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Yerevan Seeking Faster EU Aid Against Russian Sanctions

By Heghine Buniatian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia has urged the European Union to speed up its aid measures designed to help the country mitigate potentially severe consequences of a Russian embargo on key Armenian imports, according to diplomatic sources in Brussels.

One of the sources told RFE/RL's Armenian Service that the foreign minister conveyed this message to his EU counterparts and EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas during a meeting in Luxembourg on Monday, June 22. The source described the meeting as "positive and important."

Kallas said that the top European diplomats discussed with Mirzoyan "how we can further strengthen Armenia's resilience and economic diversification."

"The EU is already working on a major economic support package to help Armenia withstand Russia's unfair trade restrictions," she told reporters.

see AID, page 5

European Court Orders Azerbaijan to Pay Compensation Over Beheading of Armenian Soldier

BAKU (JAM News) — The European Court of Human Rights ruled on June 18 that Azerbaijan bore responsibility in a case involving the torture and beheading of a wounded Armenian serviceman during the April 2016 fighting.

The court awarded the victim's parents and sister 90,000 euros in compensation. It also granted a further 14,000 euros to cover legal costs.



The late Maj. Hayk Toroyan

Azerbaijan rejects the allegations. Officials argue that the events occurred during active combat operations and say investigators found no evidence of a crime during the exchange of bodies. The Azerbaijani authorities also challenge the court's jurisdiction and dispute the evidence on which the ruling is based.

see COMPENSATION, page 6



Dr. Taner Akçam, at left, with Dr. Michael Bazyler during the question-and-answer session (photo Aram Arkun)

Akçam and Bazyler Call for Focus on Armenian Genocide Restitution Starting with Looted Art

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BELMONT, Mass. — Dr. Taner Akçam and Dr. Michael Bazyler spoke at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) on "Nazi Looted Art Recovery as a Model for Recovery of AGLA: Armenian Genocide Looted Art" on May 5. They gave similar talks in New Jersey and New York a few days earlier.

NAASR Director of Academic Affairs Marc Mamigonian greeted guests and announced that the evening constituted the first annual Rev. Vartan Hartunian Lecture. Members of the Hartunian family, who established this annual lecture, were acknowledged as they were in the audience. Mamigonian spoke about the life of Rev. Hartunian, including his translation of his father Rev. Abraham Hartunian's memoirs, titled Neither to Laugh Nor to Weep, which was published in 1968, and his service as pastor of the First Armenian Church in Belmont from 1959 to 1990.



Marc Mamigonian (photo Aram Arkun)

Mamigonian also noted that the series of three Northeastern talks were co-sponsored by the Armenian Genocide Research Program (AGRP), the Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center (MEMEAC) at the CUNY Graduate Center, NYC Times Square Armenian Genocide Committee, St. Leon Armenian Church, and the NAASR / Calouste Gulbenkian Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues.

He briefly introduced the two speakers, starting with Akçam, who is the inaugural director of the Armenian Genocide Research Program of the Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA. His most recent publication is as editor of 'The Great Crime' by Aram Andonian: Talaat Pasha's Orders on the Armenian Genocide and Naim Bey's Testimony (2026).

Bazyler is professor of law and the 1939 Law Scholar in Holocaust and Human Rights Studies at Chapman University. Mamigonian said, "He is one of the leading experts on the use of American and European courts to redress genocide and other historical wrongs." Bazyler's books include *Holocaust Justice: The Battle for Restitution in America's Courts* (2003) and *Holocaust, Genocide and the Law: A Quest for Justice in a Post-Holocaust World* (2016).

see AKÇAM, page 16

Armenian Opposition Leaders Kocharyan And Karapetyan Sue State Bodies

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

Former President Robert Kocharyan and Strong Armenia Alliance leader Narek Karapetyan have filed separate lawsuits against Armenian state institutions, as political and legal disputes continue following June's parliamentary elections.

Kocharyan, who leads the Armenia Alliance, has sued the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), seeking to invalidate its decision to lift his parliamentary immunity in mid-June.

The lawsuit was filed on June 19, two days after the CEC approved a request by prosecutors to initiate criminal proceedings against him. The case is scheduled to be heard by the Administrative Court on June 24 (after the Mirror-Spectator goes to press).

The court has also ruled that the Prosecutor General's Office should be involved in the proceedings as a third party, citing provisions of Armenian law requiring the



Robert Kocharyan during the campaign (Social media photo)

inclusion of people or bodies that would be directly affected by a judicial ruling.

Kocharyan is expected to face charges of abuse of official authority and money laundering in connection with a 2004 transaction. The criminal case surfaced after authorities prevented him from leaving Armenia earlier this month.

In an interview aired on June 19, Kocharyan called the case "simply absurd" and insisted that it was connected to his attempt to leave Armenia.

"They rushed to fabricate a case in just two days, because three days earlier, in response to media inquiries, there were no criminal cases against me. Then, a day later, it turned out that such a case already existed", Kocharyan said.

Kocharyan's lawyers have argued that the statute of limitations on the new charges had expired, while Kocharyan has denied any wrongdoing.

Karapetyan Suit

Strong Armenia Alliance's Narek Karapetyan, the nephew of Russian–Armenian tycoon Samvel Karapetyan filed

see LAWSUIT, page 2

ARMENIA

Armenia and Azerbaijan Sign Internet Traffic Transit Agreement

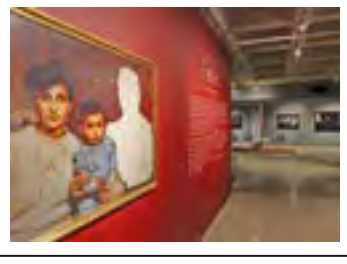
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WATERTOWN

Diana Markosian Exhibition Opening At Armenian Museum

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ANNUAL SUMMER VACATION

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

This issue is our last before break, while the first issue back is that of July 18. No newspapers will be published on July 4 or 11.

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

ARMENIA

NEWS *from* ARMENIA

Hayastan Alliance Seeks Recusal of CC Judge

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Hovhannes Khudoyan, legal representative of the Hayastan Alliance at the Constitutional Court, said the alliance is preparing to file a motion requesting that Judge Seda Safaryan be barred from participating in the trial set to begin on June 26.

The request is based on concerns regarding the judge's possible bias, RFE/RL reported.

During the 2021 parliamentary elections, Safaryan was included in the electoral list of the Shirinyan-Babajanyan Alliance of Democrats. At the same time, the For the Republic Party, led by Arman Babajanyan, is also challenging the election results before the Constitutional Court.

By decision of the Constitutional Court, judges Vladimir Vardanyan and Artak Zeynalyan will not participate in the examination of appeals submitted by seven political forces because, according to the court, they have "a prejudicial attitude" toward the parties involved in the proceedings.

Vardanyan joined the Constitutional Court from the National Assembly, where he represented the ruling Civil Contract faction. Before being elected a Constitutional Court judge, Zeynalyan was a member of the Republic Party led by Aram Sargsyan.

Schools, Universities To Receive 50,000 ChatGPT and Codex Subscriptions

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Representatives of OpenAI have held meetings with stakeholders in Armenia's general and higher education sectors as part of a working visit aimed at launching an educational partnership between Armenia and the artificial intelligence company.

As a result of cooperation between Armenia's Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, OpenAI, and Firebird, Armenian schools and higher education institutions will gain access to the ChatGPT Edu and Codex platforms starting in September. The initiative will provide approximately 50,000 educational subscriptions.

The program will be implemented through cooperation between the Ministry of Education, the National Center for Educational Technologies (NCET), the National Center for Education Development and Innovation (NCEDI), and partner organizations.

According to Alina Leon, OpenAI's lead for cooperation with the Armenian Ministry of Education, close collaboration with state institutions and educational organizations is planned to support the introduction of innovative solutions and the effective implementation of technological transformation in education.

Armenia and Azerbaijan Sign Internet Traffic Transit Agreement

By Yousef Bardouka

Telecom Armenia and Azertelecom have signed agreements to route internet traffic through each other's territories. According to RFE/RL, the agreement would allow Azerbaijan to provide its exclave Nakhichevan with internet connectivity using Armenian infrastructure.

The agreements were announced on Monday, June 22, with both companies issuing statements saying that the agreement provides for the transmission and transit of internet through their respective countries on a commercial basis.

In nearly identical statements, Telecom Armenia and Azertelecom said that it was expanding the number and geography of countries supplying international internet traffic, 'ensuring transit to Azerbaijan through its own infrastructure'.

According to RFE/RL, Telecom Armenia has not specified how much it will receive in exchange for Azertelecom using its infrastructure. Additionally, the outlet cited the company's deputy director Aram Barseghyan as saying that Armenia's National Security Service (NSS) must first greenlight the agreement before its implementation.

Barseghyan also clarified that connections would be made in Kornidzor and Yeraskh. Kornidzor is located in eastern Armenia, near the border with Azerbaijan and the Lachin region. Yeraskh is located in western Armenia, near the border with Turkey and Nakhichevan. He also added that the Azerbaijani side will not connect to Armenia's network or data, but would only be able to use its cables with a speed of 100 gigabits per second.

"The cable does not enter Armenia, but at the border, as it is with Georgia, Turkey, and Iran," Barseghyan told RFE/RL. "Everyone brings their own cable, a cable is laid right on the border, and it goes from point A to point B."

"There is no internet, it's just a transit channel through which they use their internet [...] We don't sell them any Armenian goods, we don't sell them anything from Armenia, we give them the opportunity through our channel, as it were, to get from point A to point B, so that they can go from Nakhichevan to Azerbaijan and vice versa," Barseghyan added, noting it was a "very big strategic advantage."

Barseghyan further noted that the telecommunications agreement was made "according to TRIPP logic," but that it was not directly part of the project itself.

TRIPP, or the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity, is a major infrastructure project agreed upon by Armenia, Azerbaijan and the US that would connect Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan through Armenian territory. The project



entails major infrastructure work, including power lines and gas pipelines.

A digital security expert who wished to remain anonymous explained to OC Media that internet service providers run data through international routes — or other countries.

"If someone's internet traffic runs through your ISP, you can indeed spy on it. Not the 'I read your Signal messages' kind, but more of the 'I know how much you use Facebook' kind," they explained.

The expert noted, however, that Armenia already routes its traffic through other countries, as "nobody exists in a vacuum."

"These changes are mostly benign, but sometimes really bad. Ukraine routed a lot of its traffic via Russia 10 years ago," they added.

Amidst online debate on what security ramifications such an agreement could have for either country, geopolitical analyst Dionis Cenușa wrote on the platform formerly known as Twitter, that "the more linkages are established, the less likely conflicts will emerge between interconnected sides."

"That's the formula that made the EU a peaceful project and protected Europe from wars among the nations that formed the bloc," he wrote.

"Despite this step's significance for normalization, Armenia has to understand that Azerbaijan remains a regime with autocratic tendencies," he continued, adding that Armenia was surrounded by other states "with autocratic tendencies."

"Indeed, establishing lasting peace is crucial for the region's stability and prosperity, but Armenia requires diversification and interconnectedness," Cenușa continued.

(This article originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on June 23.)

Armenian Opposition Leaders Kocharyan And Karapetyan Sue State Bodies

LAWSUIT, from page 1

a lawsuit on June 20 against the Investigative Committee. He demands that it publicly retract allegations that Narek Karapetyan "concealed" foreign citizenship while registering as a parliamentary candidate, which constitutes an obstacle to acquiring the status of a public official.

The lawsuit concerns a statement published by the Investigative Committee on May 20 announcing the investigation. Karapetyan has denied the allegations.

In his lawsuit against the Investigative Committee, he is seeking a court order compelling it to dismiss its claims and apologize for "entirely defamatory, false, and unfounded" information.

Karapetyan is also seeking symbolic compensation of one dram (less than $0.01), along with reimbursement of legal expenses, including court fees and attorney fees.

