, after which you will be contacted and you will fill out the main application form together. This service is provided free of charge."

He added that he and the firm handling the cases have already received 600 applications but they are still accepting more.

Losing one's property takes a heavy emotional toll, since one's home is more than just brick and mortar. Having lost everything, the Karabakh Armenians have been trying to start new lives from scratch in Armenia after their forced displacement in 2023. The Armenian government's housing program remains unaffordable for many, with many facing bureaucratic hurdles. It is especially difficult for smaller families, as the Armenian government issues remuneration per the number of residents in one's family.

In addition to social difficulties, they face difficulty integrating into Armenia society. During this pre-election period, hate speech towards Karabakh Armenians has become even more strident and overt, both from authorities and a broad segment of society. Karabakh Armenians have been unable to secure the right to vote either, despite holding Armenian passports, per the decision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

"I feel like a Japanese robot in Armenia. I don't understand what I'm working for. I pay my entire salary for rent, with a little extra from my wife's savings," Suren (75), told the Mirror-Spectator. He added that he was a taxi driver in Karabakh and now works as a security guard at night in Armenia for a construction company. "Although I have to work during within a day, my boss says if you want a more money, you have to be on duty every night. I agreed, so we can pay the rent. However, working hard doesn't help either. I earn 120,000 drams ($325), but the rent for an apartment is 200,000 ($542), not to mention utilities and food, and the medicines that both my wife and I need," he says.



A boy takes water from a container places by the Red Cross during the Karabakh's blockade. Artsakh neighborhood in Stepanakert, 2023 (photo Marut Vanyan/The Armenian Mirror-Spectator)



Yeraz (Dream) neighborhood, Yerevan 2026 (photo Marut Vanyan/The Armenian Mirror-Spectator)

This socio-psychologically difficult situation especially affects people of age. Ashot Danielyan, acting president of Karabakh, recently announced that mortality rates among Karabakh Armenians have increased and birth rates have decreased.

Massive construction work is underway in Yerevan, including residential high-rises, the windows of which are dim at night. Real estate agencies advertise on Instagram, urging people to snap up one of these apartments as soon as possible. But when they quote a price, even locals can't afford them, let alone refugees from Karabakh.

"My husband is a refugee from Baku. His family fled the pogroms and reached Stepanakert in 1988. We lived in a dormitory for many years. He served in the army for more than twenty years, and I baked cakes at night and worked in an office during the day. Finally, we received an apartment from the government, where we lived for only six years. I saw on Facebook that the Azerbaijanis had turned our apartment into a dormitory for students. It is painful to see. We were happy when we bought a curtain, a sofa, or a TV. That's how we lost everything and now we are living in someone else's house in Yerevan, renting it," Gayane from Stepanakert told the Mirror-Spectator.

Every Karabakh Armenian has a sad story like this. Although they are appealing to the ECHR, they are hardly optimistic about it. During the election campaign these days, even the opposition leader, whom they sympathize with, speak cautiously when asked about the return of Karabakh Armenians. They say the refugees should think about settling down and integrating into Armenia.

ARMENIA

Rising from the Scrum: Yerevan Beats Limassol to Mark a Decade's Return for Armenian Rugby

By Raffi Elliott
Special to the Mirror-Spectator



Both teams post-game (photo Shant Kel Khatcherian)

YEREVAN — About 200 people turned out on a sunny Saturday afternoon of May 22 at Pyunik Yerevan's home soccer ground (where poles had been lashed to the football goalposts to stand in for rugby uprights) for the 4 p.m. kickoff: local Armenians, a knot of Cypriot supporters who had traveled with the visiting side, French expats, children, proud girlfriends and a handful of curious onlookers.

What followed was a rout. Yerevan Lions RC beat the Limassol Crusaders 43-12, an upset win for the upstart Armenian team in a friendly exhibition match, the first of its kind played in the Republic of Armenia in over a decade, and one that comes less than seven months after the formal reestablishment of Rugby Union in the country under the Pan-Armenian Rugby Federation.

The Lions' game bore the fingerprints of its scattered origins. Midway through the second half, an Iranian-Armenian forward fed the ball out of a maul on the Lions' 10-metre line; a French back, timing his run, took it at pace and went over untouched, a try assembled by two players who'd learned the game a continent apart. Captained by Albert Tatevosyan, an experienced ethnic Armenian rugger from Georgia, the Lions drew on a core of veteran players from India's storied Armenian College and on diaspora talent from Canada, the United States, France and Iran.

"Both sides played with grit, yet remained respectful throughout the entire match," reports Referee Garren Jansezian. A librarian at the American University of Armenia by day, this repat from Rhode Island happily dusted off his New England Rugby Referee Society uniform to officiate the match, splitting the responsibility with his colleague from the Cypriot side.


Lions and Crusaders setting up a scrum (photo Shant Kel Khatcherian)

Limassol drew first blood, but the Lions caught up quickly and, from there, controlled the match. The opening half was the tighter, more physical of the two; in the second, several Crusaders (fresh from a holy war of their own against Yerevan's bars the night before) began to run out of legs, rotating off more and more often as Yerevan pulled clear.

'It's in Our Blood'

Team Coach Armen Markarian, himself no stranger to Armenian rugby headlines, brings a career's worth of knowledge and experience to bear in helming the fledgling team. Markarian, an alumnus of the Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy, played on the Indian national under-19 rugby team, which reportedly fielded 12 Armenian players out of a total 15 on the pitch, making Armenian the de facto language of the Indian national side.

Since moving to Yerevan, Markarian has led efforts to revive the sport in Armenia. He carries with him 140 years of Armenian rugby tradition, rooted in the Armenian College & Philanthropic Academy in Kolkata. The school was established in the early 19th century to educate the children of British India's Armenian merchant community, and the rugby program it later developed, one of the Raj's oldest and most resilient, continues to produce strong Armenian players to this day. For the young pupils the College attracts from India, Iran and Armenia, rugby has become inseparable from the school's Armenian identity.

"As Armenian students, we woke up together, studied together and then trained together so closely that we knew each other's moves without speaking," Argin Ghadimian, also an Armenian College alum who now plays fullback for the Lions, told the Mirror-Spectator. "That's why we always yell the word 'ayrun' [blood] in Armenian at the start of every game, because rugby is in our blood." Ghadimian, who moved to Armenia as well two years ago, is focused on rooting the game once and for all in the Armenian homeland itself.

Repatriating Armenians like Markarian, Jansezian and Ghadimian mark the latest chapter in a half-century-long bid to indigenize rugby in Armenia, one that traces back to a single repat from France.

Rooting Rugby in Armenia

Jacques Haspekian, an Armenian rugby player from Marseille, France, is credited with first importing the sport to Soviet Armenia in the early 1950s. But as he later told the Marseille daily La Provence, rugby's British elite public-school pedigree turned off Soviet officials in Armenia, who are said to have preferred soccer's proletarian aesthetic. He packed his bags and took the sport north to Georgia, where its passing resemblance to a local folk game called Lelo made it an instant hit and helped turn the country into one of the world's rugby powerhouses.

The sport lingered in Armenia over the years, overshadowed by soccer and by the martial sports in which the country excelled on the world stage; teams inspired by Haspekian held occasional matches against Georgian opponents through the 1960s.

French intervention kept rugby on life support again after the economic hardship of the post-independence 1990s, culminating in the first Armenian Rugby Federation, with Gagik Panikyan as president and at least three clubs forming around it. French-Armenian players formed the core of a new national team that won a number of high-profile European matches. But a roster of French-born players couldn't sustain the sport without a pipeline of local players to feed it, and rugby lay dormant for another decade. The Rugby Federation of Armenia was suspended from Rugby Europe by 2014 for inactivity. Grassroots attempts to revive it in the mid-2010s were cut short by the Covid-19 pandemic and then the 2020 Azerbaijani invasion of Artsakh, which drew most of the players into the Army.

Rugby Endures

Still, two independent revival efforts sprouted at the start of this decade. Veterans of the earlier iteration, and of the War, began trickling back onto the pitch for open practices, bolstered by an entire roster's worth of Russian exile players known as Yerevan Legion RC. A few kilometers across town, graduates of India's Armenian College got back in touch to form the core of the Yerevan Lions RC.

The revived Pan-Armenian Rugby Federation, drawing lessons from the past, is now consolidating the sport across the country. Alongside coaching the Lions Markarian also represents the Federation which has introduced after-school rugby programs at the Anatole-France Lycée, Public School No. 194, and at the university level for students of the French-Armenian University and the American University of Armenia, the start of a farm system meant to feed the next generation of Armenian players. To fund the effort, the league has secured a sponsor in Avo Tevanian, a former Armenian College player who went on to find success with the Sydney-based Avopiling insurance company and the Yerevan biotech firm Vipeco, along with support from the Franco-Armenian Ovalian rugby association.

Raising the Next Generation

The revival also extends to women and girls. A new program, still in its early days, is beginning to take root. "I've seen firsthand what rugby does for young women," says Anglo-Armenian professional rugby player Sirvart Safarian, who leads it, "the confidence it builds, the friendships it forges, the way it changes how a girl sees herself." Safarian believes Armenian girls and women have that spirit in abundance: "We can't wait to see them on the pitch."

Back in downtown Yerevan, the Cypriot and Armenian players (dry blood washed off, broken teeth covered up) are locked arm in arm once again, this time huddled over pints of lager. As the evening wears on, the afternoon's bruises are forgotten, and the only contest left is who buys the next round.

The Lions aren't done. They've announced a Rugby Day on June 14, open to anyone who wants to try the game, and plan to host sides from Georgia and France later in the season. Fittingly, these are the two countries most entangled in Armenia's rugby story: the one that gave the sport its modern Armenian roots, and the one that took it in when Armenia first turned it away. Details have yet to be announced.

Former ECHR Judge Warns of End of Democracy In Turkey, Calls for United Struggle

ISTANBUL (SCF) — Former European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) judge Rıza Türmen has warned that democracy in Turkey has been dismantled and replaced by an authoritarian order under the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), calling for a broad social movement to resist it.

In an interview with the Yeni Yaşam daily, Türmen said conventional political channels and parliamentary opposition alone would not be sufficient to reverse the current trajectory. He said democratic forces should come together in a grassroots social movement against a centralized political order where the rule of law, judicial independence and basic rights have been eroded.

Criticizing judicial interventions in opposition politics, Türmen pointed to a court ruling that annulled the 2023 congress of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), saying the decision reflected the erosion of multiparty democracy and a shift toward what he described as a bureaucratic, single-party state.

The ruling concerned the CHP's 38th Ordinary Congress, where Özgür Özel defeated former chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and became party leader. The court found the congress legally invalid, temporarily removing Özel and the party's current leadership from office and reinstating Kılıçdaroğlu and his team.

The decision came amid mounting judicial pressure on the CHP since its sweeping gains in the March 2024 local elections, with investigations targeting party-run municipalities and officials.

He also cited Turkey's failure to implement ECtHR rulings, including those concerning businessman and philanthropist Osman Kavala and the jailed former leader of the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Selahattin Demirtaş, as evidence of disregard for international legal obligations and the rule of law. The court called for Kavala and Demirtaş to be released, finding in both cases that their detention had pursued political purposes.

Türmen said Turkey's current crisis also presented an opportunity to learn from past mistakes and build a more inclusive and pluralistic republic based on equal citizenship and constitutional protections of different identities and beliefs.

Türmen referred to a forthcoming conference titled "Democratic Transformation of the Republic in its Second Century" scheduled for June 13, describing it as a call to action to address Turkey's political crisis and lay the groundwork for a more democratic future.

He is among 29 organizers of the conference along with a group of academics, lawyers, journalists, rights advocates and former politicians who say Turkey needs a new democratic framework in the second century of the republic. Its title refers to the centenary of the Turkish Republic, founded in 1923, and ongoing debates over whether the country's second century can be built on pluralism, equal citizenship and the rule of law.



Former European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judge Rıza Türmen

Türmen also linked Turkey's economic problems to its democratic backsliding, saying citizens needed to understand that economic hardship and the absence of democracy were interconnected.

He also criticized the Turkish government's current peace efforts with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), saying they focused narrowly on disbanding the group while failing to address the democratic grievances underlying the conflict.

The PKK, designated as a terrorist organization by Turkey and its Western allies, has waged an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984 but announced in May 2025 it would disband and end its armed campaign.

Turkey's democratic backsliding has drawn criticism from various international organizations, including the EU and the Council of Europe, with scrutiny intensifying following a judicial crackdown on the CHP that began in October2024.

At least 20 mayors from the party, including İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, have been jailed, while 25 others have been suspended and several municipalities put under trustee rule. İmamoğlu, a leading figure in Turkey's main opposition and widely seen as President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's strongest political rival, was detained on March 19, 2025, and arrested days later on corruption charges. Critics and international observers say the case is politically motivated, aimed at sidelining a major challenger ahead of the 2028 general election.

At least 14 CHP-elected mayors have since joined the AKP.

In the latest global Rule of Law Index released in October 2025 by the World Justice Project, Turkey was ranked 118th out of 143 countries.

Russia Condemns Election Result, While EU Hails Pashinyan Victory

RESULTS, from paage 1

Peskov said that Moscow is also taking note of "numerous irregularities" reported during the ballot. The Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, went further, deploring "unprecedented pressure on the opposition and interference from the West, primarily the European Union."

"The entire election campaign and the voting process itself took place amid harsh repression by the Armenian authorities against opposition parties and movements, their activists and supporters," Zakharova said in a statement. "The Armenian Apostolic Church, traditionally deeply revered in the country, also came under attack. All of this constitutes a flagrant violation by Yerevan of democratic principles and procedures for holding free elections."

Zakharova also said that Pashinyan's party did not gain a "monopoly on power," apparently alluding to the official results that showed it winning just under half of the vote.

"Moreover, compared to the previous electoral cycle, its support [by Armenians] has noticeably declined," she claimed.

Russian-Armenian tensions rose further in the run-up to the June 7 elections, with Moscow saying that Yerevan can no longer remain part of a Russian-led trade bloc while seeking to eventually join the EU. It imposed de facto bans on the vast majority of Armenian-made products exported to Russia.

Pashinyan criticized the embargo during the election campaign while downplaying its impact on the Armenian economy and pledging to get the Russians to lift it shortly after the polls. He said he is planning to visit Moscow for more talks with Putin.