Allegations about his citizenship emerged shortly before the elections, when Armenian authorities announced they were investigating reports showing Russian official documents in which Narek Karapetyan was registered as a Russian citizen. Narek Karapetyan rejected the accusations then, insisting that he had never held any citizenship.

Shortly after the case, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin rejected claims that Karapetyan holds Russian citizenship. Following the publications, the Armenian media outlet Factor reported that the citizenship data for Karapetyan in the Russian state registry had been edited to show that he only held Armenian citizenship.

Constitutional Court to Hear Election Challenges

The two legal disputes come as the Constitutional Court prepares to hear challenges to the results of the parliamentary elections.

According to the final results, the ruling Civil Contract party will hold 64 seats in parliament, while Strong Armenia secured 29 seats and the Armenia Alliance won 12. The opposition Prosperous Armenia party led by tycoon Gagik Tsarukyan has failed to pass the 4% threshold required to enter parliament, receiving only 3.9893% of the vote after a controversial decision of CEC.

A single hearing is scheduled for June 26 to consider appeals filed by seven political parties and alliances seeking to annul the election results over alleged violations or have a second round appointed.

In preliminary rulings, the Constitutional Court decided that Artak Zeynalyan and Vladimir Vardanyan should be recused from proceedings after finding that they "have a biased attitude toward a party to the proceedings, its representative, and other participants in the proceedings".

The Constitutional Court has also decided to involve the ruling Civil Contract party in the case as a third party.

ARMENIA

Despite Heated Campaign, Many Chose to Not Vote

By Marut Vanyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator



Stand up for peace," is the slogan of the Pashinyan's Civil Contract party. Gyularagark, 7, 2026. Marut Vanyan/ The Armenian Mirror-Spectator

After a tense election season, the Central Election Commission (CEC) has released initial results for the number of seats in parliament:

Civil Contract (Nikol Pashinyan) 64 seats

Strong Armenia (Samvel Karapetyan) 29 seats

Armenia Alliance (Robert Kocharyan) 12 seats

Although the election results have already been announced, the tension continues to simmer in and around Armenia. "If Pashinyan doesn't leave, it will be bad, very bad," said former President Rober Kocharyan. In turn, Pashinyan has threatened Kocharyan, as well as opposition candidates and oligarchs Samvel Karapetyan, and Gagik Tsarukyan with decades in prison.

At the same time, "warnings" are being sounded from Moscow that Armenia cannot sit in two chairs simultaneously, directly saying that it must choose the West or Russia. While Russia is blocking Armenian goods from its market, Armenia exported its first shipment of flowers to Latvia and Ukraine. The villagers are now worried about their apricot crop, which might rot without a Russian market.

On June 7, I visited Armenia's Tashir with a Swedish colleague to watch the voting process there. There are posters of Samvel Karapetyan everywhere. Everyone speaks of him with admiration. Next to the half-ruined buildings and factories left over from the Soviet era are shining business centers. "Everything you see here was built with Samvel Karapetyan's funds," said one resident, a grandmother named Haykanush, 87, who owns a little shop in from the church.

In the morning, Narek Karapetyan arrived at the polling station in Tashir, where everyone hugged and kissed him, and wished him success in the elections. "It will only take you 10 minutes, my fellow citizens, please all of you participate in the elections, and vote for whoever you want," Karapetyan said to those gathered at the polling station.

When we returned from Tashir to Vanadzor, posters for Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan were clearly visible on the walls of all the shops and city's walls. It was unnecessary to ask the people sitting under those posters who they would vote for. It is clear that the answer is Pashinyan.

In this post-election period, the Armenian Mirror-Spectator has spoken to ordinary people from different regions of Armenia. Various polls have already stated that almost half of the Armenian population did not participate in the elections. Many hesitate to mention their names when they were asked for whom they voted.

One person from Yerevan replied, "I didn't vote for anyone. I voted for my family. I will continue to water trees as I used to, nothing will change in my life."

Another person, a Hrazdan resident, echoed the fatalistic sentiment.

"I didn't vote for anyone, I don't need to. I don't want to talk about it at all," he said.

A nurse from Yerevan expressed her fear that "war is about to escalate in Armenia. I have voted, I went to the polling station at 7:30 in the morning so that I could vote first. I wouldn't like to mention whom for I voted for, but I feel that there will be a war here and my heart aches for it."

A man from Hrazdan, whose wife is from Artsakh and does not have the right to vote, said that he did not vote either. "It doesn't interest me at all, and I just get nervous when they talk about elections," he said.

Two others, one from Georgia and another from Aleppo, Syria, expressed the same sense of futility when it came to voting, noting that their lives would not change as a result of voting.

Finally, a paramedic from Abovyan, when asked who he voted for, replied, "Of course for Pashinyan! Why should I vote for Tsarukyan?"

These elections raise more questions both in Armenia's domestic political life and in the geopolitical processes surrounding it. Will TRIPP construction work finally begin on the ground? Will Armenia be able to keep its economy stable by selling flowers on the European market? How will Moscow react to being hit by 200 drones by Ukraine tonight, and what will the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace process ultimately look like? Political forces in Armenia are still arguing about who stole votes from whom.



Narek Karapetyan searches for his name on the voter lists before entering the polling station. Tashir, June 7, 2026. Marut Vanyan/ The Armenian Mirror-Spectator

ARMENIA

Advancing Therapy and Psychological Education in Armenia

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Since 2020, the Armenian people have undergone a series of crises on multiple fronts, crises that have created challenging needs for intervention. Armenian soldiers returning from the 2020 war, followed by tens of thousands Ukrainian refugees and Russian emigres on the heels of the 2022 Russian invasion, and the expulsion of 100,000 Armenians from Artsakh in 2023, have created successive waves of demographic, economic and psychological pressures on the entire population. If returning soldiers, refugees, and emigres have been traumatized, the general population and organizations tasked with accommodating the inflow of newcomers have been overwhelmed. Anxiety, fear, insecurity — all symptoms of overall stress — have come to dominate personal life.

Government as well as private and volunteer agencies have been meeting the needs for material support, including housing, employment and education, but what facilities and personnel are available to deal with subjective needs — psychological and social support? What is the status of psychotherapy in Armenia? A report submitted to the Mirror-Spectator by Arpi Khalatyan, a psychologist leading a new professional organization committed to improving the quality and availability of psychotherapy in Armenia, identified the leading problems and innovative efforts to solve them. The following summarizes her report.

It may come as a surprise to learn that psychologists in Armenia are not licensed, the entire sector is unregulated. This means that anyone can declare professional competence as a psychologist, set up practice and start treating people in need. Without governmental or institutional regulation, no one bears responsibility for the quality of care provided, or the consequences a client may experience.

This reflects shortcomings in educational opportunities for psychologists.

Yerevan State University, Yerevan State Pedagogical University and the National Academy of Sciences are the three main providers of education in the field, plus a few small private universities that offer programs or psychology departments. University programs do provide basic education in the field, but with very little practical education or internship. Thus, highly-motivated graduates headed for a career as therapists will seek experience in small psychological centers, participate at their own expense in internships or various types of practical training, short- and medium-term educational and practice-based programs. Many students go to work in schools and kindergartens or other child-centered institutions as child psychologists and begin their psychological careers there. Others seek work as psychologists in hospitals. There is, however, also a group of graduates who immediately begin seeing clients without further preparation or guidance. The one positive aspect is that there are numerous psychological centers in Armenia founded by individual professional psychologists, which have more than ten years of experience in both practice and education, and which have trained multiple generations of psychologists following the model described above.

A Jungian Approach

In 2021, a group of 8 analytical psychologists founded the Armenian Association of Analytical Psychology (AAAP) to meet the need for a specialized professional community. In coordination with the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich, the AAAP became a member of the International Association of Analytical Psychology (IAAP), providing interaction conducive to further individual development. Co-founder and current president of the AAAP is Arpi Khalatyan, who received her BA and MA in psychology from Yerevan State University, followed by specialized education in Training for Trainers Programs at the YSU Center of Applies Psychology, and Jungian Analysis. Jungian Analysis is based on the work of Swiss psychiatrist and psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), who has influenced psychotherapy, literature, religious studies, anthropology, education and the arts throughout the world.



Arpi Khalatyan

Like Khalatyan, since the 2020 war many AAAP members have actively participated as volunteer psychologists in hospitals, providing psychological support and counseling to returning soldiers. She herself worked in a program aimed at organizing reskilling and upskilling courses or even career transition programs for war participants, doing needs assessments and guiding conversations with them, advocating and helping to solve problems with documents. Several members have also worked with displaced people from Artsakh and with individuals affected by forced displacement.

One major problem that therapists face in individuals traumatized by war is recurrent nightmares. dreams about wars, murder, brutal torture and mutilation. Here, the methodology of analytical psychology becomes extremely important, based as it is on working with symbols. Practitioners of this approach aid clients in understanding their dreams, interpreting symbols and thus gaining insight into the processes occurring in their psyche, the sources of their anxiety and other factors that reduce their quality of life. It also helps them find the healing sources within themselves.

In its focus on training programs, the AAAP has organized 19 webinars on different topics.

In response to the lack of official accreditation in Armenia, the AAAP is working to establish proper licensing standards. All individuals who participate in the international association's program through the national AAAP organization undergo a training process that may last 6–8 years, during which they take three examinations and, after the final exam, receive an international certificate of qualification in analytical psychology. This serves both as a marker of credibility and as a way of demonstrating to the state and government how essential professional licensing in psychology is.

In this regard, as Khalatyan stresses, membership in the international Jungian community is particularly important for the AAAP. It allows Armenian professionals to participate in global discussions, receive training from internationally recognized analysts and contribute perspectives shaped by Armenia's unique cultural and historical experience. In August 2025, Khalatyan led a delegation to Zurich to attend the 23rd International Congress of Analytical Psychology, which brought together more than 1,800 participants and among them some of the most influential voices in the field. For the Armenian representatives, the congress offered an opportunity to attend panels and lectures on pressing contemporary issues — ranging from trauma and cultural identity to the future of training in analytical psychology — as well as a chance to introduce the AAAP to leading scholars. The reception was encouraging; many, in fact, expressed their willingness to collaborate with Armenia. In June of this year, Swiss Professor Verena Kast, an internationally renowned Jungian analyst, educator and author, visited Armenia and conducted a four-day intensive workshop covering a range of topics within analytical psychology.

Despite Jung's influence worldwide, in Armenia, access to his writings remains limited. While his ideas are widely discussed, none of his major works is available in Armenian translation. To address this gap, the AAAP has launched an ambitious long-term project to translate some of his key works into Armenian.

Armenian Opposition Leader's Home Searched in 'Post-Election' Probe

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Investigators searched opposition leader Ishkhan Saghatelyan's Yerevan apartment and car on Tuesday, June 23, in a criminal investigation linked by him to Armenia's disputed parliamentary elections.

Saghatelyan heads the Yerevan-based governing body of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun) party, a key component of the opposition Hayastan alliance. The bloc led by former President Robert Kocharyan finished third in the June 7 elections, according to their official results rejected as fraudulent by the Armenian opposition.

The Investigative Committee said its officers raided Saghatelyan's home and confiscated cash and jewelry kept there early in the morning because of his failure to comply with a court's decision to freeze his properties and other assets worth over 258 million drams ($700,000). In particular, it said, he defied orders by Armenia's Service for the Mandatory Execution of Judicial Acts (SMEHA) emanating from that injunction. The committee did not formally charge him with any crimes as of Tuesday evening.

Saghatelyan denied breaking any laws. He argued that he recently challenged SMEJA's "illegal" demands in another court.

"All this is ridiculous," he told journalists. "We are ready for any scenario. They can't achieve anything with such methods."

Saghatelyan claimed that the criminal case is part of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's efforts to tighten his grip on power in the face of vote-rigging allegations made by Hayastan and other major opposition groups.

"[Pashinyan] didn't win the backing of a majority of our people [in the elections]," said the Dashnaktsutyun leader. "In order to shore up his illegal and illegitimate power, he is resorting to illegal actions against opposition figures and forces."

Pashinyan pledged last week to "crush" Kocharyan and businessmen Samvel Karapetyan and Gagik Tsarukyan leading the two other main election challengers of the ruling Civil Contract party. Law-enforcement authorities brought new corruption charges against Kocharyan the next day. They charged Tsarukyan with tax evasion a few days earlier.

For his part, Karapetyan went on trial in April on separate charges, also rejected by him as politically motivated. The Russian-Armenian tycoon is currently negotiating with Hayastan, Tsarukyan's Prosperous Armenia Party and other opposition groups over his proposal to set up a "post-election opposition coalition" that would fight for regime change in the country.

Prosecutors moved to confiscate Saghatelyan's assets last year, invoking a controversial law that allows the state to seize money, property and companies deemed to have been acquired illegally. The court froze them in January pending a ruling on the case.

Saghatelyan, 44, said that the asset forfeiture proceedings are also politically motivated. He argued that he held a government position for only several months in 2018 and could not have used it to enrich himself and his family. The opposition leader's father has reportedly engaged in entrepreneurial activities for many years.

INTERNATIONAL

Turkey's Top Court Faults Dismissal Based on Secret-Witness Files Alleging Gülen Links

ISTANBUL (Stockholm Center for Freedom) — Turkey's Constitutional Court has faulted the dismissal of a former police officer accused of links to the faith-based Gülen movement, ruling that authorities relied on digital files supplied by a secret witness without sufficiently verifying or explaining the evidence against him.

The decision, published Tuesday, June 23, in the *Official Gazette*, found that Mehmet Emin Okyay's dismissal violated his right to respect for private life and ordered a retrial before an Ankara administrative court. The court said the authorities and lower courts had not shown with sufficient reasoning that the records proved Okyay's alleged movement links.

The case centers on files obtained from a secret witness known by the code name "Garson," who Turkish authorities said provided two microSD cards and a phone containing information on thousands of police officers allegedly categorized according to their ties to the movement.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has targeted followers of the Gülen movement, inspired by the late Muslim cleric Fethullah Gülen, since corruption investigations in December 2013 implicated him as well as some members of his family and inner circle. He dismissed the probes as a Gülenist conspiracy and later designated the movement as a terrorist organization in May 2016, intensifying a sweeping crackdown after a coup attempt in July of the same year that he accused Gülen of orchestrating. The movement denies involvement in the coup attempt or any terrorist activity.

Okyay, who worked as a police officer in the central province of Niğde, was dismissed from public service in 2017 under an emergency decree issued after the coup attempt. Authorities accused him of links to the Gülen movement.

The Constitutional Court said Okyay's dismissal affected his professional life, reputation and ability to maintain social and professional relationships, bringing the case within the scope of the right to respect for private life.

According to the ruling, the emergency commission that reviewed Okyay's dismissal cited information obtained from the Garson files, including coding that allegedly placed him within the Gülen movement's police network.

Okyay denied links to the movement. The ruling said he told authorities he had not stayed in Gülen-linked houses or dormitories, had not used encrypted messaging programs, had not made donations to the movement and had not sent his children to schools affiliated with it. The court also cited a 2017 decision by prosecutors in Niğde not to pursue criminal charges against him.

The Garson files have been used in multiple criminal and administrative cases involving police officers accused of Gülen links. In testimony cited by the Constitutional Court, Garson said the files included information on about 4,700 people and had been compiled through the movement's alleged police structure.

Authorities later said the files included Excel sheets that categorized police personnel with codes such as "A4," "A5," "B4," "EA" and others. The records allegedly identified whether officers were members of the movement, close to it, outside its influence or seen as hostile to it.

But the Constitutional Court said the lower courts had not sufficiently examined whether the coding records reliably established Okyay's alleged links. It said the administrative courts did not obtain and assess a later data analysis report that could have shed more light on the records and did not evaluate other coding details in the file.

The court concluded that the interference with his rights was not proportionate, even under the state of emergency declared after the coup attempt.

The court sent the case back to the Ankara 25th Administrative Court for retrial. It rejected Okyay's compensation request, saying a retrial would provide sufficient redress, and ordered the state to pay 40,000 Turkish lira ($860) in legal costs.

The decision could affect other cases stemming from Turkey's post-coup purges, particularly those involving civil servants dismissed on the basis of coding records attributed to Garson. The ruling leaves room for courts to use such material but requires them to verify and explain what the records prove in each individual case.

Following the coup attempt, the Turkish government declared a state of emergency (OHAL) that remained in effect until July 19, 2018. During this period, the government carried out a purge of state institutions under the pretext of an anti-coup fight by issuing a number of government decrees, known as KHKs. Over 130,000 public servants, including 4,156 judges and prosecutors, as well as more than 24,000 members of the armed forces were summarily removed from their jobs for alleged membership in or relationships with "terrorist organizations" by emergency decree-laws subject to neither judicial nor parliamentary scrutiny.

Yerevan Seeking Faster EU Aid Against Russian Sanctions

AID, from page 1

Kallas and some EU foreign ministers welcomed the official results of Armenia's June 7 parliamentary elections that gave victory to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party.

In the run-up to the elections, Russian authorities imposed de facto bans on the vast majority of Armenian-made products exported to Russia, the South Caucasus nation's main trading partner. Moscow also pressed Pashinyan's government to quickly choose between seeking to join the EU or remaining part of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), a Russian-led economic bloc.

The EU condemned the Russian embargo, saying that Moscow is "weaponizing economic relations for political pressure" on Armenia. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen also announced on June 4 50 million euros ($58 million) in urgent economic assistance to Yerevan. She said the EU will also open its market to "some Armenian products, in particular agri-food."

The EU released the first 34 million-euro installment of that aid on Friday. It said its Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos will visit Armenia on July 5 to "advance the implementation of the support package and discuss further steps to strengthen EU-Armenia cooperation."

For its part, the Armenian government has approved subsidies for domestic farmers, agribusiness firms and beverage producers that will find new export markets. Pashinyan said on Thursday that some of them are already signing "big and long-term" supply contracts with European partners. But he did not give any numbers.

According to Russian officials, Armenian agricultural exports to Russia totaled over $700 million last year. Armenian analysts are skeptical about Yerevan's ability to quickly offset the potential loss of such export revenue.

Pashinyan and his political allies assured Armenians during the election campaign that Moscow will lift the trade restrictions if they win reelection. Russia's state agri-



EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas and Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan talk at a meeting in Luxembourg, June 15, 2026

cultural watchdog on the contrary banned more food imports from Armenia on June 11.

Also, Russian leaders have questioned the legitimacy of Pashinyan's election victory rejected by the Armenian opposition as fraudulent. President Vladimir Putin has still not congratulated Pashinyan. On June 10, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov echoed Putin's earlier demand for the Armenian government to make a choice between the EU and the EEU "as soon as possible."

Mirzoyan's June 15 trip to Brussels underlined Yerevan's intention to continue moving closer to the EU

"Mirzoyan's visit confirmed the deepening relations between the EU and Armenia," another European diplomat told RFE/RL. "Foreign Minister Mirzoyan also emphasized Armenia's desire to diversify the energy sector and stressed the need for the EU to take steps in that direction."

Armenia imports from Russia the bulk of natural gas used by its households, power plants and manufacturers. Moscow threatened late last month to end a significant discount on the price of Russian gas.

INTERNATIONAL

Memorials in Astghashen Reportedly Destroyed

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Azerbaijani authorities have destroyed a monument in the village of Astghashen in Artsakh dedicated to local fighters who were killed during the Artsakh liberation struggle, according to Artsakh Monuments.

The claim is based on an analysis of satellite images taken between April 19, 2024, and July 15, 2025.

"During the same period, the memorial commemorating residents of Astghashen who died in the Great Patriotic War was also destroyed. The monument had been erected in the 1970s. Does Maria Zakharova have anything to say about this?" the statement said.

First Batch of Armenian Apricots Arrives in EU

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The first symbolic batch of Armenian apricots has arrived in the European Union, Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos said on Monday.

"Thank you to Armenia's Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures, Davit Khudatyan, for the gift and for a very good discussion," she posted on X , sharing a photo with the minister.

"We met ahead of tomorrow's launch of the Connectivity Agenda Platform, where we will take forward our work to better connect Armenia with its neighbors and Europe.

"This will help Armenian producers diversify their exports and bring more of their high-quality products to new markets," Kos said.

Moscow Protests Wartime Memorial Desecration in Gyumri

GYUMRI (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Russia has sent a diplomatic protest note to Armenia over the vandalism of a memorial in Gyumri dedicated to heroes of the Great Patriotic War, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said during a briefing on June 18.

"This sacrilegious act is not merely hooliganism. It is a deliberate attack on the shared historical memory of our countries and an attempt to desecrate the Great Victory. Of course, we have sent a protest note to the Armenian side," she said, according to TASS.

According to Zakharova, servicemen from the 102nd Russian Military Base immediately began efforts to repair the damage.

Zakharova added that it was "surprising" that Armenia's official authorities, instead of strongly condemning the desecration of the monument or at least expressing a clear position on the matter, "preferred to remain silent."

She further argued that what she described as an "unrestrained anti-Russian campaign" accompanying the parliamentary elections had created conditions for such acts of vandalism.

INTERNATIONAL

Erdoğan Pushes for New Talks on Reopening Halki Orthodox Seminary

ISTANBUL (Stockholm Center for Freedom) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has ordered officials to resume talks on reopening the Halki Theological School, a historic Orthodox Christian seminary near İstanbul that has been closed for more than five decades, Turkish Minute reported, citing Reuters.

The move follows renewed international pressure on Ankara over the school, including from US President Donald Trump, who raised the issue with Erdoğan in Washington last year.

Trump is expected to visit Ankara next month for a NATO summit.

The Halki seminary, founded in 1844 on Heybeliada, one of İstanbul's Princes' Islands, served as the main theological school of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and trained generations of Orthodox clergy, including the current patriarch, Bartholomew.

The school's higher education department was closed by the Turkish state in 1971 after a Constitutional Court ruling that private institutions of higher learning had to be affiliated with state universities, a requirement rejected by the patriarchate.

Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon, whose diocese includes İstanbul, said the issue had entered a "new phase" after Erdoğan instructed Turkey's Council of Higher Education (YÖK) to continue talks with a committee from the patriarchate.

Although there is no timetable for the school's reopening, Emmanuel said the process had moved beyond years of inaction.

"For the patriarchate, after decades of inaction, the water has entered the trough," he said, using a Turkish expression meaning that formal work has begun.

Emmanuel said both sides still need to complete renovations of the building complex and agree on the legal and educational framework under which the seminary would operate.

The possible reopening of Halki has long been one of the most prominent issues raised by the Greek Orthodox Church, Greece, the United States and the European Union in discussions with Turkey about religious freedom and minority rights.

Bloomberg reported last week that the Turkish government was considering reopening the school as part of Turkey's higher education system, with academic programs overseen by the Education Ministry and student admissions handled through the national university entrance exam.

Under that plan, the school would include a theology faculty, allowing Orthodox clergy to be trained in Turkey for the first time since 1971.

Bloomberg said a draft agreement was completed after a meeting in Ankara between Erdoğan and Bartholomew. Turkish media have also reported positive signs about a possible reopening.

Bartholomew told the Hürriyet daily earlier this month that restoration, reinforcement and renovation work at the seminary was expected to be completed in the coming months.

The patriarch said Erdoğan had instructed Education Minister Yusuf Tekin in 2024 to examine the possibility of reopening the school. Tekin visited the seminary in May of that year, after which dialogue began among the Education Ministry, YÖK and the patriarchate, Bartholomew said.

"I pray that this dialogue will reach a favorable outcome and that a decision allowing the school to reopen will be taken," he said.

Bartholomew said in Athens in May that extensive renovations to the seminary's buildings would be completed in the coming months and that, "God willing," an inauguration would be held in September.