EU Hails Armenian Election Outcome:

The European Union on Monday congratulated Pashinyan on winning Armenia's weekend parliamentary elections and reaffirmed support for his pro-Western foreign policy.

"The people of Armenia have voted for a future built on peace, stability and stronger cooperation with their neighbors and the world," EU Council President Antonio Costa said in a congratulatory message also posted on X.

"You can be proud of your role in strengthening Armenia's resilience, stability and prosperity," he wrote to Pashinyan.

"We deeply value our partnership with a democratic Armenia that is drawing ever closer to Europe," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said for her part. "Armenia can count on us."

Von der Leyen and Costa met with Pashinyan in Yerevan on May 5 for what was billed as the first EU-Armenia summit. It came the day after a European Political Community summit also held in the Armenian capital.

The gatherings were interpreted by the Armenian opposition as an EU endorsement of Pashinyan ahead of the June 7 elections. The Hayastan alliance, one of the main opposition election contenders, accused the EU of effectively meddling in "Armenia's internal political processes."

Opposition leaders have for years accused the West of turning a blind eye to what they call gross human rights abuses in Armenia for geopolitical considerations. During the parliamentary race, some of them deplored the lack of EU reaction to mass arrests of their activists and supporters on vote-buying charges strongly denied by them. The arrests continued on election day.

The European summits also contributed to a further deterioration of Armenia's relations with Russia, its traditional allies irked by the Armenian government's desire to join the European Union. Russian President Vladimir Putin said on May 9 that the South Caucasus nation should choose "as soon as possible" between European integration and its continued membership in a Russian-led trade bloc essential for the Armenian economy.

INTERNATIONAL

Army Chief Comments On Parade Military Hardware

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian Armed Forces Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Eduard Asryan, stated on June 9 that the Russian-made Tor-M2KM air defense missile systems displayed during the military parade in Yerevan were received by Armenia only recently.

The chief of the General Staff did not disclose the full list of seven countries whose military equipment was showcased during the May 28 parade, Sputnik Armenia reported.

At the same time, he confirmed that the event featured several recently acquired weapons systems of Russian origin.

"You saw the Russian Tor-M2KM systems during the parade, which we received recently," Asryan said.

During the military parade held in Yerevan on May 28, military equipment manufactured in Armenia, Russia, France, India, China, Iran, and Belgium was displayed.

EBRD Has Appointed a New Head of its Office In Armenia

YEREVAN (ARKA) — The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has appointed Remon Zakaria as the new head of its Yerevan Resident Office, effective 1 September 2026, replacing George Akhalkatsi.

Based in Yerevan, Zakaria will be responsible for the EBRD's investments and operations in Armenia and will report to Tomas Kairys, Regional Director for the Caucasus.

An Italian national, Zakaria joined the EBRD in 2012 in the Istanbul hub as part of the Energy Efficiency and Climate Change banking team, following earlier experience in international consulting focused on project finance, due diligence and the preparation of renewable-energy and energy-efficiency investments.

Over subsequent years, he held a series of progressively senior roles in Istanbul and London, working across eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the southern and eastern Mediterranean, contributing to more than €600 million of green investments. He later led a specialized green-buildings unit, helping to expand green investment in private-sector real estate and supporting major public-sector building-renovation programs across multiple countries.

Since 2021, Zakaria has served as Head of Montenegro, where he led a period of strong growth. During his tenure, the Bank saw delivery of more than 40 per cent of all EBRD projects and investments in the country since operations began in 2006, alongside progress on key reforms supporting the green transition and private-sector development.

The EBRD has been working in Armenia since 1992. To date, the Bank has invested €3 billion across 245 projects.

INTERNATIONAL

EU Ambassador Highlights Breakthrough In Partnership Talks with Azerbaijan

BAKU (Caucasus Watch) — On June 6, Marijana Kujundžić, Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Azerbaijan, stated that the European Union and Azerbaijan had held a productive round of negotiations this week on a new strategic partnership agreement, describing the process as a positive milestone in bilateral relations. During a meeting with the head of the Executive Authority of Ganja city, Niyazi Bayramov, Kujundžić said that the latest stage of talks marked a symbolic conclusion in the city of Ganja. "We had a very productive round of negotiations this week between the EU and Azerbaijan on a future bilateral agreement on strategic partnership. It is very symbolic that this successful stage of negotiations concludes in your city," she stated.

She emphasized that 2026 marks the 30th anniversary of EU–Azerbaijan relations, recalling that the 1996 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement remains the legal foundation of cooperation between the two sides, covering political dialogue, trade, and economic engagement. Kujundžić also stressed that the EU continues to be Azerbaijan's largest trading partner and investor, adding that Brussels intends to further expand cooperation in the coming years. The ambassador highlighted ongoing EU-supported projects in Ganja, noting the city's participation in international sustainability initiatives. She pointed out that Ganja joined the Global Covenant of Mayors in 2022 and became the first pilot city in Azerbaijan under the EBRD Green Cities program. She added that the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has provided a €35 million loan for modernization of water supply and wastewater systems, while more than €7 million has been allocated under the Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership for energy efficiency initiatives. She also noted that over 80% of the city's street lighting system is planned for modernization.

In a separate statement the same day, Kujundžić reiterated that the EU remains Azerbaijan's largest trading partner and investor, emphasizing that hundreds of joint projects have been implemented since the start of cooperation in 1996 across sectors including agriculture, healthcare, education, environmental protection, and business development. She described initiatives such as the "European Village" as a platform for strengthening public awareness of EU activities in the country.

She also confirmed that the EU expects to approve the text of the Partnership Priorities with Azerbaijan by the end of the year. Kujundžić stated that the draft document has been preliminarily aligned and will be submitted to Brussels for further approval, adding that negotiations on a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement are ongoing. "As with any framework agreement, this is a normal negotiation process," she said, noting that the document requires further coordination before completion.



Marijana Kujundžić, Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Azerbaijan

Russia Hints at Possible EAEU Membership For Azerbaijan amidst Rift With Armenia

EAEU, from page 1

Separately, Galuzin noted Russia's willingness to allow Azerbaijan into the EAEU, noting that a "list of measures was prepared to increase trade turnover and develop investment cooperation and industrial cooperation between our countries identified opportunities for Russian business."

He emphasized that Russia was "ready to contribute in every possible way to Azerbaijan's rapprochement with this integration union."

"Moreover, we believe that it will have a positive impact on Azerbaijan's economy, as the country will gain access to the advantages of a common goods market and will be able to expand cooperation in the areas of transport, services, and investment," he said.

Galuzin's remarks came as Russia pushed a number of restrictions on Armenian imports ahead of the country's 7 June parliamentary elections. The EAEU, to which Armenia is also a party, also recently called on Yerevan to hold a referendum on whether it wants to leave the EAEU or join the EU.

On Thursday, June 4, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that "Armenia's foreign policy was oriented to Western standards."

"You know, there is nothing supernatural here [in the course of Yerevan]. The political forces that are behind [Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan], they have been talking [about the political orientation to the West] for a long time and are not shy, they do it openly," Putin said, according to Russian state-run media TASS.

Putin also said that ties between Russia and Azerbaijan "are very good, friendly, both in the economic and political spheres." He added that he was aware that Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev was "investing considerable effort" into putting the 2022 declaration into action.

"I believe cumulative Russian investment in the Azerbaijani economy exceeds $10 billion. A large number of enterprises work with Russian capital. We have close cooperation on humanitarian issues," Putin said, adding: "A large number of Azerbaijanis work in the Russian Federation. They transfer money to support their families. And we are trying to organize this in a proper, civilized manner."

(This article originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on June 5.)



On the sidelines of the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum, dedicated to Azerbaijan-Russian relations, June 4 (photo Roscongress)



Mashalian Meets Turkish President in Ankara

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople Archbishop Sahak Mashalian met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on June 8 to discuss issues of interest to the Armenian community.

The meeting was also attended by Turkish Justice Minister Akin Gurlek, Culture and Tourism Minister Mehmet Nuri Ersoy, and Member of Parliament Sevan Sivaçioğlu, Armenpress reported.

The sides exchanged views on the progress of restoration work at the Holy Forty Martyrs Church in Iskenderun and Saint Sarkis Church in Diyarbakir.

Above, Archbishop Mashalian, second from left, stands with Erdogan, third from left.

INTERNATIONAL

Meet Serena Abou Sefian, the Lebanese-Armenian Model Opening Fendi's AW26 Show

By Leen Al Saadi

PARIS *(Vogue Arabia)* — It's every model's dream to open a runway show for a major luxury house — to be the first face, the first silhouette, the woman who sets the tone for an entire season. For 20-year-old Serena Abou Sefian, that moment arrived at the very start of her career when she opened the Fendi Autumn/Winter 2026 show, signing an exclusive with the Roman house in the process.



But Serena's story begins far from Milan — in Bourj Hammoud.

Born to fully Armenian parents raised in Lebanon, Serena grew up in a home where Armenian and Lebanese identities weren't distinct categories but a seamless blend. "I thought everyone experienced their home the same way," she says. "But as I matured, I realized that wasn't the case."

The Lebanese-Armenian community, though small, is tightly knit — almost its own ecosystem. From the schools children attend to the circles they socialize in, life often unfolds within that shared cultural space. Serena spent her earliest years in Bourj Hammoud living with her grandparents alongside her sister while her parents worked. Her grandmother walked them to school and back; her grandfather slipped her pocket money she would promptly negotiate into a stop at the dollar shop. "I was very convincing even as a child," she laughs — a quality that would later serve her well.

As she grew older, her family moved to Antelias. She attended two Armenian schools before enrolling for a freshman semester at Haigazian University. Fashion was always present in her life, though not in an obvious way. "I was always interested in fashion, but not necessarily the modeling side of it," she says. "There was a part of me that wanted it, but I never said it out loud because I didn't want to sound vain."

Instead, she gravitated toward what felt attainable. During quarantine, she took a fashion design course, imagining that design might be a more realistic entry point into the industry. If modeling hadn't intervened, she suspects she would have pursued digital marketing — not out of passion, but because it felt safe. "When you don't know what you want to do, you pick the safest option."



Her sense of identity felt similarly complex. Outside of her immediate community, answering the simple question "Where are you from?" was never straightforward. "Sometimes I felt too Armenian, sometimes too Lebanese," she explains. "But slowly I learned that I could just be me in the middle. These labels aren't important — at the end of the day, we're all the same."

Her path shifted unexpectedly at 16 — on the leg press at the gym. Someone connected to Elie Saab approached her and suggested she had the look of a model. Flattered but skeptical, she went home and told her parents. Her father, who had briefly modeled in his youth, was cautious. He understood the industry's demands. About a year later, when she applied to her mother agency, Local Vice Management, she braced herself for resistance.

Instead, her father surprised her. "He told me he saw that he could trust me to handle myself," she says. "He never had to worry about me." Her mother took longer to warm to the idea — but Serena's powers of persuasion, honed since childhood, eventually prevailed.

Her first booking came just four days after signing. Her agent called casually: Bazaar wants to shoot with you. Do you know how to swim? The shoot lasted nine hours underwater in a tank with photographer Lara Zankoul. For a debut job, it was intense and unconventional — and she loved it. "It was challenging, but incredibly fun. It made me realize how exciting this industry could be."

Momentum followed. Campaigns for Chanel Beauty, eyewear for Etro, and Ramadan projects with Gucci and Jil Sander positioned her as a fresh presence across markets. Yet nothing compared to the magnitude of Fendi.

The opportunity was a mix of preparation and timing. On the day of her callback, she was on her way to the airport. She met the team, answered a few questions, and left without overthinking it. Days later, her agents called: Fendi wanted her not only to walk but to open the Autumn/Winter 2026 show — and to sign exclusively with the house. "I started crying and so did they," she says. "But after that, I couldn't process it." The relationship continued beyond the runway, with Serena also appearing in Fendi's Cruize 2026/27 presentation, cementing her status as one of the house's emerging new faces.

Backstage at the Autumn/Winter 2026 show, adrenaline replaced disbelief. The atmosphere was electric — chaotic in the way fashion shows always are, yet suspended in anticipation. "It felt like everyone was waiting for a pin to drop," she says. As the opening look, she carried the weight of first impression — the responsibility to embody the mood of an entire collection.

It wasn't until she called her parents that the magnitude settled in. Hearing her father's voice break on the phone made it real. "That's when I realized what was happening."

Despite her growing international schedule — Paris, Milan, Madrid, Barcelona — Lebanon remains her anchor. After months abroad, it is always the place she longs to return to. "It's where I grew up, where my family is, where my friends are. There's nothing quite like being home."

There were no Lebanese-Armenian models before her to look up to. The absence of representation meant navigating much of the path independently. "Of course, I had support," she says. "But there are things you have to take responsibility for and own yourself." In an industry already demanding, that added layer requires resilience.

Perhaps that resilience is something uniquely Lebanese. "If you're lucky enough to be born in Lebanon, you grow up with a strong sense of self," she reflects. It's a strength shaped by culture, tradition, and contradiction — elegance paired with grit, confidence tempered by humility. "And yes," she adds with a smile, "a bit of stubbornness. But sometimes being stubborn is what allows you to achieve what you set your mind to."

From persuading her grandmother to stop at the dollar shop in Bourj Hammoud to convincing her parents to trust her instincts, Serena Abou Sefian has always known how to advocate for herself. Opening the Fendi Autumn/Winter 2026 show may be every model's dream — but for a young woman who once felt suspended between identities, it is also something deeper: proof that you don't have to choose between where you come from and where you're going.

Community News

Prof. Anna Ohanyan Earns Third Fulbright Award

EASTON, Mass. — Anna Ohanyan, Stonehill College's Richard B. Finnegan Distinguished Professor of Political Science & International Relations, has received the prestigious Fulbright Global Scholar Award, which allows U.S. academics and professionals to engage in multi-country, multi-regional projects. This is the third Fulbright honor of her career.

"The Fulbright is an impactful program and an important tool of U.S. foreign policy in promoting global understanding through research and teaching," she said. "I feel privileged to be part of the Fulbright community. I was both thrilled and humbled to receive this honor."

The award will support her current book project, which seeks to challenge widely accepted understandings of how states navigate a world order that is simultaneously fragmenting and realigning.

"Understanding how smaller states and middle powers develop and operate in the shadow of great power competition is a central question driving this research," she said. "It is an important one, because examining the behavior and survival strategies



Prof. Anna Ohanyan

of these states at a time of heightened great power competition can help generate policy insights for a more stable and peaceful global order."