The patriarchate later clarified that he was referring to the renovated building, not the formal reopening of the seminary, which still requires a license from Turkish authorities.

The US State Department's 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom said Christian communities in Turkey continue to face restrictions despite protections formally recognized under the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne.

Against that backdrop, the reopening of Halki school will be a significant step for the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Orthodox theological education in Turkey, ending more than half a century of uncertainty over the school's future.



The Halki Orthodox Seminary

European Court Orders Azerbaijan to Pay Compensation Over Beheading of Armenian Soldier

COMPENSATION, ffrom page 1

The clashes, often referred to as the "Four-Day War", took place between Azerbaijani and Armenian forces from April 1 to 4, 2016, along the line of contact in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. The fighting marked the first large-scale hostilities since the end of the First Nagorno-Karabakh War and the signing of a ceasefire in 1994.

The victim was identified as 30 year-old Major Hayk Toroyan in the armed forces of Karabakh.

After the parties declared a ceasefire on 5 April, they exchanged the bodies of those killed in the hostilities. Armenian officials later reported that some bodies had been returned with heads, hands or ears missing.

According to the court, investigators found Toroyan's body near the line of contact, close to the village of Talish. Local investigators and forensic experts in Armenia concluded that he had suffered severe injuries during an attack on a military truck and had become immobile and incapable of fighting.

According to the findings cited by the court, assailants severed his hands while he was wounded and later beheaded him.

The applicants — his parents and sister — argued that Azerbaijani servicemen had captured, tortured and killed Toroyan.

The court's judgment states that the condition of the returned body prevented the family from conducting a full funeral ceremony and caused additional psychological suffering.

The family filed the application with the European Court on April 13, 2016. Ara Ghazaryan and other Armenian lawyers represented the applicants.

In November 2016, the ECHR notified the Azerbaijani authorities that it had opened the case.

The European Court found that Azerbaijan had violated Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which protects the right to life. The court concluded that Azerbaijani forces killed a wounded serviceman who had already become hors de combat. It also noted that such conduct contravened international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions.

The court also found a violation of Article 3 of the Convention, which prohibits torture and inhuman or degrading treatment. According to the judgment, H.T. suffered torture and inhuman treatment. The court concluded that perpetrators severed his hands while he was still alive and subsequently beheaded him.

The court also found a violation of Article 3 in relation to the victim's family members. It held that they endured severe suffering after learning of the brutal killing of their son and brother and because the body was not returned intact.

The ECHR also examined complaints under several other provisions, including Articles 8, 13 and 14 of the Convention. However, it established the principal violations under Articles 2 and 3.

The court awarded his parents, V.T. and L.V., €60,000 jointly in compensation for non-pecuniary damage.

His sister, A.G., will receive €30,000 in compensation for non-pecuniary damage.

The court also awarded €14,210 to cover legal and other expenses.

The total award amounts to approximately €104,210. Azerbaijan must pay the compensation within three months.

The judgment will become enforceable once it enters into force. If the Azerbaijani government fails to comply, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe can initiate its supervision procedure.

This case marks the first ECHR judgment related to the April 2016 fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Both sides suffered casualties during the clashes. However, Armenia also reported several cases involving the alleged mutilation of the bodies of dead servicemen.

The ECHR is currently considering 21 similar applications.

In the court's case law, the concept of hors de combat carries particular significance. International humanitarian law and human rights law prohibit attacks on wounded, captured or otherwise incapacitated individuals. In this case, the court applied that principle to the actions of Azerbaijani forces during the hostilities.

The Azerbaijani authorities have consistently rejected such allegations.

President Ilham Aliyev and other officials have repeatedly described ECHR rulings as "biased".

In some cases, Azerbaijani officials have argued that, following the country's loss of voting rights in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Azerbaijan no longer recognizes the authority of judgments issued by the European Court of Human Rights.

Baku Renews Demands For 'Return Of Western Azeris'

YERVEN (Azatutyun) — Less than two weeks after the Armenian parliamentary elections, Azerbaijan's leadership renewed on Thursday its demands for Armenia to allow a mass influx of Azerbaijanis who had lived there in Soviet times.

"Every Western Azerbaijani has the right to return to the land of their ancestors," deputy parliament speaker Ziyafet Askerov said during a "festival-conference" on their "return to Western Azerbaijan" organized by Azerbaijan's government in the Nakhichevan exclave.

"Return is the legal, historical and moral right of Western Azerbaijanis as these lands are our ancient territories," he added, according to Azerbaijani media.

Azerbaijani Education Minister Emin Amrulayev also addressed the event held in Ordubad, a town close to the Armenian border. He said "the topic of Western Azerbaijan" is of strategic importance to Baku.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev continued to voice such demands even after he and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan initiated an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty in Washington last August. Pashinyan's domestic critics say the demands make mockery of Pashinyan's regular claims that peace has already been established between the two nations. They claim that Aliyev's ultimate goal is to end Armenia's existence as a viable state.

Throughout the election campaign, the two main Armenian opposition forces said that Pashinyan will allow as many as 300,000 Azerbaijanis to settle in Armenia if he wins reelection. The Armenian premier reacted angrily to those claims.

Baku rekindled the issue just three days after Aliyev's top foreign policy aide, Hikmet Hajiyev, visited Armenia and met with the secretary of the country's Security Council, Armen Grigorian. Pashinyan said on Wednesday that he initiated their talks in order to "manage" what he described as the risk of another Armenian-Azerbaijani war increased by the Armenian opposition's performance in the June 7 elections.

Despite winning the elections, according to their official results, Pashinyan's Civil Contract party fell short of a two-thirds majority in the parliament needed for enacting a new Armenian constitution demanded by Baku. Opposition leaders say the purpose of Hajiyev's visit was to discuss this and other concessions promised by Pashinyan.

Aliyev's demands sharply contrast with Pashinyan's categorical refusal to champion the right of Nagorno-Karabakh's displaced ethnic Armenian population to return to its homeland recaptured by Azerbaijan in 2023. Pashinyan has repeatedly said in recent months that discussing the repatriation of the Karabakh Armenians and other refugees from the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict would be "dangerous for the peace process."

Turkmenistan Signs Bevy of Trade Agreements with Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan is working hard to coax Turkmenistan out of its shell and integrate Ashgabat into trans-Caspian trade routes.

Azerbaijani leader Ilham Aliyev exchanged a variety of trade-related agreements with Turkmenistan's titular head of state, Serdar Berdymukhamedov, during a June 22 ceremony in Baku. A joint statement issued after the ceremony highlighted an agreement to streamline "technical specifications" concerning the movement of goods and vehicles between the two countries, and another to harmonize "customs statistics of mutual trade." Additional agreements covered cooperation in such spheres as energy, industry, agriculture, banking and labor migration.

Aliyev told journalists that Baku's engagement with Turkmenistan is aimed at expanding the emerging Middle Corridor trade network, which is designed to increase the flow of goods from Central Asia across the Caspian Sea bound for European markets.

"We agreed to carry out more in-depth coordination of our activities in the transport and logistics sector in order to increase cargo flows … [and] work on attracting goods from third countries," Aliyev said. "Therefore, this area will naturally be one of the priorities both in our bilateral and multilateral cooperation."

Turkmenistan has a reputation as a "hermit" kingdom, featuring one of the globe's most repressive political systems led by the paramount leader, Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, Serdar's father. But over the past year Ashgabat has voiced interest in cautiously opening to the outside world to diversify its economy and expand trade beyond natural gas exports to China. The agreements signed in Baku are a tangible indicator of that desire.

"A solid package of bilateral documents was signed," Serdar Berdymukhamedov said in Baku. "This meets the long-term interests of the two countries and peoples."

The two leaders issued instructions to empower an intergovernmental commission, which is now scheduled to meet in July in Ashgabat, to implement the Baku agreements.



Azerbaijani leader Ilham Aliyev (right) and his Turkmen counterpart Serdar Berdymukhamedov shake hands after signing a variety of deals on June 22 (Photo president.az)

"I am sure that the instructions that we have given today will be worked out in detail by that time, and we will reach the solution of new joint tasks and the implementation of new projects," Aliyev said, emphasizing that Azerbaijani-Turkmen relations were "built on a solid foundation - these are historical ties, cultural ties, spiritual ties."

During the joint press conference, Aliyev dropped an intriguing hint that Azerbaijan would help develop Turkmenistan's nascent mining sector. The country's most important reserves of minerals are presently iodine, sulfur and potash, according to the US Geological Survey. But Turkmen leaders have expressed interest in exploring for critical mineral deposits.

"Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan are two countries with vast mineral resources, energy resources. In this case, we aim to cooperate in combining our efforts," Aliyev said.

Earlier in June, Azerbaijan signed an agreement to help Uzbekistan develop a self-standing value chain for the Central Asian nation's critical minerals and precious metals. An Azerbaijani-based entity, NEQSOL Holding, will lead the effort to help Uzbekistan improve not just mining operations, but also the country's capacity to process, market and export critical minerals and precious metals.

(This article originally appeared on the website www.eurasianet.org on June 23.)

Eight Russian Citizens Jailed in Baku

MOSCOW (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Eight Russian citizens detained in Baku have been sentenced to prison on charges of "transiting and distributing narcotics from Iran" as well as "cyber fraud," Azerbaijani media reported on June 19.

Sergey Sofronov, Anton Drachev, Dmitry Bezuglin and Valery Dulov were each sentenced to four years in prison. Dmitry Fyodorov, Boris Timoshov, Alexey Vasilchenko and Ilya Bezuglin received three-year prison terms, according to Deutsche Welle.

According to a relative of one of the convicted men, the ruling was issued by a court of first instance. The relative said family members remain in a state of uncertainty and do not know what developments may follow. Asked whether the defendants would appeal, a source cited by Agentstvo replied: "This is not the best option. It would only prolong the process, but not filing an appeal is also impossible."

According to Agentstvo, many of the defendants were allegedly forced through violence and threats against their relatives to provide false testimony regarding drug purchases.

The court proceedings began on April 3. The first verdicts were issued in April. At that time, a court in Baku sentenced Yekaterinburg resident Alexander Vaysero to four years in prison in a case involving the legalization of criminal proceeds. In mid-May, Russian citizens Igor Zabolotskikh and Ilnur Valitov were each sentenced to three years in prison.

The Russian citizens were detained amid deteriorating relations between Baku and Moscow following mass arrests of members of the Azerbaijani diaspora in Yekaterinburg on allegations linked to organized crime.

Diplomatic tensions between Azerbaijan and Russia began after the crash of a passenger aircraft operated by AZAL in December 2024. A new phase of the crisis began in late June 2025, when large-scale arrests were carried out in Yekaterinburg as part of investigations into old criminal cases. Among those detained were brothers Huseyn Safarov and Ziyaddin Safarov, who died shortly afterward in custody. Azerbaijan's Prosecutor General's Office opened a criminal case on charges of premeditated murder and blamed Russian law enforcement officers for their deaths.

According to Azerbaijani forensic experts, 60-year-old Huseyn Safarov suffered a broken nose, chest injuries, hemorrhaging in the groin area, ruptures of the pleura and lungs, and injuries to the liver and peritoneum. Multiple bruises and abrasions were reportedly found on the body of 55-year-old Ziyaddin Safarov, including in the areas of the kidneys and genitals. One of his ribs was missing, while the remaining ribs were fractured.

On April 13, 2026, a court in Yekaterinburg sentenced former Azerbaijani diaspora leader in the Urals Shahin Shikhlinski to 24 years in prison. The sentence combined convictions related to a 2001 murder, a 2011 attempted murder, and violence against a law enforcement officer.

Community News

UC Berkeley Offers Online Summer Course on the Armenian Language And Sociolinguistics

BERKELEY, Calif. — This summer, UC Berkeley's Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures will offer an upper-division course titled "Language in Its Social Context: The Case of Armenian." The six-week course runs July 6–August 14, meeting on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 1:00–3:30 p.m. PDT. Conducted entirely via live online instruction, the course is open to participants globally. No prior knowledge of Armenian or linguistics is required.

Students will be introduced to foundational concepts in sociolinguistics and historical linguistics, using the unique trajectory of the Armenian language as their primary case study. The curriculum covers themes including language ideology, language vitality, dialect variation, and multilingualism. Through a series of short, hands-on projects, students will explore the role language plays in their own lives and engage with contemporary debates in the field. To learn more or to enroll, visit https://classes.berkeley.edu/content/2026-summer-armeni-122-001-lec-001.

The course instructor, Julianne Kapner, is a Ph.D. candidate in the UC Berkeley Department of Linguistics with specializations in sociolinguistics and minority languages. As director and founder of the Armenian Language in the Bay Area (ALBA) undergraduate research team, Kapner collaborates with the Armenian Studies Program (armenian.berkeley.edu) on campus to mentor students in linguistic fieldwork. To date, the ALBA team has conducted 63 interviews with diverse Armenian speakers, documenting how the language varies across time and social identities. Students who have worked under Kapner's direction praise her for fostering an immersive, supportive research environment that bridges undergraduate study and graduate-level scholarship.

The course serves as an elective for Armenian Studies or Linguistics majors and minors, and it fulfills UC Berkeley breadth requirements. It offers transferable credit for visiting students and is open to the public through UC Berkeley Summer Sessions. Approximate enrollment costs are as follows: UC Berkeley Undergraduates: $1,800; Other UC Undergraduates: $2,000; Non-UC Affiliated U.S. Residents/Students: $2,500 and International Students: $3,000.

The UC Berkeley Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures offers major and minor undergraduate degrees (B.A.) in Armenian Studies. Administered in partnership with UC Berkeley's interdisciplinary Armenian Studies Program, these degrees foster deep regional and cultural expertise.



Adrin Nazarian at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Tiny Home Village

LA Councilmember Nazarian, Mayor Bass Cut Ribbons at Tiny Home Village

VAN NUYS, Calif. — On June 22, Councilmember Adrin Nazarian, Los Angeles City Council District 2, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass, Rowan Vansleve, President, Hope the Mission & Los Angeles Mission and Jocelyn Cardenas, District Director, Council District 2 held a ribbon cutting and press conference celebrating the opening of the Van Nuys Tiny Home Village, which will add 100 new beds for unhoused San Fernando Valley residents.

Nazarian and Los Angeles City Council District 2 joined Bass and Hope the Mission, one of LA's largest homeless service providers, for a ribbon cutting ceremony marking the opening of a new Tiny Home Village in Van Nuys. Built alongside an existing shelter, the village reflects Nazarian's push to bring innovative, multi-model housing solutions to CD2 — pairing private tiny home units with community shelter space so residents can choose the setting that best fits their needs.

The site has served as a hub for interim housing in the district for years, first opened as a sprung-structure shelter under Mayor Garcetti and then-Councilmember Krekorian. Seeing an urgent need for more housing options in the East San Fernando Valley, Councilmember Nazarian partnered with Hope the Mission to expand the site, adding tiny homes next to the original structure and creating one of the city's few locations where multiple sheltering models operate side by side.

Hope the Mission launched the city's first Tiny Home Village in February 2021 and has since grown to operate 10 villages across LA County and beyond, providing residents with private sleeping units, meals, showers, laundry, case management, housing navigation, mental health support, and job training. Each 64-square-foot home includes two beds, heat and air conditioning, windows, a desk, and a front door. The Van Nuys site will bring 50 new tiny homes and 100 beds to CD2, building on Councilmember Nazarian's broader effort to confront the region's homelessness crisis with cost-effective, humane solutions that move people off the streets and into stable environments with wraparound support.



The village

Astronaut Jarret Lafleur to Receive Neil Armstrong Award of Excellence

ORLANDO, Fla. — The Astronaut Scholarship Foundation (ASF) announced Dr. Jarret Lafleur will receive the prestigious 2026 Neil Armstrong Award of Excellence. The award recognizes an Astronaut Scholar alum who best exemplifies the personal character and professional achievements of the first human to walk on the Moon, Neil Armstrong.

ASF will present Lafleur with the award during its Innovators Gala on Aug. 15, 2026, in Houston, Texas.

"Each year, the Neil Armstrong Award of Excellence recognizes an Astronaut Scholar whose achievements, leadership and character embody the values that Neil Armstrong demonstrated throughout his life and career," said Colleen Middlebrooks, President and CEO of the Astronaut



Dr. Jarret Lafleur

Scholarship Foundation. "Dr. Lafleur has built an extraordinary career advancing aerospace innovation and national security while remaining deeply committed to engineering excellence and public service. We are proud to recognize his accomplishments and welcome him as the 2026 recipient of this distinguished honor."

Lafleur serves as chief engineer for Hypersonics at Ursa Major Technologies, a venture-backed aerospace and defense company delivering breakthrough hypersonic solutions powered by liquid rocket engines, solid rocket motors and space mobility systems at speed and scale.

Lafleur is spearheading development of the strategic vision and design of a new, cutting-edge class of hypersonic vehicle that takes advantage of Ursa Major's liquid rocket engine using safe, storable propellants.

Prior to joining Ursa Major, Lafleur served in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering as senior advisor to the Principal Director for Hypersonics, helping shape strike system strategy and policy.

He also served as senior technical advisor to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Missile Defense Policy, contributing to the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review and advising on Nuclear Weapons Council matters.

His public service contributions earned him two Office of the Secretary of Defense Medals for

see ASTRONAUT, page 9

Astronaut Jarret Lafleur to Receive Neil Armstrong Award of Excellence

ASTRONAUT, from page 8

Exceptional Public Service. Earlier in his career, Dr. Lafleur held technical staff positions at Sandia National Laboratories, conducting defense system analyses for the Departments of Defense and Energy. He also completed rotational assignments at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, White Sands Test Facility and Johnson Space Center, where his work included hypersonic flight mechanics and trajectory design for spacecraft entering the atmospheres of Earth and Mars.

A 2005 and 2006 Astronaut Scholar from the Georgia Institute of Technology, Lafleur earned his PhD in Aerospace Engineering from Georgia Tech. He is also an Associate Fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics and a certificated sport pilot.

"I am truly humbled to be selected as the recipient of the 2026 Neil Armstrong™ Award of Excellence," said Lafleur. "When I received the phone call, I was in disbelief that our nation's astronauts and distinguished supporters of the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation felt my character, achievement, and impact merit an award whose namesake is among the most distinguished, respected, and humble explorers (and engineers) in history.

"I am grateful to the Armstrong Family, the Purdue Research Foundation, Jim Hays, and the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation, as well as to the countless family members, friends, colleagues, mentors, teachers, professors and others who have contributed to my success, starting from a small town in Rhode Island to my educational and professional journeys from East Coast to West Coast, and from North to South across the United States. I am simultaneously grateful that the nominee pool for this year's award did not include the newest class of Astronaut Scholars. As I meet each successive Astronaut Scholar class, I am blown away by the new scholars' character, achievements and impact, all of which give me great optimism for our nation's ability to sustain its place as the world's science and technology leader."

He is the son of the late Sheryl (Tahakjian) Lafleur and Gerald R. Lafleur of Rhode Island.

The Neil Armstrong Award of Excellence was established in 2016 through a partnership between the Purdue Research Foundation, the Armstrong family and Jim Hays, a friend of Neil Armstrong. Presented annually, the award honors an Astronaut Scholar alum whose professional achievements, leadership and personal character reflect the values exemplified by Armstrong throughout his life and career.

OBITUARY

Archdeacon Charles J. Hardy

Exemplary Servant of the Armenian Church

ELK GROVE VILLAGE, Ill. — Archdeacon Charles (Garabed) J. Hardy (Kherdian), age 86, passed away peacefully at Ascension Hospice in Elk Grove Village, IL on June 15, surrounded by his family.

Chuck was born in Racine on August 18, 1939, to the late Jacob (Hagop) and Blanche (Baydsar), nee Demirjian, Hardy.

He married the former Araxie Djiknavorian on July 3, 1966 with anticipation of their 60th wedding anniversary this July.

In his early years, and with the encouragement of his parents he became an accomplished musician and Armenian dancer performing frequently at various Armenian functions. Losing both his parents at an early age, he was determined to carry on their dedication to the Armenian Church and to the community.

Chuck graduated with a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh and later earned a master's degree in library science from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. He taught in the Kenosha Unified School System for 33 years and was beloved by his students.

He served at St. Mesrob Armenian Church for over six decades mentoring and training young people to be acolytes, sub-deacons and deacons, with a passion to make certain that there would be properly trained altar servers for years to come. As a senior deacon and in the absence of a full-time priest for many years, Deacon Chuck was given special privileges by then Archbishop Torkom Manoogian to administer holy communion to the sick and dying as well as giving homilies during deacon's services which he led and also serving as a chaplain in Racine hospitals.

In 2009, he was presented with the Pontifical Encyclical of Supreme Patriarch of All Armenians Karekin II and was awarded with the St. Nersess Shnorhali (the Graceful) medal. He was also very active in church organizations, serving on the parish council as well as a diocesan delegate, and serving as the chairman of the Heritage Committee for many years.

After relocating to Elk Grove Village he continued to serve at St. James Armenian Church in Evanston, IL and always cherishing the time with family and grandchildren.

Survivors include his wife, Araxie Hardy; son, James (Ardem) Hardy; daughter, Christine (Robert) Simon; grandchildren, Natalie, Tavit and Aren Hardy, and Rachel and Brandon Simon. Chuck is also survived by other relatives and friends.

Funeral services for Chuck was held at St. Mesrob Armenian Church, 4605 Erie Street, on Saturday, June 20, with Rev.



Avedis Kalayjian officiating at 11:00 a.m. Interment followed at Graceland Cemetery.

Memorial donations may be directed to St. Mesrob Armenian Church for the purposes of deacon training (https://www.stmesrobchurch.org/).

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 your resume.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Assembly Kicks off Summer Internship Program with Members of First Cohort

YEREVAN — The Armenian Assembly of America's (Assembly) Summer Internship Program in Armenia welcomed 11 students to begin their 8-week program in the homeland. Representing Georgetown University, the University of California, Berkeley, Boston College, George Washington University, California State University, Northridge, the University of Washington Bothell, and the University of California, Los Angeles, the interns will gain valuable professional experience working in Armenia's government institutions, private-sector companies, nonprofit organizations, and museums, while immersing themselves in daily life in Yerevan and exploring the country's rich history and cultural ties.

"We are happy to welcome eleven bright students from some of the leading academic institutions in the U.S. for an immersive 2-month experience in Armenia," remarked Armenia Country Director Armen Sahakyan. "The students will have a chance not only to gain valuable professional skills interning at diverse institutions, but also meet with leaders in various sectors as well as travel throughout the country to get more closely connected and involved with the country and its people."

The official launch of the program coincided with the visit of four alumni of the 1986 Terjenian-Thomas Internship program class — Jon Hanessian, Ruth Zeronian Edwards, Lisa A. Kazanjian, and Tanya Koshgarian Chakmakian — and their families, who traveled to Armenia to celebrate their class's 40th anniversary.

The alumni shared their Assembly internship experiences and offered the students words of advice on career development and the lasting bonds the program creates. "My internship became a natural stepping stone — it led me to business school and a career in finance," said Lisa A. Kazanjian, a member of the 1986 class. "My advice: whatever project they give you, push to walk away with a real result or outcome, so you can say, 'I did this, and here's what came of it.' That mattered enormously when I applied to schools and jobs afterward."

For many in the class, the program's impact has endured well beyond their career paths. "Seven or eight of us have stayed extremely close ever since," said Jon Hanessian. "We started holding reunions right after 1986 and have gotten together nearly every year to keep those bonds alive. Forty years later, this program is still what brings us back together." During the visit, we were also able to honor and celebrate the memory of Jon's father, John Hanessian Jr., one of the founding fathers of the Armenian Assembly.