As part of the project, Ohanyan will spend five months conducting research in Armenia. She will also expand her fieldwork to Japan and East Asia, building on research she previously conducted in South Korea and Turkey through Stonehill's Richard B. Finnegan Fund.

Ohanyan emphasized that her efforts will better position her to contribute to public discourse that supports the peaceful management of ongoing global order transitions.

"Armed conflict and great power rivalry do not have to determine the shape of the future international order," she said. "Understanding the role of smaller states and middle powers is crucial for generating policy insights that can support peaceful transitions across the broader Eurasian continent, which remains fractured by armed conflicts and wars of varying intensity."

The Stonehill faculty member received her first Fulbright, which was a U.S. Scholar Award, during the 2012–2013 academic year. The grant supported research she conducted in

see FULBRIGHT, page 9



Richard Hovannisian in his library in an undated photo

Landmark Richard G. Hovannisian Library to be Established in Yerevan

YEREVAN — A global fundraising campaign has officially been launched to support the creation of the Richard G. Hovannisian Library in the heart of Yerevan.

Dedicated to honoring and extending the monumental legacy of the late Professor Hovannisian — a titan of modern Armenian History — the library will permanently house the unparalleled collection of more than 10,000 books and volumes he amassed over his lifetime.

Born to Armenian Genocide survivors in California's San Joaquin Valley, Hovannisian set out on a life's journey to pioneer the field of Armenian Studies in the United States and across the world. He founded and held the AEF Chair in Modern Armenian History, later renamed in his honor, at UCLA. He wrote the four-volume masterpiece, The Republic of Armenia. He preserved the history of the Armenian Genocide through several more books and a comprehensive oral history collection, which now resides at USC's Shoah Foundation. His series of conferences on the historic Armenian cities and provinces also became books, wherein the lost history, culture and spirit of Western Armenia are forever preserved.

The Richard G. Hovannisian Library is envisaged as a world-class cultural and intellectual space. Work is already well underway on the ground in Yerevan, where specialists and catalogers are meticulously indexing the vast archival collection. By the end of this year, these volumes will be integrated into a beautifully designed facility featuring custom, floor-to-ceiling bookshelves. The space will serve as a dynamic center for the study and advancement of Armenian and regional studies, inspiring a new generation of scholars, thinkers, and leaders through a year-round calendar of panels, symposia and educational programming.

While the Hovannisian family, together with several Armenian institutions, has borne the lion's share of the initial project and construction costs, a global campaign has been launched to bring this history-in-the-making across the finish line, funding the final outfitting of the space, ongoing archival work, and future programming.

"We hope to build, in my grandfather's name, a library that will not only perpetuate his legacy, but that will allow new generations of Armenians to discover the riches of our past and to be inspired and propelled toward our future," said Garin Hovannisian, Founder of Creative Armenia, which is helping implement the project on the ground in Yerevan.

To make a tax-deductible contribution to the campaign, please visit the official donation portal at https://www.creativearmenia.org/library.



The library of Prof. Richard Hovannisian

Daughters of Vartan to Offer Workshops at Philadelphia Convocation

PHILADELPHIA — The Grand Council of the Daughters of Vartan will present three new workshops on July 30, 2-5 p.m. at the 2026 Grand Convocation in Philadelphia, the annual conference of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, held in a different city each summer.

With a desire to engage the members in new ways, National Chair Lily Sarkissian and her officers have planned these workshops at the Hilton Philadelphia at Penn's Landing, featuring accomplished Armenian women, on topics that are a bit different from the format of previous years:

• Book Club Discussion: *My Grandmother: An Armenian-Turkish Memoir,* by Fethiye Cetin.

Moderated by National Chaplain Nancy Tutunjian Burdman, the discussion will engage members about the book and its perspective on shared Armenian history, the Genocide, and the story of the author's grandmother. The book will be available for purchase prior to the convocation some members can read it ahead of time



Fethiye Cetin

and be prepared for the discussion.

• "Healing from Trauma: Dr. Taline Andonian."

Armenian women carry so much, especially with passed down trauma of the Armenian Genocide, generational healing, and how Armenian culture sometimes suppresses trauma. Clinical Psychologist and author Dr. Andonian will conduct a workshop to enlighten members on various methods and paths to healing, including a 10-minute sound therapy session. She will also share about her creative Armenian-themed book series (including Let's Make Manti!) which will encourage members with food and culture topics as well.

• "Young Armenian Professional Women's Panel"

Three accomplished women from across academia, business, science, and nonprofit sectors discuss their challenges and victories in their professional and personal lives: Ani Jilozian, Markrete Krikorian and Araz Majnoonian. Moderated by Past National Chair Lisa Kradjian, the panel will inform the wider membership of all that our newer generation is accomplishing across the country.

For more information on the Grand Convocation, visit https://kofv.org/grand-convocation-2026/. For more information on the Daughters of Vartan, visit https://kofv.org/about-us/.

COMMUNITY NEWS

ANCA Endorses Rep. Chris Pappas for U.S. Senate in New Hampshire

WASHINGTON — The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) this week endorsed Rep. Chris Pappas (D-NH) for the United States Senate, citing his sustained leadership on Armenian American legislative priorities, his principled stand against U.S. arms transfers to Turkey and Azerbaijan, and the stark contrast he offers to a likely Republican opponent whose family holds a multi-million dollar stake in a mining company profiting from Azerbaijan's genocidal ethnic cleansing of Artsakh.

Rep. Pappas — the favorite to win the Democratic nomination — is expected to face former U.S. Senator John E. Sununu, the leading contender for the Republican nomination in the race to succeed retiring Senator Jeanne Shaheen.

"Chris Pappas has shown up — year after year, vote after vote, letter after letter — for justice for the Armenian people," said ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian. "He has stood with displaced Artsakh Armenians, with the families of hostages held in Baku, and with every Armenian American family asking their government to stop arming the regimes that target Armenians. That is the kind of leadership Armenian Americans want representing them in the United States Senate."

A member of the Congressional Armenian Caucus, Rep. Pappas has compiled one of the most consistent pro-Armenian records in the U.S. House, earning a sustained "A" grade on the ANCA Congressional Report Card across multiple Congresses. He is a perennial co-signer of the Armenian Caucus's annual foreign aid appropriations letters – supported by the ANCA – calling for robust U.S. humanitarian assistance to Armenia and Artsakh refugees, expanded U.S.-Armenia security cooperation, and the strict enforcement of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act restrictions on military aid to Azerbaijan.

Rep. Pappas signed the June 2025 Armenian Caucus letter affirming the right of return for Armenians forcibly displaced from Artsakh, and the FY2026 foreign operations appropriations letter advancing the full slate of ANCA-backed priorities. Across multiple Congresses, he has co-sponsored the Artsakh Blockade Resolution (H.Res.108), the Armenian Genocide Education Act, and a range of measures supporting Section 907 enforcement, Global Magnitsky sanctions against Azerbaijani officials responsible for war crimes, and continued U.S. recognition of and education about the Armenian Genocide.



As Co-Chair of the Congressional Hellenic Caucus, Pappas has emerged as one of Capitol Hill's most forceful voices against U.S. fighter jet sales to Turkey, a fight the ANCA has supported at every turn. In September 2025, he led a bipartisan letter to Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth opposing the Trump Administration's discussions with President Erdogan over the sale of F-16 and F-35 aircraft to Turkey, despite Ankara's continued possession of Russian S-400 missile systems in violation of U.S. law.

"Congress has consistently upheld bipartisan restrictions on Turkey's access to the F-35," Pappas and his colleagues wrote. "Any move to reverse this policy without first securing the statutorily required certification would be a clear violation of U.S. law, undermine Congressional authority, and signal to others that U.S. law and strategic principles can be disregarded."

In prior Congresses, Pappas secured passage of a bipartisan amendment to the FY2023 National Defense Authorization Act prohibiting the sale of F-16s to Turkey, an effort the ANCA actively championed.

A New Hampshire Voice for the Armenian American Community

Rep. Pappas' Congressional office has engaged directly with New Hampshire's Armenian American community throughout his tenure, listening to constituent concerns and translating them into legislative action.

"Chris Pappas has been there for our community when it counted," said Alla Gevorgyan, ANCA activist from New Hampshire. "He took the time to understand the issues facing our community, ensured our concerns were heard, and — most importantly — translated engagement into meaningful action." Granite State Armenian Americans know we have a real friend in Chris Pappas, and we are proud to stand with him in this race."

The race also presents Granite State voters with a sharp choice on questions of corruption, accountability, and complicity in the genocidal ethnic cleansing of Artsakh. Former Senator John E. Sununu, the leading Republican contender, is the son of John H. Sununu, who holds an estimated 9 to 10 percent stake (valued at roughly $16 million) in Anglo Asian Mining, a company operating gold, copper, and silver mines in Azerbaijan. His brother, Michael Sununu, serves as a Non-Executive Director of the same company.

Anglo Asian Mining publicly welcomed Azerbaijan's 2020 military assault on Artsakh as opening new commercial opportunities, and moved aggressively to operationalize mining sites in territories from which Armenians had been displaced. The company's claims to mining rights in Artsakh – including the Kashen mine in occupied Martakert – were among the pretexts cited by Azerbaijan for its 2022-2023 blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the nine-month siege that preceded Azerbaijan's September 2023 genocidal ethnic cleansing of more than 120,000 indigenous Armenians from their homeland. Anglo Asian began copper production at Kashen in 2025.

"Armenian Americans – and every American who cares about human rights – deserve to know whether their next Senator's family is profiting from the ethnic cleansing of an indigenous Christian people," Hamparian added. "The Sununu family has direct financial and governance ties to a company cashing in on Azerbaijan's genocide and occupation of indigenous Armenian lands. That is a question John E. Sununu will need to answer to New Hampshire voters."

Armenian Americans and all New Hampshire voters can learn more about Rep. Chris Pappas's record by reviewing his ANCA Report Card and visiting Congressional and campaign websites.

Prof. Anna Ohanyan Earns Third Fulbright Award

FULBRIGHT, from page 8

Armenia to help diversify technology within Armenian higher education institutions and create professional development programs for faculty at those colleges and universities. She also explored the prospects and limitations of regional cooperation in areas like the Balkans and South Caucasus. Her work resulted in the publication of her second book, Networked Regionalism as Conflict Management, by Stanford University in 2015.

Ohanyan's second Fulbright, also a U.S. Scholar Award, supported her sabbatical and fifth book project, The Neighborhood Effect: The Imperial Roots of Regional Fracture in Eurasia, published by Stanford University in 2022. She spent the summers of 2020 and 2021 working at the American University of Armenia, where she taught a Peace and Conflict Studies course.

Giants GM Zack Minasian Blunt on Slump: 'That's not OK'

By Bailey O'Carroll

SAN FRANCISCO (Yahoo Sports) — One-third of the way through the Major League Baseball season, the San Francisco Giants are falling well short of their expectations, prompting general manager Zack Minasian to demand a higher standard of play from the underachieving roster.

Despite the additions superstars Rafael Devers, Matt Chapman, and Willy Adames, the Giants have struggled with consistency, poor plate discipline, and the lack of a reliable closer.

The slow start has left the front office searching for answers, though Minasian insists blame cannot be pinned on a single entity.

"We expect to play championship-caliber baseball, and we're not there right now, and that's not okay," Minasian said.

The Giants' offensive droughts have raised questions about the front office's roster-building philosophy. President of Baseball Operations Buster Posey has consistently emphasized prioritizing clubhouse culture and strong team chemistry. However, with the team past the 50-game mark and struggling to score runs, the pressure to favor raw production over intangibles is mounting.



Zack Minasian

"As a front office, you try not to get overly emotional over a certain stretch of games, but you have to be honest with yourself about what's going on," Minasian said. "You hope the team chemistry and the team makeup is players who are going to fight and battle."

The general manager added that he believes the current locker room possesses the right mentality to adjust and overcome the early-season slump. He noted that the front office is actively looking across every facet of the roster—from utilizing team speed for stolen bases to demanding pitchers get ahead in counts—to spark a turnaround.

While the first two months of the season have offered few highlights, the emergence of infielder Casey Schmitt has provided a major spark. Schmitt currently leads the Giants in home runs, seizing an opportunity that many assumed vanished when the club signed veteran Luis Arráez in the offseason.

"It's been great to see Casey respond to challenges," Minasian said. "I think there was a lot made of us trying to trade for a second baseman in the offseason... any player could've said, 'That was my opportunity and now it's gone.' Casey took it as a challenge. I think we're seeing that on the field each and every day."

With the team trending in the wrong direction, fan frustration in the Bay Area has become palpable. Minasian did not shy away from the criticism, validating the fan base's high expectations.

"They deserve a winning team. I completely understand their frustration," Minasian said. "I think there is a lot of people in that clubhouse that are frustrated."

Minasian promised that neither the dugout nor the executive suite would grow complacent, vowing that the coaching staff and front office will exhaust all avenues to find solutions.

"I want us to have a high standard," Minasian said. "We're going to keep pushing to try to meet that."

COMMUNITY NEWS

Honoring 50 Years of Love, Reverence and Faithfulness at St. John Church

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. — During a four-day pastoral visit to St. John Church, Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan joined parishioners for a series of spiritual, educational and fellowship events, culminating in the ordination of new altar servers and a celebration honoring a beloved clergyman's milestone anniversaries.

The visit began on the evening of Thursday, May 28, with a welcome dinner with pastor Fr. Aren Jebejian, the parish council and Diocesan delegates.

The following day featured meetings with local ecumenical leaders and a heartwarming visit to Manoogian Manor, where the Primate blessed and prayed with the elderly residents.

A highlight of the weekend came on Friday evening, when more than 400 faithful gathered at the church to celebrate the 50th ordination anniversary of St. John's former pastor Fr. Garabed Kochakian. Fellow clergy and lifelong friends traveled from across the country to honor Fr. Garabed and Yeretzgin Roberta, who were also celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary.

The evening featured heartfelt remarks by brother clergy from the Eastern Diocese, as well as from Armenian and sister churches across the country, who reflected on the countless lives touched by Fr. Garabed's ministry over five decades. Among the speakers were Fr. Garabed's seminary classmates Fr. Kevork Arakelian of the Western Diocese and St. Nersess Seminary Board member Michael Zeytoonian, as well as Detroit television meteorologist Chuck Gaidica, who shared reflections on his longstanding friendship with the Kochakians.