From left, Richard White, Ruth Zeronian Edwards, Tanya Koshgarian Chakmakian, Lisa A. Kazanjian, Steve Coyne, and Jon Hanessian. Members of the Terjenian-Thomas Internship Class of 1986 and their families.



Class of 1986 alumni share career advice with the 2026 Armenia interns at the Yerevan Office



2026 interns with Assembly staff and the visiting Terjenian-Thomas Internship Class of 1986 alumni at the Assembly's Yerevan Office

COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Assembly of American Welcomes Six Armenia-Related Amendments

WASHINGTON — Members of Congress have submitted amendments to be considered by the House Rules Committee for the following bills: H.R. 4016, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2027, and H.R. 8595, the National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2027, aimed at securing the release of Armenian hostages unlawfully detained by Azerbaijan, strengthening Armenia's security, enforcing Section 907 restrictions, protecting Armenian Christian cultural heritage, and advancing accountability for Azerbaijan's ongoing actions against Armenia and the Armenian people.

The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) welcomes the introduction of these measures and commends Representatives Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Jim Costa (D-CA) and Gabe Amo (D-RI) for their continued leadership on issues of importance to Armenia and the Armenian people.

The Assembly strongly supports the following amendments:



Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL)



Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ)



Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA)



Rep. Bill Costa (D-CA)



Rep. Gabe Amo (D-RI)

Amendments to H.R. 4016 – National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2027

Rep. Frank Pallone's (D-NJ) amendment limits the President's ability to waive Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act until Azerbaijan takes demonstrable and verifiable steps to release Armenian hostages, withdraw its forces from sovereign Armenian territory, protect Armenian Christian cultural heritage, and cease the destruction of Armenian property in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Rep. Gus Bilirakis' (R-FL) amendment requires the Department of Defense to assess Armenia's security needs and identify additional U.S. security assistance should Azerbaijan fail to meet several conditions, including releasing Armenian hostages, withdrawing from sovereign Armenian territory, ceasing hostilities, recognizing the right of return for displaced Armenians, and preserving Armenian cultural and religious heritage. The amendment also restricts the President's ability to waive Section 907 if these conditions are not met.

Rep. Brad Sherman's (D-CA) amendment expresses the Sense of Congress that Azerbaijan should immediately and unconditionally release all Armenian hostages and calls on the United States to employ all appropriate diplomatic, economic, and legal tools, including full enforcement of Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act and consideration of Global Magnitsky sanctions, to secure their release.

Rep. Gabe Amo's (D-RI) amendment prohibits security assistance to Azerbaijan under Section 333 authority until Azerbaijan has released all Armenian hostages, withdrawn from sovereign Armenian territory, ceased hostilities against Armenia, recognized the right of return for displaced Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, and committed to protecting Armenian cultural, religious, and historical heritage.

Amendments to H.R. 8595 – National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2027

Rep. Jim Costa's (D-CA) amendment prohibits funds from being provided to Azerbaijan until the President certifies that Azerbaijan has satisfied several conditions, including taking steps to ensure the unconditional release of all remaining Armenian hostages and withdrawing Azerbaijani military forces from sovereign Armenian territory.

Rep. Costa also offered an amendment directing the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of State, to submit a report to Congress assessing the damage, destruction, and continued threats to Armenian Christian religious, cultural, and historical heritage sites in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh).

"At a time when Armenian hostages remain unlawfully detained in Baku and Armenian Christian heritage faces ongoing threats, these amendments demonstrate Congress' continued commitment to accountability, human rights, religious freedom, and a just and lasting peace," stated Armenian Assembly Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan. "The Assembly appreciates the leadership of these Members and urges Congress to advance these important measures."

The Rules Committee is expected to consider these measures as early as next week.

Ararat Home Holds Quarterly Luncheon

MISSION HILLS, Calif. — The Ararat Home welcomed approximately 350 guests to its Quarterly Tuesday Luncheon held on June 2, in the Deukmejian Grand Ballroom. Organized by the Ararat Home Ladies Auxiliary in coordination with Ararat Home administration and staff, the event brought together residents, supporters, volunteers and members of Armenian Relief Society chapters from throughout the Los Angeles area for an afternoon of fellowship, entertainment, and community spirit.

The Armenian Relief Society served as one of the luncheon's Grand Sponsors.

Guests were welcomed by Ladies Auxiliary Chair Ani Shorvoghlian, who expressed appreciation for the many individuals and organizations whose dedication and generosity continue to strengthen the Ararat Home community. Ararat Home Board of Trustees Chair Joseph Kanimian, Esq., thanked attendees for their steadfast support and commitment to the organization's mission and programs.

Kanimian thanked the Ladies Auxiliary and the Ararat Home staff for the success of the luncheon and then introduced H.E. Archbishop Kegham Khacherian, Prelate of the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Church, to deliver his remarks and to bless the tables. The Prelate praised the mission of the ARS as well as the service provided by the Ararat Home Board, Administration, and staff to the welfare of residents.



Members of the clergy at the Ararat Home luncheon

Entertainment was provided by Joseph Krikorian, whose performance added to the festive spirit of the gathering.

Ararat Home extends its sincere gratitude to its sponsors, dedicated volunteers, and the many supporters from the community whose participation and generosity continue to uplift and sustain the organization's important work. Their ongoing commitment helps enable Ararat Home to carry forward its mission of providing compassionate care and enhancing the quality of life for the residents it serves.

For generations, events such as the Quarterly Tuesday Luncheon have reflected the strong bond between Ararat Home and the community that supports it.

Arts & Culture

Oud Masters John Berberian And Antranig Kzirian Share Compositions at The Armenian Museum

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America presented a memorable evening of music on June 11 as part of their Music in Color concert series. The museum was honored to welcome legendary oud virtuoso John Berberian and acclaimed contemporary musician Antranig Kzirian for a captivating performance that bridged two generations of Armenian musical tradition.

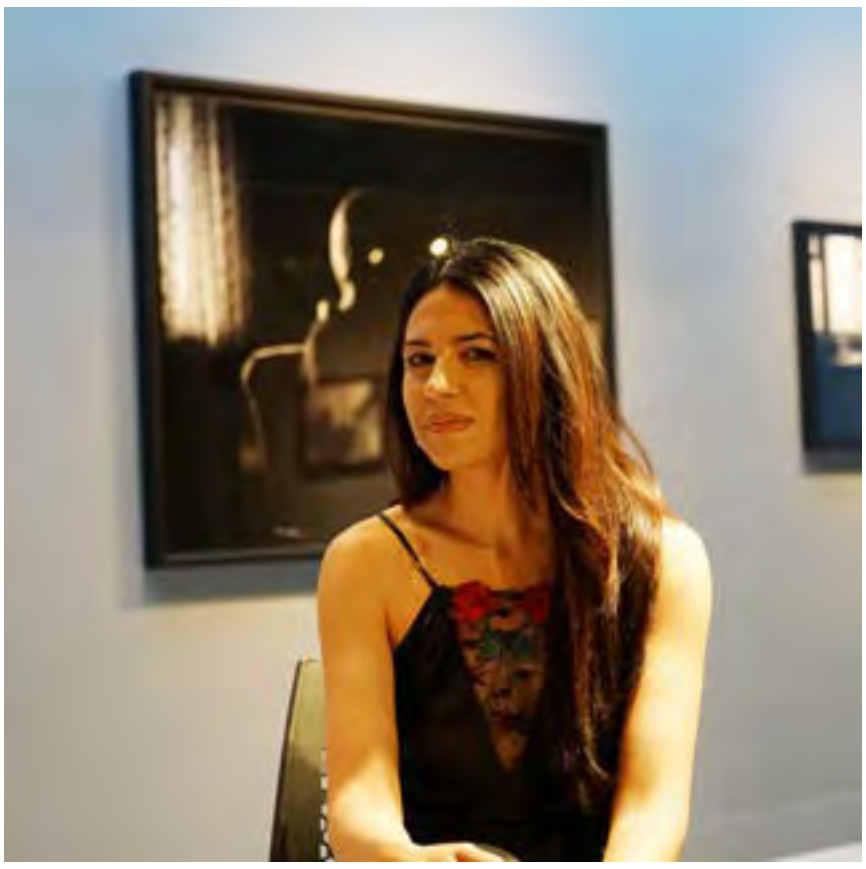
The duo performed 17 songs, including Gharapaghi Yeghnig, a beloved folk song from Artsakh that celebrates the region's natural beauty and cultural heritage, Ghujin Ara and Sari Nor Yar Jan, collected and arranged by Komitas, and Maggi Aghchigner, a spirited dance tune associated with the Meghri region and popularized in America on John Berberian's "Echoes of Armenia" album.

"The antiquity of the oud and the environment of the Armenian Museum with its timeless artifacts was a perfect venue for such a concert. Guests enjoyed exploring the exhibits, and for me, it will always be a night to remember," noted John Berberian after the performance.

Oud masters Antranig Kzirian (left) and John Berberian (right) performed at the Armenian Museum on June 11 (photo Natalie Nigito)

"A memorable experience to share the storied history and artistry of Armenian oud and simultaneously breathe new life into our endangered oud music. To accomplish all this at such a venerable institution made it all the more impactful and fitting," added Antranig Kzirian. "Cultural events such as this preserve and empower our community and serve a critical role to pass the responsibility as custodians of this music along to succeeding generations."

The Music in Color program fosters meaningful engagement with the museum's exhibitions through live performance and educational elements, inviting audiences to experience the rich tapestry of Armenian music and art. The program is now in its second year and is generously supported by Nancy R. Kolligian.



Diana Markosian (photo Aram Arkun)

Diana Markosian Exhibition Opening at Armenian Museum Features Discussion with Actress Angela Sarafyan

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN — The Armenia Museum of America continues on the path of prolifically offering audiences one stimulating art exhibit after another with the inauguration of "Father," an exhibit by artist Diana Markosian, on May 28. The artist participated in a discussion with actress Angela Sarafyan moderated by curator Anahit Gasparyan that evening.

The exhibit continues through September 13, and incorporates photography, film and narrative in Markosian's attempt to reconnect with her long absent father. It is co-produced by Les Rencontres d'Arles and FOAM Amsterdam and sponsored by the JHM Charitable Foundation.

The pairing of Markosian and Sarafyan, on the surface unexpected, brought out interesting contrasts of individual connections to identity, family, memory and art. Sarafyan had the opportunity to sit down and compare experiences with Markosian for the first time only two days prior to the event.

Markosian, born in Moscow but raised in the US, is a well-established American artist in her late 30s working across photography, film and installation. Her work has been exhibited internationally at such institutions as the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the International Center of Photography, National Portrait Gallery and FOAM Amsterdam. She earned a master's degree from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism in 2010.

The current exhibition is accompanied by her eponymous photobook Father, published in 2024. Markosian received the Madame Figaro Prize for both in

continued on next page



From left, Anahit Gasparyan, Angela Sarafyan and Diana Markosian (photo Natalie Nigito)

Marina Dédéyan

A Literary Mind Etched by History

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN-PARIS — Marina Dédéyan is a French novelist of Armenian and Russian descent. She was born in the port city of Saint-Malo and spent her childhood and adolescence in Montpellier. Coming from a family deeply shaped by history and literature, she inherited a passion for books and storytelling from an early age. She is the daughter of medieval historian Gérard Dédéyan and the granddaughter of literary scholar Charles Dédéyan. Marina published her first novel, Moi, Constance, princesse d'Antioche, the real story of an Armeno-French princess during the Crusades, in 2023. Her historical novels often combine adventure, family memory, and multicultural worlds, drawing inspiration from Armenian, Russian and European history. To date, she has published eight novels, including L'Aigle de Constantinople (The Eagle of Constantinople), De tempête et d'espoir (Of Storm and Hope), Là où le crépuscule s'unit à l'aube (Where Twilight Meets the Dawn), Les Vikings de Novgorod (The Vikings of Novgorod). She currently lives near Paris, where she works as a writer and a consultant in Change Management.



Dear Marina, it is rather rare among Armenians to come from a family of intellectuals whose cultural activity goes back to the nineteenth century. Your Smyrna Armenian ancestors played an important role in Armenian cultural life. Do you feel that writing and literature were somehow "in your genes"? How did your family background influence you as a writer?

My Armenian family's love of books began earlier. Before coming to Smyrna at the end of the 18th century, when my ancestors lived in Tomarza, in Anatolia, they bought an edition of the famous Armenian Bible of Amsterdam, which is now lost.

In the mid-19th century, they founded a publishing house to promote education for Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. They aimed to connect them through a unified language via literature and translations of

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The exhibition starts with Diana Markosian's "The Cut Out," Father Series, 2014-2024 (photo Natalie Nigito)

from previous page

2025. She is the author of two other books and is working on her first feature film.

Sarafyan is an Armenian-American actress who has been seen in many recent films, including "Superman" (2025), "Billy Knight" (2025), "The Promise" (2016), which portrayed the Armenian Genocide, "1915" (2015), "Lost and Found in Armenia" (2012), "The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn (Part 2)" (2012) and "A Beautiful Life" (2008). She has appeared in HBO's Emmy Award-winning drama "Westworld" and has a new Amazon Prime series coming out in the fall named "El Gato." This year, she received the Best Actress Award at the Malaga Film Festival in Spain for her role in the film "Quase Deserto" [Almost Deserted].

Gasparyan, who kept the discussion moving with comments and questions, is an art historian specializing in Armenian art and visual culture. She holds a master's degree in art history from Tufts University and has worked in curatorial, archival, and cultural heritage institutions, including the Getty Institute and the MassArt Art Museum. She began working for the Armenian Museum as its curator last September.

Separation vs. Integration

Markosian began the discussion on the nature of her project by declaring: "I think for me this is an attempt to build a relationship. I think ultimately my dad and I found each other after so many years, and I was a stranger to him, and vice versa. I didn't know my dad." In other words, it was an attempt to reconstruct something which did not exist for her.

She was seven when her mother found an opportunity to leave Moscow in 1996 and come to the United States by connecting with an American man in Santa Barbara, Calif., through a matchmaking agency. Her father and mother had separated before she was born and her father alternated living between Armenia and Moscow, where he would visit Markosian. He only found out through a letter in an empty Moscow apartment that his daughter, son and wife left for the US.

He spent the next 15 years trying to find out where they were, while Markosian said she grew up with the story that his father just left. Moreover, she and her mother were busy becoming Americans and she had a new American stepfather. In order to forget the past, her mother cut out her husband's image from all their photographs.

Her father later told her that he did not want to come to America because he was a single child and needed to take care of his own parents, while Markosian's mother had four siblings in a big family who stayed in Armenia.

Sarafyan said her experience was the opposite of that of Markosian, as both her parents came to the US together with Sarafyan, adding, "And Armenia was my home in Los Angeles. So there was no fragmentation. There was just a continuation." She added, "There's this question of Armenian identity and I think I was so lucky because it was never something separate or something that I was seeking. It was always just in the kitchen, in the living room. My grandma would cook…"

Sarafyan grew up in Hollywood from the age of four and recalled, "Every neighbor I had was Armenian. The grocery store, everything. I was not away from Armenia. I came to Armenia and Hollywood and I loved it."



The wallpaper in the Markosian home in Armenia is reproduced on the Armenian Museum wall where some of her works have been placed (photo Natalie Nigito)

Reconnection

On the other hand, Markosian said that when she went back to Armenia in her 20s, "I felt like a foreigner coming in. I had remembered my grandparents' home, of course, on my mother's side, and always just the warmth towards that." However, she said she did feel like she belonged there, especially from 2015 or 2016. She was making the current work, and she also spent time with her grandfather, a painter, as both her grandparents were alive.



Some of the letters written by Diana Markosian's father in search of his family and the responses received (photo Natalie Nigito)

Markosian explained that after she graduated school she became a photographer, and that became her compass and passport to travel all around the world. When she finally found her father, she and her brother went to Armenia and had two different experiences. When they first went to their father's home and he did not recognize them, her brother decided he was never going to come back.

Markosian, however, decided to move there and live with her father while she made her images. She said, "But also it was just so important for me to find that home within myself and within him and the country, the culture. I just wanted to make up for the thing that was broken in some small way."

Over the last ten years, Markosian would go back to visit and, she said, "It's like my attempt to make up for that lost time, my attempt to really bridge the experiences I didn't have." She is still trying to do this, she said, but with the absence of her grandparents there, despite still loving to go to Armenia, she again feels like a stranger there.

Ultimately, she discovered that she could not make up for the tears and sorrow in the past despite all her efforts. She said, "I think what I've done now is make a different story with him … And it's one that doesn't feel negative. It doesn't mean grief or joy. It just means that it's different."

Sarafyan noted that on the other hand, the first time she went back to Armenia was for work in 2010, to make the movie "Lost and Found in Armenia." Her father passed away when she was 19 and during her trip, she said she was almost able to relive her memories, which was magical. She went again during the commemoration of the centennial of the Armenian Genocide in 2015, which was a different experience, and the last time was last summer. She said, "I found Armenia to be this beautiful, beautiful, moving new country…It felt like it was reinventing itself, and there was opportunity that I never saw before, so it filled me with hope."

In fact, she declared, "Every time I'm there, I feel like I see all of my relatives and all the people that I don't know. I can see my grandmother who passed away. I can see my dad. I can see my sisters and brothers, and I'm so moved."

Creating One's Own Narrative

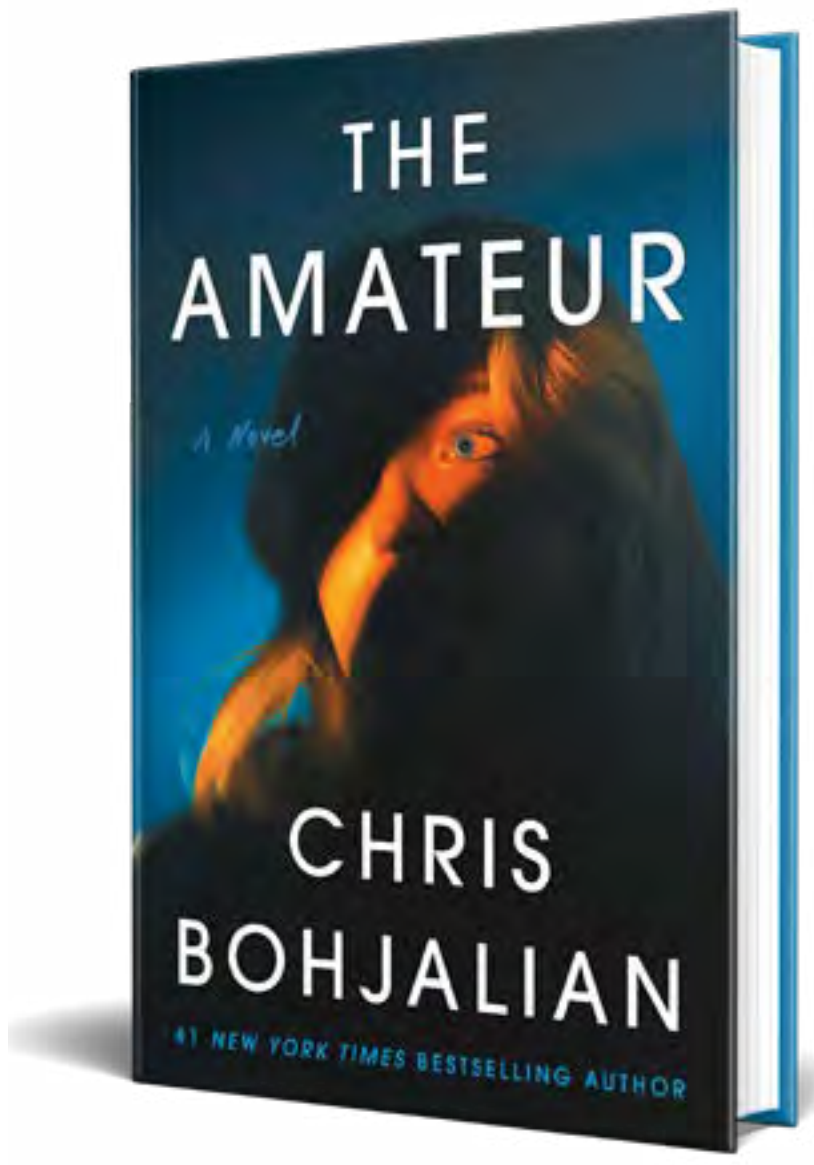
Gasparyan asked whether the two speakers used storytelling respectively in art or acting in order to reconstruct memory or something else, or instead to create an entire thing.

Markosian said, "I try to make sense of the world. I try to make sense of my own life. I think art has been there for me when I needed it. It's become almost a friend in my life where, when things go bad, I turn to it and it's there for me." She was able since she was 20 to use this language and way of understanding the world to confront it instead of running away, through film, photography and writing, and, she said, to express something deeper.

In closing, Markosian said, "I think for me, the most important thing as an artist or as a person has been to not be defined by a story, to not be a victim of a story, to not be defined by my mom's decisions." She wanted to have her own story and the courage and compassion to truly get to know her family and friends. That is what she wished the younger generations who look at her project and listen to this discussion would take away from it.

In the question and answer session with the audience that ensued, among other things, Markosian revealed that her first book, *Santa Barbara* (2020) was about her mother, whose story was more dramatic than her father's.

Armenian Museum to Host Acclaimed Authors Chris Bohjalian And Nancy Kricorian for Launch of *The Amateur*



WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America will host a literary conversation with bestselling novelist Chris Bohjalian and acclaimed author Nancy Kricorian in celebration of the launch of Bohjalian's latest novel, *The Amateur*.

The event will take place on Tuesday, August 11, at 7 p.m. at the museum. Bohjalian and Kricorian will engage in a thought-provoking discussion exploring literature, history, storytelling and the creative process, followed by a book signing and audience reception.

Recently named a *New York Times* book review "Novel Everyone Will Be Talking About in 2026" and an Oprah Daily Best Book of Summer 2026, The Amateur has already garnered widespread critical acclaim.

Set in 1978, *The Amateur* follows Mira, a teenage golf prodigy whose life is irrevocably altered after a tragic accident on a golf course. What begins as a devastating moment unfolds into a compelling story of heartbreak, resilience, class divisions, hidden secrets and the far-reaching consequences of a single event. Combining literary suspense, coming-of-age storytelling and courtroom drama, *The Amateur* has been hailed as one of the most anticipated novels of the year.

Publishers Weekly, in a starred review, called the novel "a masterpiece," while Kirkus Reviews praised it as "irresistible" and "a perfect novel." *Library Journal* described it as "an engrossing read that will offer much discussion for book clubs," and bestselling author Clare Leslie Hall called it "a joyous novel with an unforgettable narrator who will break your heart."

Bohjalian is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of more than 25 books, including *The Flight Attendant*, *The Sandcastle Girls*, *Hour of the Witch* and *The Lioness*. His novels have been translated into more than 30 languages and have earned numerous literary awards and distinctions. Known for his meticulous research and compelling storytelling, Bohjalian frequently explores themes of history, identity, justice, and human resilience.

Joining him in conversation will be Nancy Kricorian, an acclaimed novelist, essayist, and educator whose work examines the Armenian diaspora, memory, displacement, and intergenerational storytelling. She is the author of *Zabelle*, *Dreams of Bread and Fire*, *All the Light There Was* and *The Burning Heart of the World*. A respected voice in Armenian-American literature, Kricorian has taught at institutions including Columbia University and has been recognized for her significant contributions to contemporary Armenian literature and culture.

"This special evening brings together two extraordinary literary voices whose work explores themes of identity, history, memory, and the human experience," said Jason Sohigian, Executive Director. "We are delighted to welcome Chris Bohjalian back to the Museum for the Boston area launch of his twenty-sixth novel."