Fr. Garabed and Yeretzgin Roberta Kochakian with Diocesean Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan



The banquet



The celebration of the mass at St. John Armenian Church

A special toast was also offered by Fr. Hratch Sargsyan in honor of the couple's golden anniversary.

Presiding over the occasion, Bishop Mesrop extolled Fr. Garabed's half-century of ministry, which has included pastoral service in Worcester, Racine and Southfield, as well as tenures as chancellor of the Eastern Diocese and as a teacher at his alma mater, St. Nersess Seminary.

"Der Hayr has served with seriousness, love, reverence and faithfulness," Bishop Mesrop said. "He loves the Armenian Church — her worship, her theology, her tradition and her beauty. That kind of faithfulness strengthens the whole church. Of course, Yn. Roberta has walked beside Der Garabed in this sacred journey with grace and strength, sharing in the joys and burdens of ministry. Today we also thank God for her life, her love and her faithful partnership."

In a touching expression of their enduring commitment to the parish they have served and loved, Fr. Garabed and Yn. Roberta donated $10,000 to the St. John's Veterans Building renovation fund.

The weekend also included a gathering with more than 60 members of the parish Women's Guild, as well as a luncheon with parish acolytes and altar servers.

On Sunday, Bishop Mesrop celebrated an Episcopal Divine Liturgy and ordained new subdeacons and acolytes. A reception followed, giving the Primate an opportunity to meet with parishioners and celebrate the vitality of the community.

The visit concluded with expressions of gratitude to Fr. Aren Jebejian, parish leaders, volunteers and faithful members whose dedication continues to strengthen the life of the Southfield parish.

Mirror-Spectator Seeks Summer Interns

WATERTOWN — The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is looking for summer interns.

The internship, which will be paid, will be funded by the Armenian Students' Association.

The six-week internship will start in mid-July and go through August, though it would be possible to start earlier. The stipend is $150 per month.

All applicants should be in college or graduate school. They need not be journalism majors.

"We love working with young interns, who have helped us by writing stories, posting on social media and other tasks," said *Mirror-Spectator* editor Alin K. Gregorian. "In turn, we can impart many skills, including improved writing, research and contacts with people who work in their fields."

Mirror-Spectator managing editor Aram Arkun declared: "This is a chance for students to try their hand at journalism, polish and publish their writing, and work on a variety of other tasks that make modern newspapers accessible and entertaining to audiences of all ages. Along the way, we try to make it an enjoyable summer."

The internship may be done in person or long distance, though the former is preferred.

Fluent knowledge of English is vital.

If interested, email tcadirector@aol.com or alin@mirrorspectator.com.

Donations

The following donations to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* were just received:

Haig and Sylvia Minassian of Los Angeles donated $100.

Agavni Yeramyan, Newtown Square, PA donated $200 .

COMMUNITY NEWS

AIWA New England Hosts Two Events With Two Sets of Sister Entrepreneurs

BOSTON — This spring, the New England chapter of the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) New England hosted two sold-out events highlighting Armenian women entrepreneurs and celebrating the power of women supporting women. Both events featured immigrant sisters who have successfully built businesses through passion, resilience and creativity.

In April, AIWA New England partnered with Valentina Day Spa in Belmont for an evening centered around wellness and entrepreneurship while bringing women together for skincare education, self-care discussions, networking and community building. The event was hosted by sisters Armine Manukyan and Narine Kyuregyan, owners of Valentina Day Spa, who grew up in Armenia. Prior to opening their spa, Kyuregyan had worked as a dermatologist, while Manukyan was an assistant executive director in higher education and has served as principal of the Erebuni Armenian School in Belmont for more than 15 years.

Guests participated in skin analysis sessions and interactive skincare discussions led by expert estheticians, while also learning more about the sisters' entrepreneurial journey.

"By opening their doors to AIWA New England, Valentina Day Spa demonstrated the importance of women-owned businesses giving back to the community and investing in the success of other women," Manukyan said.



Anna and Gayane Sargsyan of Boston Flower Lab teach participants how to arrange flowers.

In May, AIWA New England hosted another sold-out event in partnership with Boston Flower Lab, owned by sisters Anna and Gayane Sargsyan. The evening celebrated the journeys of women entrepreneurs while guests participated in a floral arrangement masterclass and learned the art of floral design.

Anna and Gayane were born in Armenia and raised in Moscow. By profession, Anna is a dentist who practiced for several years, while Gayane is a lawyer who previously worked in banking. Despite their different careers, they always shared a love for flowers. Gayane, in particular, developed a passion for floral design and pursued courses to deepen her expertise. After moving to the United States, the sisters decided to follow that passion together and launched Boston Flower Lab.



Valentina Day Spa co-owner Armine Manukyan, center

The event highlighted not only their creativity and talent, but also the courage it takes to pivot careers, build a business from the ground up, and pursue a passion later in life.

"As immigrants who recently came to the United States, my sister and I are incredibly proud to have found a community that has supported us throughout our journey. I have always tried to participate in different events organized by the Armenian International Women's Association, and one thing that has always stood out to me is their warmth, welcoming spirit, and genuine willingness to help others. They have created a community that is truly there for you," said Anna Sargsyan.

She added, "When my sister and I first started thinking about organizing an event centered around bringing people together through beautiful floral design, we wanted to create something meaningful for our community. AIWA immediately stepped in to support us, encourage us, and help make it happen."

To learn more about AIWA, visit www.aiwainternational.org.

AUA to Celebrate 35th Anniversary with Gala

GLENDALE, California — The American University of Armenia (AUA) has announced its 35th Anniversary Gala, a landmark celebration to be held on November 7, 2026, in Beverly Hills, California. The special evening will bring together AUA supporters, alumni, and distinguished figures from across the Armenian diaspora to celebrate the University's 35-year legacy of expanding opportunity, advancing knowledge, and shaping the next generation of leaders in Armenia.

The Gala will serve as the culminating event of AUA's 35th anniversary campaign, Paving the Way for Future Leaders, a yearlong initiative highlighting AUA's role as a powerful engine for Armenia's democratic, market-based economy. The campaign underscores the University's growing impact while making a compelling case for continued investment in AUA's next chapter of growth and innovation. In addition, select sponsors will be invited to an exclusive pre-gala dinner hosted at the residence of Zaven P. Akian, AUA benefactor and chairman of the University's Board of Trustees.

"As we reflect on the 35 years of AUA, it is remarkable how far the University has come since its founding," said AUA President Dr. Bruce Boghosian. "From our need-blind admissions policy, to maintaining a public library open to all, to filing our first patent application in Armenia, AUA has consistently led with innovation, integrity, and purpose. Higher education is where Armenia's future is shaped, and our mission is to prepare graduates who will drive the country's economic growth and strengthen its democratic institutions."

The anniversary campaign also advances the University's Strategic Plan 2024-2034, which outlines ambitious priorities for the coming decade. These include expanding AUA's research portfolio, strengthening faculty recruitment and retention, diversifying academic programs, growing the student body, and expanding the University's campus and national reach to serve more students across Armenia.

"This Gala is above all a celebration of the extraordinary community that has stood behind AUA for more than three decades," said AUA Vice President of Development Gaiane Khachatrian. "We look forward to honoring the generosity of our donors and supporters, and we are very grateful to our dynamic Gala Committee for helping bring this evening to life. Guests can look forward to a vibrant program filled with entertainment and memorable moments as we gather to celebrate AUA's remarkable journey."

The gala will feature Magdalena Yesil as the keynote speaker. A Silicon Valley technology pioneer, serial entrepreneur, and founding board member of Salesforce, Yesil has been a dedicated supporter of AUA, impacting the lives of many students through her gift of education.

For more information about the 35th Anniversary Gala, visit the Gala webpage.

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR

Paid Summer Internship through ASA

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is seeking an intern for a six-week program this summer (mid-July through August, though it is possible to start earlier). The intern will receive a $150 weekly stipend provided through the Armenian Students' Association of America's Internship Program.
The intern should be in college or graduate school and does not necessarily have to be studying journalism. Internet skills are a plus. The internship may be done in person or long distance, via electronic communications. Native speaker knowledge of English is important. If interested, please email tcadirector@aol.com or mirrorspectator1975@gmail.com with

OBITUARY

Sculptor Matthew Spender

Son of Noted Poet, Married to Gorky's Daughter

LONDON *(Times of London)* — Matthew Spender, sculptor and painter, was born on March 13, 1945. He died of undisclosed causes on May 31, 2026, aged 81

When Matthew Spender was a schoolboy trying to master English grammar, help arrived from an unusual source. Over breakfast in the family house in St John's Wood, the poet WH Auden explained the use of adjectives to him. Such episodes seemed almost ordinary in the household of his parents, Sir Stephen and Natasha Spender, where poets, composers, critics and intellectuals passed continually through the drawing room.

Only later did Spender come to understand that he had grown up at the center of one of the most remarkable literary circles of 20th-century Britain. He memorialized that world with candor in his memoir *A House in St John's Wood: In Search of My Parents* (2015). He deals with his parents' unconventional marriage, how his mother dealt with her husband's bisexuality and whether Stephen Spender knew, as a former communist, that *Encounter*, the magazine he edited, was funded by the CIA. Remarkably, the book manages to steer clear of washing the family's soiled linen in public and instead succeeds as a successful exorcism of family ghosts.

Matthew Spender was born in 1945, at Queen Charlotte's Hospital in west London, during the closing weeks of the Second World War. One of the last V2 rockets to fall on London exploded nearby, close to Maresfield Gardens, as Europe moved towards peace. The child born as the last horrors of the conflict played out grew up in a household that became one of the meeting places of Britain's postwar literary and intellectual elite.

Literature, music and art were the air he breathed from childhood. His father was already one of the leading poets of his generation, his name forever associated with Auden, Louis MacNeice, Cecil Day-Lewis and Christopher Isherwood, and the literary left of the 1930s. His mother, Natasha Spender (née Litvin), was a gifted pianist and writer whose own circle reached deep into the worlds of music and criticism.

The family home in Loudoun Road, St John's Wood, became a place where conversation, argument and artistic endeavor were treated less as accomplishments than as the ordinary business of daily life. He grew up with his sister Elizabeth, known as Lizzie, who later married the Australian comedian, writer and actor Barry Humphries.

Oxford provided the first opportunity for Matthew to step beyond the orbit of his parents' friends and contemporaries. Reading modern history, he acquired the habit of patient inquiry that would inform his writing and later, and at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, he discovered that the visual arts offered a language quite different from that of the literary conversation in which he had grown up. While words and reputations often dominated the world of St John's Wood, sculpture demanded something more stubborn and exacting.

If Matthew Spender inherited one remarkable artistic lineage by birth, he acquired another through marriage. In 1967, he married Maro Gorky, the painter and daughter of the Armenian-American artist Arshile Gorky. The marriage joined two families whose histories had been shaped by some of the defining artistic movements of the 20th century. Many years later, Spender would repay that inheritance with From a High Place (1999), his biography of his father-in-law, a work that combined family insight with the discipline of a serious historian.

The Gorky connection proved more than a matter of family history. Arshile Gorky's life, marked by exile, artistic innovation and personal tragedy, cast a long shadow over those who knew him. Spender approached the subject with unusual advantages and unusual burdens. As a member of the family, he enjoyed access unavailable to other biographers. As a writer, he understood the danger of sentimentality. From a High Place was widely praised for navigating those difficulties with tact and intelligence, producing a portrait that illuminated both the artist and the complicated legacy he left behind.

The brilliance of his childhood household concealed tensions that Spender would spend much of his later life trying to understand. His memoir was notable for its candor about both parents, particularly his father, whose relationships with men before and during his marriage had long been part of the complicated private history behind the public figure. Spender was less interested in exposing secrets than in understanding the emotional cost of them. *A House in St John's Wood* became, among other things, an attempt by a son to reconcile the celebrated poet he had known with the more elusive and contradictory man behind the legend.

Reviewers recognized the book as more than a literary memoir. It was also a study of family memory, loyalty and self-deception. Spender wrote with unusual frankness about the strains within his parents' marriage and about the effort, particularly after Stephen Spender's death, to preserve a simpler version of his life than the evidence allowed. The result was one of the most searching portraits written of a major figure of the Auden generation, and one that revealed as much about the son investigating as it did about its subject.

After Oxford and the Slade, Spender gradually moved away from the literary world that had shaped his childhood. In 1968, he and Maro settled in Tuscany, which became both his home and his artistic landscape for more than half a century. The move was not a rejection of his inheritance so much as an attempt to establish a life beyond it. In the hills of Chianti, he found a life centered less on literature than on drawing and sculpting.

The Tuscan years became the defining time of his life. What had begun as a move abroad gradually evolved into a deeper attachment. He settled into a landscape of vineyards, olive groves and hill towns whose rhythms differed sharply from those of literary London. Friends who visited from Britain often found themselves surprised by the extent to which Spender had become rooted in Italian life. Tuscany offered him not merely a refuge from inherited expectations but a place in which artistic work could proceed at its own pace, measured less by reputation than by the steady demands of the studio and commissioned work.

Although he wrote with distinction, Spender regarded himself primarily as a visual artist. Working as a sculptor and painter, he developed a reputation for work marked by clarity of line and close attention to the natural world. Tuscany



provided not only a setting but a subject. Its landscape, architecture and agricultural rhythms informed much of his work, while its connection to Renaissance art offered a cultural environment in which he felt instinctively at home.

Those friends who knew him in Tuscany remarked on the combination of intellectual sophistication and practical craftsmanship that he brought to his work. He was not drawn to grand theoretical statements and art theory, preferring the patient observation of form, landscape and natural processes. Sculpture appealed to him because it demanded direct engagement with materials and space.

Friends recalled a figure equally at home discussing Auden, Renaissance painting or the latest political upheaval over lunch, before disappearing to his studio to spend long hours refining a piece whose simplicity concealed considerable technical skill. The example of the Tuscan masters remained important to him, not as imitation but as attitude. Art was something to be practiced with seriousness, humility and discipline.

Over the years, his work was exhibited in Britain, Italy and the United States, and he came to occupy a respected place in the artistic life of Tuscany. Friends and visitors remarked on the contrast between the intensity of the cultural world into which he had been born and the quieter, more contemplative existence he made for himself among the hills of Chianti. The contrast was not quite as great as it appeared. The curiosity, discipline and seriousness that had characterized his parents' generation remained central to his own life, though expressed through different media and in different surroundings.

Unlike many children of celebrated parents, Spender neither traded on his inheritance nor attempted to escape it through rebellion. He spent much of his life preserving and explaining artistic worlds that might otherwise have slipped from memory. Through his family connections, he preserved a direct link to the literary culture of Auden and Isherwood. His gift lay in describing those worlds honestly, preserving their brilliance without concealing their flaws.

Although deeply conscious of the remarkable people who had shaped his life, he was rarely inclined to trade on famous names. Friends remarked instead on his curiosity about the work of others and on the generosity with which he encouraged younger artists and writers. The reserve that occasionally accompanied him in public life softened considerably among family and friends, particularly in Tuscany, where he and Maro created a home that became a gathering place for artists, writers and visitors from many countries. He is survived by his wife and their daughters, Saskia and Cosima.

The publication of *A House in St John's Wood* brought him a wide readership. Critics admired not only its portrait of Stephen and Natasha Spender but its refusal to indulge either nostalgia or score-settling. The book demonstrated the same qualities that marked his sculpture and painting: patience, close observation and a willingness to allow complexity to remain unresolved. It was, in many respects, the work of a man who had spent a lifetime learning how to see clearly.

Nardolillo Funeral Home
Est. 1906
John K. Najarian, Jr.
Rhode Island's Only Licensed Armenian Funeral Director
1278 Park Ave. Cranston, RI 02910 **(401) 942-1220**
1111 Boston Neck Rd. Narragansett, RI 02882 (401) 789-6300
www.nardolillo.com

James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC **Mark J. Giragosian**
Giragosian
FUNERAL HOME
576 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472, Tel: 617-924-0606
www.giragosianfuneralhome.com

Telephone (617) 924-7400
Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.
Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945
558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472
MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN

Arts & Culture

Northampton's Paul Arslanian Receives National Honor for His Contributions to Jazz Scene

By Carolyn Brown

NORTHAMPTON, Mass. *(Valley Advocate)* — A longtime member of and influential figure in the Valley's jazz scene recently hit the national spotlight.

Paul Arslanian, co-founder of the Northampton Jazz Workshop, has been named one of 33 "Jazz Heroes" by the Jazz Journalists Association. Since 2001, the Manhattan, New York-based nonprofit organization's annual awards has celebrated "activists, advocates and altruists" who keep local jazz culture alive across the U.S.

Though appreciative, Arslanian, a pianist, composer and leader of the Green Street Trio, was characteristically low-key about the honor.

"It's not that hard to do, really — I just sit at the computer, hire people and raise some money here and there," he said.

Arslanian also co-founded the Northampton Jazz Workshop, a weekly jam session that brings musicians from larger cities' jazz scenes to Spare Time Northampton and The Drake in Amherst.

The Workshop began at the former Green Street Cafe, where co-owner Jim Dozmati offered musicians a free meal and $50 to play once a week. Arslanian and the late Green Street Trio bassist Dave Shapiro launched the series for a mix of "selfish and altruistic reasons" — giving themselves a place to play while providing a platform for local talent.

When the Workshop began, "Maybe 30 or 40 people could fit in the place," Arslanian said. "And it was right next to Smith College, so a lot of students would come over, and word got around. And the same 45 or 50 people, those who haven't passed on yet, are still coming 16 years later. They get the bug, just like the musicians do."

But for Ruth Griggs, president of the Northampton Jazz Festival, recognition for Arslanian is a long time coming.

"What he has done to elevate western Mass. as a viable legitimate jazz region is huge," said Griggs, who nominated him. She credits him with transforming Northampton into a destination for world-class talent. Thanks to Arslanian and late Green Street Trio bassist George Kaye's deep connections in New York City, Boston and Philadelphia, word traveled that Northampton was a good place for jazz musicians to play.

"On a Tuesday in the middle of February … they'll look around to a full house and they'll say, 'Jeez! I don't get an audience like this in New York on a Tuesday evening!'" Griggs said, noting that crowds are famously "educated and respectful"—the kind of fans musicians can't wait to play for again.

Griggs and Arslanian both referenced jazz vocalist Avery Joi as an

see ARSLANIAN, page 15



Lusine Saakyan near her art (photo Karine Armen)

Exploring Memories And Identity in 'Interconnection'

By Karine Armen
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GLENDALE — Lusine Saakyan's latest exhibition, "Interconnection," opened at the Glenmark Art Gallery on June 4 and will be on display until July 3.

In her latest collection, Saakyan tells a story through her art about memory, identity, heritage and place, inviting viewers to reflect on their own connections to their Armenian lineage.

"Interconnection" is an extension of Saakyan's 2024 collection exploring Armenian petroglyphs, a body of works rooted in heritage, ancestry and the enduring spirit of its people, highlighting resilience that can inspire viewers. Through this exhibit, Saakyan traces the dialogue between petroglyph and textile as an act of cultural resilience — a reminder that documentation did not end in stone. It adapted, softened and lived on in Armenian textiles.

Saakyan said, "My vibrant and healing approach to art stems from my multifaceted life as an artist, educator and mother. I view art as a crucial element of everyday life, providing not just beauty but also balance and transformative energy." She added, "My personal journey in art began as a therapeutic hobby that blossomed into a significant aspect of my life, leading to numerous solo exhibitions."

Saakyan has had many solo exhibitions, commissioned works and contributions to many community charities. Her artworks reflect the emotional contrasts she experienced, often portraying serene, uplifting scenes, nature and flower bouquet compositions that belie the turmoil she faced. She is a self-taught artist who moved to the United States in 1991. Rediscovering her roots and gaining new insights as an adult through her ancestral Armenian petroglyphs, carpets, rugs and textiles has pivoted her from creating stylized decorative art to research-based works that shed light on Armenian heritage.

Saakyan's professional background as a director in early childhood education for over a decade complements her artistic endeavors. She developed a unique art education program tailored to children's art appreciation, fostering their creativity and reflecting her dedication to nurturing growth and understanding in her community.

She resides in Glendale, a city with a vibrant Armenian community, where she regularly contributes to her cultural heritage.

Saakyan's petroglyphs are more than carvings in stone; they were the earliest visual record of Armenian ancestry. In the Armenian Highlands, documentation of what was witnessed — the rhythm of the seasons, celestial illuminators, sacred animals, ritual life, elemental forces. Engravings were coded in the visual language of survival, reverence and cosmology.

see INTERCONNECTION, page 17

Alicja Khatchikian

Listening to Echoes

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/BERLIN — Alicja Khatchikian (born in Italy, 1988) is a Berlin-based artist whose work unfolds at the intersection of documentary, fine art and ethnographic approaches. Through images, text, collage and archival materials, she questions borders, memory and the body as a site of lived experience, often moving outward from her biography. She holds a BA in political science from the University of Trieste and an MA in socio-cultural anthropology from the University of Vienna. She later completed her photography studies in Germany. Alongside her artistic practice, she works as a freelance photographer and facilitates image-based workshops focused on artists' books and collaborative learning.

More about the artist can be found at her website: https://alicjakhatchikian.com/



Dear Alicja, I was very glad to see your images in "What does contemporary Armenia look like?" photo exhibition last April in Yerevan. Why did you choose photography as a means of self-expression?

I think dance and music were my first choice. I started practicing ballet at a very young age, then moved on to modern and contemporary dance. Growing up in the 1990s, cameras were somehow always there: I started using my mom's camcorder, disposable and other inherited, analog cameras, often with expired films. I wasn't interested in the results as much as in the process; as a relatively shy person, cameras helped me hold space without being in the spotlight. Only years later, while doing fieldwork for my master's thesis, I documented the work of performance artists and began shaping my own practice.

What themes attract you the most: people, urban spaces, memory, body, identity, travel?

I'm drawn to stories, and to how context, time and lived experience shape the meaning we make of them. I'm also committed to slow photography as a way of looking and producing. Environments can be as much actual spaces as imaginary landscapes; for instance, Armenian diaspora stories often refer to places

see KHATCHIKIAN, page 17

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian



Ara Zada's Khorovats Salad (Armenian BBQ Salad)

LOS ANGELES —Ara Zada is an Armenian-American chef, author, TV personality, and content creator based in Los Angeles. He specializes in food styling and recipe development, and has worked with Food Network, ABC, CBS, NBC and Jaime Oliver's Food Revolution. Zada is known for adding a California twist to traditional Armenian dishes, like Armenian sushi, burritos, and pizza. He released his first cookbook, Lavash, in 2019, which focuses on Armenian food and lavash bread. With the same co-authors of Lavash, Zada's book Artsakh was published in 2021, and is sold on Etsy with proceeds benefiting Hayk For Our Heroes. Hayk For Our Heroes, in collaboration with All for Armenia and Veterans of Armenia, is providing humanitarian aid to the displaced families of Artsakh.



Ara Zada brings Armenian flavors to a national audience through his appearance on the new season of "Chopped: Castaways," where he competes as one of 12 elite chefs in an outdoor, open-flame cooking competition.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Zada spent most of his younger years skateboarding and snowboarding though he always had his heart in the kitchen. He attended culinary school at Le Cordon Bleu and built a career as a Chef diving into many ethnic cultures. He has been featured on PBS No Passport Required, Discovery Channel Recipe Lost & Found and on Fox Good Day LA. He has also worked with Breville, Gelson's and a range of others. He is a father of four, bow hunter, and a triathlete.

Zada was recently chosen as one of the 12 elite chefs competing on "Chopped: Castaways" on the Food Network on May 12, 2026. "Chopped" is a series synonymous with stress. But "Chopped: Castaways" is a day at the beach — just kidding. This new show is a spin on the classic with even more stress from the sand. Host Ted Allen welcomes 12 chefs to a remote island where they'll have to complete physical challenges, plus cook on an open flame, all in the name of a $100,000 grand prize. The new season of "Chopped: Castaways" airs on the Food Network and is also available for streaming on HBO Max. New episodes are released every Tuesday, with the season consisting of eight episodes total.

"Growing up Armenian in America, I was constantly reminded about the Armenian Genocide. I remember sitting with my dede, grandfather, the first time he told me the story of what happened to our family. Afterward, he rarely missed an opportunity to remind me, raising a finger in front of his face, pointing to the sky and, with a stern voice, saying, 'My grandfather, God rest his soul, was from Mardin!'"

"In the early 1900s, my great-great-grandfather Farosh Manooshian was a well-known artist in Mardin, a once-peaceful city perched on a rocky hill in what is today southeastern Turkey. But despite stories from my grandfather, the scope of what happened to make Farosh leave his hometown never really hit me until I set foot in the Genocide Memorial and Museum at Tsitsernakaberd in Yerevan. The cold, grey concrete walls were filled with images of death and torture, telling stories of soldiers who killed thousands of men, women, and children as if it were a game. As I stared at images of bodies piled up, I began to realize that the only reason I was standing in this room was because some of my family members were among those who survived."

"Over the years, I've pieced together more of what happened to my great-great-grandfather. Leading up to 1915, the people of Mardin had a tradition of banding together no matter their race or religion. The governor of Mardin at the time, who had always viewed Muslims and Christians as equals, refused Ottoman orders to turn in Armenian citizens. His refusal cost him his life and the lives of his ranked officers. The next governor stuck to the Ottoman script and began carrying out orders to deport and murder all Armenians in the city. In Mardin, this time became known as 'the year of the sword' for the countless Armenians who were marched through the city and massacred while everyone watched."

"Since my great-great-grandfather had a reputation as an artist, however, he was told that his family's lives would be spared as long as he continued working on a painting inside a mosque. The night before he finished, a soldier who had been guarding him — and who had become a friend — told him that he and his family would be murdered the next morning if he stayed. That soldier helped him flee with his family in the dead of night. They traveled by mule to Syria and then to the city of Tafilah in Jordan, eventually making their way to Cairo, where he changed the family's last name from Manooshian to Zada to avoid more persecution. Since my great-great-grandfather spoke Arabic, he fit in easily with his Egyptian neighbors, though he didn't forget his heritage."

"As my kids grow older, I will make sure that they, like me, learn the same story that my grandfather told me and that they understand their heritage. It's up to us and every Armenian to preserve our culture and honor those who lost their lives more than a century ago. We are the survivors."

During the show, Zada prepared khorovats, the traditional Armenian-style barbecue that holds deep cultural significance for many Armenians around the world. According to Zada, introducing Armenian cuisine to mainstream American television was one of the most meaningful parts of the experience. "Khorovats salad (Armenian BBQ salad) is a bunch of charred fruit and vegetables all chopped up and mixed together with herbs and seasoning. It's a perfect side dish, spread or quick meal on its own. You can eat it hot or cold but typically it pairs best when you're eating it next to your favorite BBQ meat," he says.

INGREDIENTS:

4 long eggplants (thin, Asian varieties preferred)
4 medium tomatoes
1/2 medium onion
1 head of garlic
3 green onions, chopped
1/4 cup fresh dill, chopped
1 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
1 large lemon, juiced
1 oz. extra virgin olive oil to taste
1/2 teaspoon Aleppo pepper (or paprika)
Salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION:

Char the vegetables: Slice the top off the whole head of garlic, drizzle with olive oil, and wrap it in aluminum foil.

Place the wrapped garlic, tomatoes, eggplant, and onions directly over hot coals. Rotate frequently until they are soft and have a beautiful, even char all over.

Remove the vegetables from the heat and let them cool slightly. Peel the skin off the eggplants and tomatoes. It is fine if a little bit of the charred skin remains to add extra smoky flavor.

Roughly chop the charred eggplant, tomatoes, and the 1/2 onion, then transfer them into a large mixing bowl.

Squeeze the roasted, soft garlic out of its skin into the bowl. Add the green onions, dill, cilantro, lemon juice, and olive oil.

Season with Aleppo pepper, salt, and pepper. Combine everything together thoroughly.

This salad can be enjoyed warm or cold, and pairs perfectly with barbecued meats and fresh lavash.

For this video, go to: https://www.tiktok.com/@chefarazada/video/7359211937034472747

To order Lavash, go to: https://www.lavashthebook.com/

Also, check: Abril Books, Now Serving, Omnivore Books, Book Larder, and Orinda Books.

'Chopped: Castaways': Meet the 12 Chefs Competing in the All-New Series
https://www.foodnetwork.com/shows/chopped-castaways/photos/meet-the-competitors-or-chopped-castways

Watch Ara Zada make Khorovats/Kebab on Food Network Chopped: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DYSMYu8BbF4/

See: https://www.instagram.com/popular/foodnetwork/reels/DWy_nS4jNjt/

See: https://www.thearmenianreport.com/post/armenian-chef-ara-zada-s-khorovats-wins-challenge-on-food-network-helping-green-team-take-victory

See: https://www.lavashthebook.com/dispatches/2018/7/17/get-to-know-khorovats-armenias-favorite-grilling-pastime

See: https://www.curiouscuisiniere.com/khorovats-armenian-grilled-vegetable-salad/

ARTS & CULTURE

Boyd Holbrook, Director Reed Van Dyk on Iraq War Film 'Atonement' and Avoiding Combat Stereotypes

By Mia Galuppo

LOS ANGELES *(Hollywood Reporter)* — Wartime has always had a prominent place onscreen. Less prominent are films that tackle the aftermath of war. Movies like The Deer Hunter and The Best Years of Our Lives show the difficult transition back home after the battlefield. Even rarer is a film like Atonement, the feature debut for director Reed Van Dyk, which sees the returning soldier battling his own demons while coming face-to-face with people whose lives were devastated by his actions.

Based on a New Yorker article from Dexter Filkins, Atonement follows Second lieutenant Lou D'Alessandro (Lu Lobello, in real life) who, during a firefight at the beginning of the invasion of Iraq, shoots on cars crossing at an intersection, killing three men in the multigenerational Khachaturian family (Kachadoorian, in real life), Iraqi civilians trying to find shelter after an explosion destroyed parts of their home. Back in the United States, the Marine, who is suffering from PTSD and panic attacks, finds out that some of the surviving Khachaturians immigrated to the United States and reaches out to meet them, with the hope of finding forgiveness.

Van Dyk read Filkins' original story while in his Los Angeles apartment. "I couldn't stop crying," he says, but adds, "I was in no position at that time to make a movie." He later went to UCLA for film school and made several short films, one of which, DeKalb Elementary, received an Oscar nomination in 2018. He often thought about the soldier and the Kachadoorians, and "when I had anybody to support and help me figure out how to make a feature, I asked."

Determined to make it his feature directorial debut, it was important for Van Dyk to reach out to the real people at the center of the story. "I didn't want to open up these old wounds for them without being certain that I was wanting to breathe life into this as a film." He flew out to New York to have dinner with Filkins and drove to Las Vegas to sit with Lobello. He came to know the Kachadoorians best, as they lived only 20 minutes from each other in Los Angeles. Says the filmmaker: "It was a beautiful process of, over years, talking to them, getting their blessing."

Van Dyk placed a particular importance on realizing early invasion Baghdad. The city onscreen so often acts as, he says, "backdrop for American stories." He and his cinematographer traveled to Baghdad for a scouting trip, with a reading list from Iraqi authors. The six-hour documentary from Abbas Fahdel, Homeland: Iraq Year Zero, was a principal source.

The director also spoke with Marines to bring authenticity to the film's central firefight, avoiding Hollywood's well-worn battlefield stereotypes. These, says the director, can look more akin to a sporting events where "it is their side, our side. Who's up and who's down." He focused instead on just the Americans pulling the trigger, intending for the sequence to hue closer to a documentary. Or, at the very least, "closer to the truth than I'm accustomed to seeing in movies, where Iraqis are often looked at through the sniper scope."

As for casting, Van Dyk was not familiar with Boyd Holbrook's best-known work, like the Marvel movie Logan, and the long-running Netflix series Narcos. Instead, he first clocked Holbrook in a small role in Jeff Nichols' motorcycle period piece The Bikeriders. "I left the theater talking about him. I said, 'I saw that guy in an Indiana Jones movie [Dial of Destiny] and he was nothing like he was in that.' " Shortly after, the director saw Holbrook playing Johnny Cash in the Bob Dylan biopic "A Complete Unknown," and was astounded by the actor's range. Says Van Dyk: "I was just like, 'This guy can do anything.' He's a character and really puts his shoulder into finding the body and movement and voice of that person."

He was confident that Holbrook, who is prolific but often cast as a supporting character, could carry this film.

For his part, Holbrook was drawn to Van Dyk's more nuanced perspective on a wartime film. "We see so many monetized versions of war. This is something that you never get to see," says the actor. Ultimately, he was drawn to Lou's search for absolution: "I'm going to, face to face, meet these people and put myself aside."

The role was physically daunting. First there was the firefight, which was shot on location in Jordan, which doubled for Iraq. Holbrook wore 40 pounds of gear in over 100-degree heat. But, he says, the awkwardness and discomfort lent to the practicalities of war that the filmmakers were hoping to capture. "It was not, 'I'm going to look like a cool soldier.' That's the whole antithesis of the vibe that Reed wanted."

Van Dyk pushed to have the Jordan sequences film first, allowing Holbrook to draw on those scenes for the second half of the film that sees Lou back in the United States, struggling with the memories he has from Iraq, plagued by panic attacks.

Holbrook, who signed on to the film only two months before shooting began, thought, "I'm not going to be able to fake a panic attack." He prepped breath work that would "kick in this diaphragm thing," working himself up to the point where it felt like he was having a panic attack, and would sustain. He remembers sustaining what felt like an attack for over two hours, saying, "I got into such a place that I couldn't control what I was physically going through."

Says Van Dyk, "When you have an actor committed in this way, where the body more than the mind is believing the circumstances of the story, my job in that case is to try to move through the scene as quickly as we can and stay out of his way."

Opposite Holbrook is Palestinian actress Hiam Abbass, playing the matriarch of the Khachaturian family, with whom Lou has the climactic meeting. "I wanted to do the actor-y thing and not meet her until Lou met her [in the script]," says Holbrook of trying to avoid Abbass. But they were filming in Jordan at the same time and decided it was best they got to know each other. "I was so happy that I did, because I've got to understand her and her story, so when it came time to do our big scene, we didn't need any rehearsal."

Like in the original New Yorker story, Atonement builds to the meeting between Lou and the surviving Khachaturians, a potent mix of unrealized emotion and catharsis. The Hollywood Reporter review of the film, which premiered in Directors' Fortnight, singled out the scene: "Abbass gives a master class in less-is-more restraint in these scenes, her character's fortitude severely challenged but unbroken by her years of suffering." Meanwhile, Holbrook is "a bundle of exposed nerves as he reckons with his own guilt and with the tremendous weight of grief and anger on the Iraqi family."

Atonement's aim to show an atypical onscreen depiction of war and its aftermath is realized in this moment.

Says Van Dyk: "There's something that was really profound about two people on opposite sides of a war coming together in a living room and, almost in spite of themselves, reaching for each other."

Northampton's Paul Arslanian Receives National Honor For His Contributions to Jazz Scene

ARSLANIAN, from page 13

example of the Northampton Jazz Workshop's impact. When Joi was a teenager, her mother would drive her from Westfield High School to participate. Arslanian could tell she was talented when she started out, but he wanted her to expand her repertoire. And she did — Joi kept coming back and learning more and more songs, he said.

Now, a decade later, Arslanian said, "She's still living here, and she's a fantastic singer. People love her. She's got a good stage presence. She's really warm. She does a wide variety of music."

Such success stories are common at the Workshop. Teenage drummers who cut their teeth at the sessions have since gone pro in New York and L.A., while young pianists and horn players have turned these jams into lifelong friendships and mentorships with visiting legends.

Arslanian was also the executive producer of the Northampton Jazz Festival for 14 years and now serves as an advisor. In 2018, he founded the Jazz Artists in the Schools program at JFK Middle School and Northampton High School, which brings professional musicians in to work with students. Funded through donations, the program enables youth the opportunity to experience and play at a level not afforded in the normal classroom environment.



"One of the core ways that a jazz musician learns to play and to learn their craft is by playing with others sort of spontaneously," Griggs said. In facilitating these opportunities for students, Arslanian is "totally passing down the art of jazz to the next generation — no question."

Arslanian also recalled a Northampton Jazz Workshop with saxophonist Eric Lawrence that had a particular impact. While playing a piece by John Coltrane, "The music just went beyond what we thought could happen," he said.

"We went to another level, and the audience all felt that, and they were all talking about it, even to this day," he said.

Besides appreciating his work, Griggs also said that Arslanian is dependable, honest, humble and direct, among other good qualities.

"He knows his craft so well," she said. "He has a sixth sense about musicians. He has incredible connections with musicians, so he's incredibly resourceful. He's intuitive, so he's able to give you advice that is really grounded in his knowledge, his experience and his intuition."

Griggs, herself a 2025 Jazz Hero, presented Arslanian with his Jazz Hero certificate at The Drake in Amherst on Wednesday alongside 2024 Jazz Hero Bonnie Johnson, host of the Worcester radio show "Colors of Jazz."

Asked in an interview prior to the event what he looked forward to about the award presentation, Arslanian simply replied with a one-word answer and a laugh: "Embarrassment!"

Still, he added, "I'm excited. I'm glad when the excitement will be over and I get back to not feeling embarrassed. I have a hard time patting myself on the back or self-promoting, so thank you, Ruth."

The day after the presentation, however, Arslanian said the ceremony went very well and that he was "basking in the glow of appreciation." Was he embarrassed?

"Nah, not really," Arslanian said. "Once I get up on stage, the fear goes away, and I just talk to the people!"

ARTS & CULTURE

Books

Armenian Revolutionary Federation and Constitutionalism In the Ottoman Empire, 1895-1908: Book by G.Moumdjian

LONDON/NEW YORK — Bloomsbury Press has announced the publication of the late Dr. Garabet K. Moumdjian's *The Armenian Revolutionary Federation and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire, 1895-1908*. The book is part of the series Armenians in the Modern and Early Modern World edited by Bedross Der Matossian (University of Nebraska, Lincoln).

What was the nature of the relationship between the Young Turks, whose members would go on to form and lead the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which would carry out the Armenian Genocide beginning in 1915, and the Armenian revolutionaries of the late Ottoman Empire?

Based on rich Armenian, Ottoman, British, and other archival documents and periodicals, this book reveals the complex dynamics and relations that Armenian organizations, most notably the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), maintained with the Young Turks between 1895-1908, when relations shifted from mutual suspicion to closer collaboration. Put in the context of the worsening conditions for Ottoman-Armenians in the eastern provinces of the empire, the book reveals the internal debates of the ARF about collaboration with Young Turk cadres in an effort to improve conditions for their people, as well as the role that Armenian revolutionaries played in CUP calculations and aims for toppling the regime of Sultan Abdulhamid. The book thus reveals the complex and gradual development of relations between the groups before the outright anti-Armenian policies of the CUP would culminate in the Armenian Genocide. It also reveals the ARF's commitment to the constitutional project and the difficult choices it faced in pursuing those aims.



Garabed Momjian

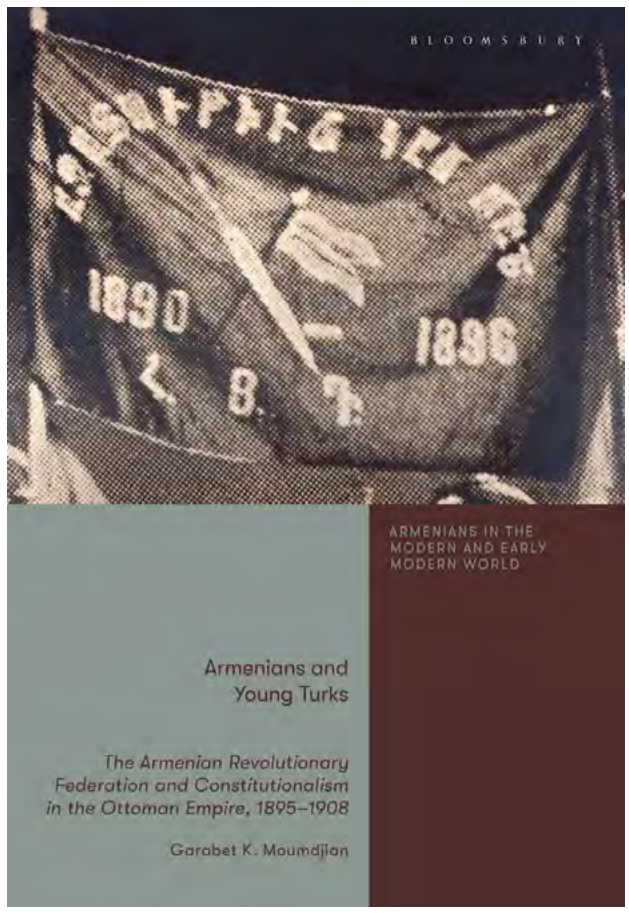
REVIEWS

"Essential reading to understand political and security conditions in the Ottoman Armenian provinces in the years prior to the Constitutional Revolution. Moumdjian provides critical insight into the interactions and cooperation between Armenian and Turkish revolutionaries."—Dikran M. Kaligian, author of *Armenian Organization and Ideology under Ottoman Rule: 1908-1914*.

"Long at the center of polemical debate, relations between the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and the Young Turks remain a defining problem of late Ottoman history. Drawing on a rich body of previously untapped archival sources, Armenians and Young Turks offers a decisive and much-needed reinterpretation. Focusing on the years 1895 to 1908, Moumdjian reconstructs a relationship marked by both strategic convergence and profound ideological divergence. United in their push to restore constitutional rule, Armenian and Young Turk revolutionaries nonetheless advanced competing meanings and visions of the empire's future. Through a meticulous analysis of internal deliberations and inter-organizational negotiations, this compelling book reveals the difficult and fraught choices that shaped this fragile alliance and traces the paths that led to its collapse, ultimately culminating in rupture and catastrophe." Varak Ketsamanian, American University of Beirut

Bedross Der Matossian reflected on his close intellectual connection with Moumdjian, noting their shared roots as Marashtsis from the Middle East and their common interest in Ottoman Armenian history. After encouraging Moumdjian to submit his manuscript to the Armenians in the Modern and Early Modern World series, he received a strong peer review and began revising the work. Tragically, Moumdjian passed away on March 29, 2023, before completing the project. A year later, his wife, Nayeri Moumdjian, expressed her wish to see the manuscript published. With her support, Dr. Der Matossian enlisted Dr. Mehmet Polatel to revise and expand the text and Dr. Tamar Boyadjian to edit and refine the manuscript.

"Although Dr. Moumdjian did not live to see the publication of his book," said Der Matossian, "his scholarship and memory endure through this work. The book is dedicated to his wife, Nayeri, and their sons, Hagop and Purag," he concluded.



Moumdjian was an independent historian and an Ottomanist. He obtained his PhD in 2012 from UCLA under the supervision of the late Prof. Richard Hovannisian. His dissertation, "Struggling for a Constitutional Regime: Armenian-Young Turk Relations in the Era of Abdul Hamid II, 1895–1909," examined the complex dynamics of Ottoman-Armenian political relations. Over the course of his career, he served as Principal of the Armenian Mesrobian School and Vice-Principal of the Vahan and Anoush Chamlian School. He also taught Armenian History at California State University, Northridge; the University of La Verne; UCLA; and Glendale Community College. In addition, he taught at the Ferrahian School and authored multiple Armenian history textbooks that continue to educate new generations.

Copies of *The Armenian Revolutionary Federation and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire, 1895-1908* are available for purchase on Bloomsbury's website.

Ayvazyan's Trilingual Volume *The Historical Heritage of Nakhijevan's Armenian Material and Spiritual Culture* Presented at Yerevan's Tekeyan Center

YEREVAN — Argam Ayvazyan's trilingual book, *The Historical Heritage of Nakhijevan's Armenian Material and Spiritual Culture*, was presented at the Tekeyan Center in Yerevan on June 2. It is an encyclopedia of Nakhijevan, encompassing virtually everything related to that portion of the Armenian homeland from petroglyphs to churches and villages.



Argam Ayvazyan

Being a native of Nakhijevan, Ayvazyan had been carrying out a mission of documenting and collecting evidence in his birthplace since the middle of the last century. Nakhijevan was annexed to Azerbaijan under the 1921 Treaty of Moscow.

On March 16, 1921, Soviet Russia and Turkey signed a treaty in Moscow according to which Nakhijevan was placed under the protectorate of Soviet Azerbaijan. From the standpoint of international law, this was unequivocally an illegal agreement. Two countries transferred the territory of a third state, whose autonomy they themselves had recognized, to a fourth state — Azerbaijan.

It is worth noting that Kemal Atatürk imposed a condition whereby Turkey would transfer Nakhijevan to Azerbaijan only on the understanding that Azerbaijan would never, under any circumstances, transfer it to a third state.



Some of the speakers at the event

History is repeating itself: in 1921 Nakhijevan was annexed to Azerbaijan, in 2023 Artsakh suffered the same fate, and now Syunik is next in line.

Following Nakhijevan's annexation to Azerbaijan, all 219 Armenian churches and the medieval cemetery of Julfa's khachkars (cross-stones) were eventually destroyed.

Ruben Mirzakhanyan, president of the Tekeyan Cultural Association, recounted how Fadey Sargsyan, director of the Yerevan Scientific Research Institute of Mathematical Machines, together with the director of the Yerevan Brandy Factory, secretly arranged for a truckload of cross-stones to be transported from Nakhijevan to Armenia.

The cross-stones were loaded onto the truck by Soviet soldiers.

Speeches at the event were delivered by Academician Ashot Melkonyan; Doctor of Arts, Professor Levon Chookaszyan; Corresponding Member of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, Professor Aelita Dolukhanyan; cultural scholar and Honored Worker of Culture of Armenia Argam Ayvazyan, the author of the book.

Ayvazyan himself rescued numerous cross-stones and monuments from destruction, preserving written records and photographs of them. He compiled this work on the basis of his earlier books, which consist of studies and documentary records concerning Nakhijevan.

The documentary material presents Armenian monuments in Nakhijevan that miraculously survived until the period between 1998 and 2006, including monasteries, churches, cemeteries, cross-stones, bridges, murals, miniatures and examples of applied art.



The book contains more than one thousand photographs. It is accompanied by information and maps relating to specific buildings, churches, historical and cultural monuments, and settlements. These constitute historical testimonies proving and documenting that Nakhijevan is part of the Armenian homeland. No matter how hard the Azerbaijanis have tried to erase and destroy the Armenian trace there, they have not succeeded.

Ayvazyan's book was published through the patronage of benefactor Gagik Melikyan.

Exploring Memories and Identity in 'Interconnection'

INTERCONNECTION, from page 13

Centuries later, that same visual language reemerged in Armenian rugs and carpets. Saakyan adds, "If petroglyphs were carved from memory, rugs became woven memories". The patterns in Armenian textiles were not decorative accidents; they are encoded continuations of ancestral observation. The sun and moon, mountains and water, fertility symbols, protective motifs and elemental forms migrated from rock surfaces into warp and weft. What was once etched into stone became embedded into daily life — beneath our feet, within our homes, carried through generations.



Lusine wrapped in an Armenian rug provided by rug collector Harry Melikian (photo by Vanda)

Hratch Koziboyekian, the president of the Armenian Rug Society and an expert on woven arts, discussed Saakyan's art and said, "Lusine's art, the vibrant world of contemporary art, is inspired by the global phenomenon of Armenian rug weaving. For centuries, Armenian rugs have captivated the world with their intricate geometric patterns and rich symbolism, becoming highly sought-after treasures in prestigious collections worldwide. This exclusive exhibition showcases how these globally celebrated textile traditions are reborn in stunning, modern masterpieces."

Kevin Briggs, General Manager of the Glenmark Gallery, said, "It was great to invite Lusine back to the Glenmark Art Gallery as she was first with us back in 2022." He continued, "Lusine's art has evolved, her medium from acrylic painting to embroidered textile artwork has emerged. We hung the work a few days ago and she has received compliments from viewers and great reviews. "



Lusine with the curator Kevin Briggs (photo by Karine Armen)

Alicja Khatchikian: Listening to Echoes

KHATCHIKIAN, from page 13

we, the grandchildren generation, haven't seen but only heard of. I think it's important to listen to those echoes without being anachronistic.

For you, does photography document reality or create a new reality?

I don't know what reality is; I think it's a matter of gaze, intention and selectivity. Someone once defined my photographic work as "documentary fine art," which I find sits somewhere between observation and interpretation. Photography is for me a relational process rather than straightforward representation; I see images as contested territories: unstable objects that carry partial truths and layered stories beyond their frame.

What has interested you the most while working in Armenia?

I travelled to Armenia in 2025 for the first time. I didn't know what to expect. Ever since my Heimweg series, I have been drawn to bordering bodies of water, so I travelled south to meet the Arax river. The area is heavily militarized and access to its waters was limited; borders are embedded in the landscape of Kapan and Gyumri too. In Yerevan I met other diaspora Armenians, local artists and intellectuals. We spoke about the diversity of so-called collective memory. Those encounters were vital, as was the visit to Tsitsernakaberd with other activists from AKEBI e.V., a Berlin-based association fostering dialogue across Anatolian communities and beyond.



How to build a stone cairn not to get lost, 2011. Gelatin Print © Alicja Khatchikian

I studied your family history while working on my research on Armenians in African states. The Khatchikian family gave a number of figures to the Sudanese Armenian community. Please tell us about the odyssey of your family.

Like many diaspora families, our story is marked by repeated displacement and generational ruptures. My father was born and raised in Khartoum before relocating to Gorizia (Italy) in 1967. My grandmother was an odar, a stranger, and struggled to feel accepted within the Armenian community. My grandfather was one of the three sons of Zenop Khatchikian, a child survivor of the Hamidian massacres from Arapgir in eastern Anatolia, who became a prominent figure in the Sudanese Armenian community as a tradesman. I have no information about my Armenian female ancestors, which is telling.

How do you define your identity: Italian-Armenian, Armenian-Italian, or simply an artist whose biography is Armenian? Have the Armenian language, memories, and customs been preserved in your family?

I was born and raised by a single mother and our extended family in the province of Gorizia, a bordering and historically contested area in the easternmost corner of Italy. Both my national attributions were questioned since I was born, which often put me in an uncomfortable position but also opened doors to a fluid, transnationalist viewpoint. My grandfather Azad, who was active in the diaspora community, died abruptly in 1990, severing an important connection to our Armenian cultural roots. It took me many years to find my own gateway and I've been trying to learn Western Armenian, a work in progress.

If you had to tell about your identity in one photo, what would you portray?

I think of a self-portrait I took some years ago, a gelatin print titled "How to build a stone cairn not to get lost." It depicts a pile of stones I collected along riverbeds, a stubborn presence that is nonetheless malleable and vulnerable to nature and the passing of time. To me, they speak of identity as layered, migrant, fluid, and diverse.

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

JULY 27 — Monday, St. James Church 26th Annual Harold Partamian Golf Tournament, Oakley Country Club, hosted by the St. James Men?s Club, following golf- cocktails, appetizers and banquet dinner at Oakley Country Club, for full details and online registration, please visit www.stjameswatertown.org/golf office 617-923-8860.

SEPTEMBER 24 — Save the Date! Celebrating Contributions! Gala to benefit the Armenin Heritage Park at the InterContinental Boston. NOVEMBER 21 and 22. Save the Date. America?s oldest Armenian Church Celebrates 135 years. Banquet November 21. Divine Liturgy November 22. Details to follow.

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

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR
SINCE 1932

An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE UNITED STATES

EDITOR
Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR
Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR
Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

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

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT
Haykaram Nahapetyan

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is published weekly, except two weeks in July and the first week of the year, by:
Baikar Association, Inc.
755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472-1509
Telephone: 617-924-4420
FAX: 617-924-2887
www.mirrorspectator.com

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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

COMMENTARY

Clarification in the Name of the Tradition-Upholding ADL Membership

Along with the usual uncontrolled, miscellaneous posts on Facebook, information is circulating that on the last weekend of May, in Yerevan, a group of several dozen people held gatherings, which are presented as the "Sessions of the Delegates Assembly" of the Armenian Democratic Liberal (Ramgavar) Party (ADL). Such information has understandably sowed confusion, especially among serious circles and Armenian individuals concerned with and involved in serious national issues in Armenia and the diaspora. Indeed, the latter have noticed the complete absence among those who claim to have the status of a "delegate" within the pictures circulated at those "Delegates Assembly" meetings, of people who are well known to the public over the years for their consistent, decisive and tireless activities as the true standard-bearers of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, which boasts an exceptional tradition of exemplary patriotism. This confusion is understandable and also very easily explained.

Therefore, we considered it necessary to provide the following brief explanation, also underlining that this is unfortunately not the first time that this same group plays such an irresponsible and dishonest role, by committing a gross violation of the ADL bylaws, and continues to further confuse the already highly agitated Armenian national atmosphere, and from time to time, holds such invalid and therefore completely unlawful meetings, and qualifies them as "delegates assemblies."

We would like to remind you that the ADL, which has a distinguished past history and is known for its significant achievements in nation-building over many decades, led by the spirit of Damadians, Tekeyans and their ilk, has unfortunately lost for over the last two decades the legal structure envisaged and very clearly described by its well-known official statutes. Numerous explanatory articles have appeared in our press about this issue. It is simply not possible to reproduce that extensive literature here.

This is a very sad situation indeed, as a result of which for years, the regular lawful activities of the membership, chapters, districts, and finally central bodies envisaged by the bylaws have practically ceased. Therefore, indisputably, under these conditions, a regular representative structure called delegates assembly simply does not exist currently.

As a matter of fact, many serious attempts were made, and today, serious, accomplished party members are still trying to reestablish a reformed but legitimate structure so that the future activities of our party can return to a normal and legal mode of operation.

Meanwhile, party members who hold dear the original traditional values of the Party and are known for their consistent patriotic activities for many decades are trying to keep the traditional patriotic and noble spirit of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party alive to the greatest extent possible, thanks especially to the widely distributed ADL (Ramgavar) Armenian and English-language Armenian news media, which are widely respected, as well as thanks to the extensive activities of the ADL-inspired Tekeyan Cultural Association.

Concluding this brief overview, we now return to the questions addressed to us about the nature of those meetings that took place in Yerevan on the last weekend of May. Once again, we confirm and clearly state that due to the above noted current absence of bylaws-prescribed legitimate structures of the ADL, evidently no one can claim to be qualified as a delegate. Consequently, there was simply not a single legitimate delegate in the aforementioned meetings on the last weekend of May. It is thus unnecessary to further detail what amounts to be the completely self-appointed nature of each participant in those meetings.

Consequently, we repeat, those meetings have no legitimate basis and the pitiable attempt of that already small group of attendees to give further half of those present the status of the ADL Central Committee also has no foundation.

We, as loyal tradition upholding members of the ADL, proudly continue to maintain our activities inspired by the rich tradition of the ADL under the current difficult conditions, in favor of our national supreme interests.

Finally, we reconfirm that, just as we were the initiators in the past, we are once again ready to make another serious effort, only with the collaboration of particularly serious ADL party members, to reestablish a reformed but legitimate structure, so that the future activities of our party return to a normal and legitimate state.

Tradition-Upholding (Avantabah) ADL Members
(Translated from the Armenian original.)

The Hypocrisy in Israel's New Christian Outreach

By Stephen Pechdimaldji

The recent appointment of George Deek as Israel's special envoy to the Christian world has been framed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a bridge-building masterstroke. Deek — an Arab Christian, seasoned diplomat and descendant of refugees from the 1948 war — appears, on paper, to be an innocuous choice. However, beneath the layers of diversity and inclusion lies a profound hypocrisy that ignores both Deek's questionable track record and the lived reality of the very community he is now tasked to serve.

The core of this hypocrisy lies in how the Israeli government instrumentalizes Deek's identity. By appointing an Arab Christian to court the global Christian community, Israel is attempting to project an image of pluralistic harmony — a harmony that is increasingly absent, both within its own borders and foreign policy.

While Deek is paraded on the world stage as a success story, the indigenous Palestinian Christian community in the Holy Land is facing an existential crisis. Squeezed between the pressures of military occupation in the West Bank and a rising tide of religious intolerance within Israel and East Jerusalem, the community is dwindling. To appoint a "special envoy" while simultaneously presiding over the expansion of settlements on Christian-owned land in the Bethlehem region is not diplomacy; it is a distraction.

The irony of Deek's appointment reaches its peak within the walls of Jerusalem itself. While he is tasked with projecting an image of Israel as a haven for Christians, the Armenian Quarter — a cornerstone of the city's Christian heritage for over 1,600 years — is currently under sustained threat from predatory land grabs.

The ongoing struggle over the "Cow's Garden" site has forced the Armenian community to maintain 24-hour vigils to protect their land from a controversial development deal. This is no mere real estate dispute; it is a coordinated attempt by settler-linked entities, bolstered by the silence or active cooperation of the state bureaucracy, to erode the Christian character of Jerusalem.

For the Armenian community, Deek's appointment is a particularly bitter pill to swallow, as there is a terrifying symmetry between his past and his present.

As Israel's Ambassador to Azerbaijan, Deek presided over a diplomatic era defined by a strategic alliance that directly facilitated the suffering of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) — home to one of the world's oldest Christian populations. During the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, Israeli-made weaponry, including "suicide" drones and sophisticated missile systems, played a decisive role in Azerbaijan's victory. As the diplomat on the ground, Deek was no mere bystander. He was the face of a partnership that provided the hardware for the ethnic cleansing of more than 120,000 Armenian Christians from their ancestral homes.

Deek's silence during this forced displacement was matched by his indifference to the systematic destruction of Armenian churches and holy sites — a state-sponsored campaign to erase the Armenian cultural footprint that began on his watch and continues to this day. Under the guise of "restoration," Azerbaijan dismantled the iconic Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi shortly after capturing the city. This followed the destruction of other sacred sites, including the 177-year-old St. John the Baptist Church and St. Ascension Church.

Across the region, ancient Armenian cross-stones (khachkars) and cemeteries have been leveled to remove any trace of Armenian history. Recent satellite imagery even indicates the systematic dismantling of the Stepanakert Cathedral, a sacred landmark of Armenian life. As Israel's representative in Baku, Deek's failure to issue even a standard diplomatic expression of concern over these acts of cultural genocide was not a matter of "diplomatic necessity," but a policy of choice. He demonstrated that his commitment to the Christian world is entirely transactional.

To name Deek now as a representative to the "Christian world" is a cynical pivot. It asks the global community to forget that his diplomatic success in Baku was built on the ruins of Armenian churches at the expense of its Christian soul.

By including his complicity in the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict, the narrative of Deek as a bridge-builder crumbles.

In the end, George Deek's appointment is not about protecting Christians. It is about providing a more palatable face for a foreign policy that prioritizes arms sales to Baku and land grabs in Jerusalem and Bethlehem over the survival of indigenous Christian communities. If his record in Azerbaijan is a harbinger of things to come, his new role will not be to defend the faith, but to provide the diplomatic cover necessary to finish what he watched begin in Baku.

(Stephan Pechdimaldji is a communications strategist living in the San Francisco Bay Area. He is a first-generation Armenian American and grandson of survivors of the Armenian Genocide. This commentary originally appeared in the *Times of Israel*.)

COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

By Hook or by Crook: Pashinyan Secures Another Five Years in Power

Regrettably, another fraudulent parliamentary election took place in Armenia on June 7. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's party, Civil Contract, did everything possible, both legally and illegally, to win enough votes to reelect him Prime Minister for another five years.

Pashinyan violated many of Armenia's election laws. He used the extensive resources of the government for his campaign, thus exploiting his position as Prime Minister. He ordered the arrests of hundreds of opposition members by falsely accusing them of election interference. He threatened to arrest the leaders of opposition parties, thereby violating the independence of the courts. He even repeated these threats during his victory speech on election day.

A year ago, Pashinyan ordered the arrest of prominent businessman Samvel Karapetyan, who, after being wrongly jailed for several months, is now under house arrest. Pashinyan thus deprived his main opposition challenger of the opportunity to campaign in the parliamentary elections.

The Prime Minister will probably have the Catholicos of Armenians arrested on trumped-up charges, thus continuing his vindictive attacks on the Armenian Apostolic Church. Under his orders, several high-ranking clergymen have been wrongly jailed for months, although two of them were recently transferred to house arrest.

Pashinyan also deprived tens of thousands of Artsakh Armenians, who have been citizens of Armenia for years, of their right to vote in the parliamentary elections, fearing that they would vote against his party.

When thousands of Armenian citizens living in Moscow decided to travel to Armenia to vote in the parliamentary elections, Pashinyan ordered their interception at Yerevan Airport and at the Georgia-Armenia border under the excuse of requiring them to serve 25 days of military training. This was, in fact, an obvious attempt to prevent Armenian citizens from exercising their right to vote.

After all that, around 50% (a little over 700,000 citizens) reportedly voted for Pashinyan's party, ignoring his disastrous rule, which resulted in a devastating defeat in the 2020 war, with thousands of soldiers killed and many more wounded. He then allowed Azerbaijan to occupy all of Artsakh in 2023, after announcing in 2019 that "Artsakh is Armenia. Period."

He ignored the plight of Artsakh Armenian leaders jailed in Baku, did not support the right of return of 120,000Artsakh Armenians to their homeland, and failed in his duty to liberate parts of the territory of the Republic of Armenia from Azeri occupation beginning in 2021 and 2022.

Pashinyan divided Armenia's population into "blacks" and "whites," meaning his supporters vs. non-supporters. He falsely blamed all of the country's problems on former leaders, even though he has been the Prime Minister for eight years. He divided the Artsakhtsis and Hayastantsis and antagonized Diaspora Armenians.

His misdeeds continue. Since the 2020 war, he made every concession President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan has requested. He agreed to change Armenia's constitution and is considering turning over the four former Azeri enclaves in Armenia to Azerbaijan.

The smaller opposition parties that did not have a realistic chance of surpassing the minimum required threshold of 4% should not have participated in the elections because 50% of their votes are going to be reallocated to Pashinyan's party under Armenia's eccentric election laws. The participation of 16 political parties and two coalitions in the election is far too many for a small country like Armenia.

When only a fraction of the votes had been counted, Pashinyan prematurely announced on June 7 that he won the election, thereby pressuring the Central Election Commission to declare his party the winner. This constituted blatant interference in the electoral process.

Pashinyan managed to fool most Armenian voters by promising them a nonexistent peace. Aliyev is in no hurry to sign the peace treaty, since he expects to extract more concessions from Pashinyan. Even the White House meeting with Trump, Aliyev and Pashinyan on August 8 did not succeed in pressuring Azerbaijan's leader to sign the treaty.

However, not everything is lost. Armenians have a second chance to rid themselves of Pashinyan. In the coming months, when he asks Armenians to approve or reject his -- or more accurately, Aliyev's -- version of Armenia's new constitution in a referendum, an all-out effort should be made to reject it, even though Pashinyan will do everything possible to secure its approval.

Since Aliyev has made the signing of the peace treaty conditional on the adoption of the new constitution, Pashinyan will be politically devastated if he fails to gain its approval. Even if he refuses to resign at that point, he will become the laughing stock of the Armenian nation, and his grand designs to accommodate Azerbaijan's and Turkey's demands will evaporate.

Finally, for those who constantly tell those of us who are critical of Pashinyan that Armenian voters have spoken and we have no right to intervene in Armenia's domestic affairs, here are my answers:

1) I am not interfering in Armenia's domestic affairs. I am simply exercising my right to express my opinion.

2) As a journalist and a citizen living in a free country, I have the right to express my opinion on any subject, especially on critical issues involving Armenia.

3) Why is it that when I give my opinion on events taking place in China, Ukraine, Russia, or Japan, no one tells me that I have no right to do so, but when I make a comment about my homeland, Pashinyan's supporters try to silence me?

4) As a dual citizen of Armenia, I have every right to express my opinion and become involved in Armenia's internal affairs,

5) Finally, the real problem Pashinyan's supporters have is not whether I have the right to speak about Armenia, but the fact that I am criticizing Pashinyan. If I were praising him, none of his supporters would tell me that I had no right to do so.

Pashinyan's supporters should be more alarmed by the actions of foreign leaders, including those of the United States, the European Union, and Russia, who interfered in Armenia's elections.

The Price of Leaving The EAEU: Who Will Pay Tomorrow's Bill?

By Avedis Bakkalian

In recent years, Armenia's foreign policy trajectory has moved increasingly toward deeper cooperation with the European Union. The government presents this course as a pathway to reforms, development, and new opportunities. Yet state decisions cannot be assessed solely through political slogans or ideological aspirations. Above all, they must be measured against sober economic calculations, strategic realities, and the national interest.

Today, Armenia is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), through which it has benefited for years from free trade arrangements, customs preferences, and access to large markets. Over time, this framework has become one of the pillars of Armenia's economic structure.

The numbers are telling. According to data published by Armenia's Ministry of Economy, trade turnover between Armenia and EAEU member states exceeded $11 billion during the first ten months of 2024. A significant share of Armenia's exports continues to be directed toward these markets, particularly Russia, which remains the country's principal economic partner.

Data from the Eurasian Economic Commission indicate that a substantial portion of Armenia's foreign trade is directly tied to the EAEU economic area, while the overwhelming majority of exports within the bloc are concentrated in the Russian market. This reality suggests that economic reorientation is not a simple political declaration but a complex, lengthy, and potentially costly process.

Energy Factor

Economic interdependence extends beyond trade. Armenia's energy security is also closely linked to external partners. The country imports natural gas from Russia under relatively favorable terms. The current border price stands at approximately $165 per 1,000 cubic meters.

While it is impossible to predict the future with certainty, it is evident that changes in political or economic relations could affect existing arrangements. In such a scenario, the consequences could be immediate: higher production costs, increased electricity tariffs, and broader inflationary pressures across the economy.

Risk of Economic Consequences

Any move by Armenia to leave the EAEU — or even to reduce its participation within the framework — could result in serious economic consequences, including lower exports, reduced investment, new customs barriers, and declining industrial competitiveness.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexey Overchuk has warned that deeper economic integration between Armenia and the European Union could, in practical terms, lead to a gradual departure from the EAEU economic space, affecting exports, production, and economic growth.

Similar assessments have been voiced by other Russian officials, who argue that Armenia's economy is deeply integrated into the EAEU system and that restructuring those ties could become a lengthy and expensive undertaking.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has likewise repeatedly emphasized the importance of the EAEU as a unified economic space where the free movement of goods, services, and labor contributes to economic growth and stability. Regardless of political interpretations, this remains a regional economic reality.

As Armenia debates its European future, various sources indicate that Azerbaijan is seeking to expand its economic engagement with EAEU member states. If such developments materialize, a new regional economic configuration could emerge in which Armenia gradually loses positions it spent years securing.

In economics, there is no such thing as a vacuum. The space one actor abandons is quickly occupied by another.

According to Armenia's Ministry of Finance, the country's public debt is already approaching $14 billion.

At the same time, the European Union provides Armenia with financial assistance and development programs. However, a significant portion of this support comes in the form of loans. In other words, these are not grants but obligations that must eventually be repaid.

Consequently, the true cost of economic decisions is never confined to the present. Their effects may extend into the future and ultimately fall upon the shoulders of coming generations.

Conclusion

The choice facing Armenia is not merely a question of foreign policy orientation. It is a question of economic security, energy stability, competitiveness, and responsible statecraft.

Every strategic choice carries a price. The responsibility of policymakers is to calculate that price in advance and present it honestly to the public.

When economic relationships are measured in billions of dollars, energy systems in dependencies, and public debt in growing obligations, political decisions can no longer be based solely on sentiment or slogans.

The central question therefore remains unchanged: Is Armenia prepared to pay the price that may result from today's choices — and if so, who will ultimately bear that burden: today's government or tomorrow's citizen?

(Avo Bakkalian is the editor of *Abaka* newspaper in Montreal.)

Iran Leaders Congratulate Pashinyan on Election Win

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has congratulated Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and the Civil Contract party on their victory in Armenia's parliamentary elections, expressing confidence that bilateral relations will continue to expand in the coming years.

Pezeshkian praised the successful conduct of the elections and described the renewed support shown by the Armenian people for Pashinyan's government as a sign of its commitment to policies aimed at strengthening peace, development, stability, and regional cooperation in the South Caucasus.

The Iranian president expressed confidence that the positive and dynamic trend in relations between Tehran and Yerevan in recent years would be reinforced through broader and more constructive cooperation between the two neighboring countries.

According to Pezeshkian, this process will help advance the interests of both nations while contributing to peace, stability, and development in the region through cooperation and joint efforts by regional states.

He also wished peace, prosperity, and well-being to the government and people of Armenia, describing the country as a friendly neighbor with longstanding ties to Iran.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also congratulated Pashinyan on the National Assembly election victory in a post written in Armenian, Factor.am reported.

"We are pleased that favorable opportunities have been created to continue constructive cooperation aimed at strengthening the positive and dynamic course that has developed in Iran-Armenia relations," he wrote on his X account.

Armenia to Tighten Its Citizenship Rules

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Armenia's Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) will submit draft legislation in the coming months aimed at tightening the procedure for foreign nationals seeking Armenian citizenship. The announcement was made by Deputy Interior Minister Armen Ghazaryan during discussions in the National Assembly on the implementation of the 2025 state budget, on June 9.

According to Ghazaryan, the ministry does not consider the current requirements sufficiently strict. Under existing regulations, foreign nationals may obtain Armenian citizenship after meeting the legally prescribed period of permanent residence in the country, Sputnik Armenia reported.

At the same time, Ghazaryan noted that differing views exist on the issue. Representatives of the business community, as well as the Ministry of High-Tech Industry, support simplifying residence conditions for foreign citizens in Armenia in order to attract highly qualified specialists.

Nevertheless, the Ministry of Internal Affairs maintains that making citizenship too easily accessible could reduce the value of the institution of citizenship and diminish public respect for it.

Under current legislation, foreign nationals of non-Armenian origin may apply for Armenian citizenship if they have continuously resided in Armenia for the previous three years. The same right is granted to individuals who have been married to an Armenian citizen for at least two years and have permanently resided in the country for at least one year.

At present, Armenia does not provide a separate residence permit regime for foreign specialists employed in the high-tech sector. Like employees in other fields, they must present an employment contract with an Armenian employer in order to obtain residency status.

At the same time, citizens of Russia and other member states of the Eurasian Economic Union benefit from a simplified framework governing employment and residence in Armenia.

Armenia does not officially operate a citizenship-by-investment program.

In 2025, Armenian citizenship was granted to 25,670 foreign nationals, primarily from Russia, as well as from Georgia and Iran.



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.