The museum is located at 65 Main Street, Watertown.

Admission is $35 for Museum Members (includes a signed copy of The Amateur) and $50 for Non-Members (includes a signed copy of The Amateur).

Space is limited, and advance registration is strongly encouraged.

For tickets and additional information, visit the Armenian Museum of America website at www.armenianmuseum.org/rsvp.

Marina Dédéyan: A Literary Mind Etched by History

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European writers such as Lamartine, Dumas, Hugo, Chateaubriand, Goethe, and Shakespeare. Thanks to this publishing house, many Armenians discovered these masterpieces of European literature in their own language and opened their minds to new ideas, become book lovers.

So, naturally, writing and literature are in my genes. However, when your ancestors have translated such great writers, it's difficult to become a writer yourself because you feel very humble and small compared to these giants. Somewhere, you have to break through a wall to find your place.

Having Armenian roots has had a strong influence on me as a writer. Because of their history, Armenians are connectors between countries, cultures, and civilizations. However, they are also strongly attached to their identity and past. When I write about the Crusades, the birth of Russia, the Seven Years' War, World War II, or the end of the Russian Empire, I explore topics such as turning points in history, lessons from the past, and the identity of peoples.

Your biography mentions connections between your ancestors and Alexandre Dumas, Friedrich Nietzsche, Rainer Maria Rilke, Ernest Hemingway and Marcel Pagnol. This sounds fascinating. Could you tell us a little more about these connections?

As the publishers of their works in the Armenian language, my ancestors corresponded with European writers, like Dumas or Hugo. Unfortunately, these letters were burned when Smyrna was destroyed. One famous letter has been saved: the one in which Victor Hugo thanks our cousin, Krikor Tchilinguirian, for translating Notre Dame de Paris.

My Armenian grandfather who was professor in comparative literature at La Sorbonne, had many connections among contemporary French writers.

My mother's side of the family had many friends and connections with writers and artists, too. One of my great-great-aunts was a close friend of Nietzsche and Rilke, whom she met in Germany and Switzerland.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, my Russian ancestors settled on the Côte d'Azur, where many famous artists lived. My great-grandmother met Marcel Pagnol, and one of my great-uncles became friends with Hemingway.

You are French, but your background is mainly Armenian, with some Russian, Latvian, German, British, and perhaps Celtic roots as well. How has this multicultural heritage shaped your personality and identity?

My background is primarily Armenian and Russian. Having a multicultural heritage makes you think differently because it opens your mind and heart to different references and gives you a unique perspective. This sensitivity increases when your ancestors are survivors of two tragedies: the Genocide and exile due to the Bolshevik Revolution. It creates a sense of uncertainty, as if the ground could give way beneath your feet or your beliefs could be thrown away at any moment. This makes you both strong and vulnerable, which is essential for creativity.

We met last May in Armenia. You visited Armenia for the first time relatively late in life. What were your impressions of the country? Did it feel familiar to you in some way?

The Armenian legacy is not easy to deal with. Despite having always been proud of my Armenian roots, I was somewhat frightened by the idea of facing it in Armenia. However, I was so deeply moved by the war in Artsakh in 2020 that maintaining a distance was no longer possible. Committing myself was not only a duty to my ancestors but also a necessary step in my life's journey.

Friends welcomed me so warmly that I really felt at home in Armenia. Reconnecting with my roots was also highly emotional, but in a peaceful way, like completing a puzzle.

My most significant feeling was that Armenia is a miracle. Located at the crossroads of great empires, it has experienced countless wars, invasions, and destruction throughout its long history. It should no longer exist. Yet Armenians, among the oldest peoples in the world, are still here, in their country, with their language and culture. It's so precious and exciting! Of course, the wounds are deep and the current issues are significant, but this miracle gives you incredible strength and trust.

I have a feeling that one day you will write something connected with Armenia or Armenian themes. If so, would you be more interested in the Armenian past or present-day Armenia?

As a trademark, I often include Armenians in the background of my novels, and my first heroine had an Armenian grandmother. I also wrote a novel about my experience as a French woman with Armenian roots facing the drama of Artsakh, which completely changed my view of the world and my connection to my roots. This text is still looking for a publisher.

One day, I will probably write a novel on a specific Armenian theme, most likely about the past and the connection with Europe. But who knows what subject could suddenly inspire me!

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian



Labneh Dip with Olives

"My mother used to keep a container of labneh on the top shelf of the refrigerator, nestled between jars of pickles and the bottle of pomegranate molasses that never seemed to run out. She'd spread it thick on slices of fresh bread, drizzle it with oil, and top it with za'atar, maybe some pickled turnips if they were on hand. It wasn't something she made from scratch, but it always felt homemade, especially when her hands were the ones scooping it onto the plate. Now, I make labneh almost every week. And this version, topped with warm Castelvetrano olives and infused lemon-garlic oil, is the one that seems to stick. Maybe it's the way the lemon zest perfumes the oil, or how the almonds crackle against the creamy yogurt. Maybe it's the quiet moment I get while stirring the olives on the stove, before the questions and messes of dinner begin," says Ksenia Prints.

Ksenia Prints is a food writer, blogger, photographer and recipe developer from Montreal, Canada. She blogs At the Immigrant's Table, a food blog showcasing healthy, beautiful international recipes for adventurous home cooks. She loves to highlight ethnic cuisines and immigrant cultures by working with chefs from relevant countries and adapting those recipes to gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian, sugar-free and other dietary restrictions. The CEO and Founder of Prints Media, Ksenia is an accomplished, accredited and professional writer and journalist with over 20 years of experience in the publishing world. She is dedicated to publishing authentic, original and human-produced content in a world filled with an ever-growing amount of artificial intelligence (AI).



Ksenia Prints is a food writer, blogger, photographer and recipe developer from Montreal, Canada (Photos courtesy https://immigrantstable.com/labneh-dip-with-olives/)

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup plain Greek yogurt, full-fat for best texture
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup olive oil
2 cloves garlic, peeled and lightly crushed
Zest of 1 lemon, reserve a few strands for garnish
1 cup Castelvetrano olives, pitted or whole*
2 tablespoons sliced almonds
Flaky sea salt to taste
Za'atar to taste

PREPARATION:

Line a mesh strainer with two layers of cheesecloth and place it over a deep bowl. Add the yogurt, sprinkle in the salt, and gently fold the cloth over the top. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 8–12 hours. The yogurt will thicken into rich, tangy labneh.

In a small skillet over medium heat, pour in the olive oil. Add the garlic and lemon zest. Let them sizzle gently for 2–3 minutes until fragrant and just golden at the edges. Add the olives to the skillet and stir occasionally for 3–4 minutes. They should be soft and glistening, not browned. Remove the olives and garlic with a slotted spoon and set aside. Save the infused oil.

Spoon the thickened labneh into a shallow serving bowl. Create swoops and divots in the surface with the back of your spoon. Top the labneh with the warm olives, garlic, and a few strands of lemon zest. Drizzle with the infused oil. Finish with toasted sliced almonds, a sprinkle of za'atar, and flaky sea salt.

For this recipe, go to: https://immigrantstable.com/labneh-dip-with-olives/

* From Bon Appétit: "Castelvetrano olives are widely beloved for their exceptionally mild, buttery, and slightly sweet flavor profile, which lacks the intense bitterness or overpowering brine of many other green olives. Originating from Sicily, these 'Nocellara del Belice' olives are prized for their bright green hue, meaty texture, and crisp, satisfying bite."

Ksenia has traveled to every continent, except Asia, in search of inspiration and culinary experiences, eating in Michelin-starred restaurants and street food stalls in Jordan, Athens, Copenhagen, Mexico City, and New York City. Her favorite culinary trip involves cooking in the back of an RV across the Golden Coast of Australia.

At The Immigrant's Table

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ARTS & CULTURE

Akçam and Bazyler Call for Focus on Armenian Genocide Restitution Starting with Looted Art

AKÇAM, from page 1

Akçam Introduces the Topic

Akçam noted that, "for decades, genocide recognition became almost like the skin color of the Armenian diaspora — its defining identity, its beginning and its end, especially here in North America. We all remember the Aprils, the intense anticipation, and the recurring anxiety over whether the American president would use the word "genocide." And each time, the outcome brought disappointment."

While things changed after the recognitions by both chambers of the US Congress in 2019 and President Joe Biden in 2021, he said "They left the central question of justice unresolved. And without justice, recognition is ultimately meaningless."

External pressure on Turkey, he opined, would lead to little practical results, while the current government of Armenia, caught between Azerbaijan and Turkey, appears inclined to put historical issues in the background. Consequently, he wondered, "does the American political and legal system offer us avenues to move forward toward justice? What should we do after recognition?" He and Bazyler organized their first conference in 2023 in part to answer this question, he said.

The answer, he declared, was to move beyond attempting to get outside states to pressure Turkey. Instead, he concluded, "what we need to do in the United States is to lay the foundations for a reparation movement." He said that he and Bazyler realized that one starting point could be the creation of the Armenian Genocide Looted Art Project, as the return of confiscated or stolen property, especially artworks, is an important part of this reparation process.

Though artworks are only a small portion of the sphere of reparations, Akçam remarked that "they are powerful symbols and tangible evidence of loss – the loss of a civilization." Moreover, whether Turkey acknowledges or denies the Armenian Genocide would be irrelevant for this project.

He suggested using the Holocaust restitution movement as a model for Armenians. He defined the former through three phases. First, immediately after victory, the Allied powers in 1945 attempted to recover and return Nazi-looted artifacts, including Jewish property, but these efforts were only partially successful. Second came negotiated settlements, while the third, starting in the 1990s, focused on litigation in US courts.

Armenians only have gone through the first stage in part.

The AGLA research project was launched at UCLA with the intention of being part of a broader Armenian Genocide restitution movement. Akçam said that institutions like NAASR, the Ararat Eskijian Museum, the Fresno State Armenian Studies Program and the Armenian Film Foundation, along with scholars in the field like Michael Bazyler, Jonathan Petropoulous, a historian of Holocaust looted art, Lauren Fielder from the University of Texas School of Law, Levon Chookaszian, chair of the History and Theory of Armenian Art at Yerevan State University, and Christina Maranci, Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies at Harvard University, are working with AGLA.

The group compiled a list of Armenian art objects held in American museums, as this had never been done before, and are now uncovering the provenance of various objects, which, he said, "will attract broader public attention."

"Our guiding principle," he said, "is simple: whatever has been done for the Holocaust should also be done for the Armenian Genocide. And in fact, not only for Armenians – but for all cases of mass violence." A framework could be established for identifying, cataloguing, and pursuing the restitution of Armenian cultural property and legislation enacted creating a legal foundation for claims.

However, he declared, "Without a strong political movement and the necessary institutional structures, none of these goals can be achieved….Following the Jewish example, we must build the institutional foundations of a restitution movement if we want to move forward."

Akçam also noted what he called a significant gap: those engaged in lobbying activities in Washington have not pursued binding legal initiatives in states like California similar to the 2016 Holocaust Expropriated Art Recovery (HEAR) Act of Congress (Congress recently expanded its scope).

Holocaust Restitution Movement as a Model

Bazyler, as he spoke about how the Holocaust's restitution movement could be a model for the Armenian Genocide, accompanied his talk with slides.

He declared that every mass atrocity, and in particular every genocide, incorporates not only mass murder but also mass plunder. He recalled that he learned about the Armenian Genocide as an undergraduate student at UCLA seeing commemorations of the event and learning more about it from various professors. Later, he had Armenian students in courses that he himself taught. He expanded the course he created in 2000 at Chapman University called the Holocaust and the Law in its second iteration to also include the Armenian Genocide.

He recalled that in the late 1990s during the Clinton Administration lawsuits began to be filed in American courts concerning the plunder of Jewish property during the Holocaust in Europe, which forced the defendants to pay attention to this issue. President Bill Clinton appointed Stuart Eizenstat as his special representative and Eizenstat began negotiations with various institutions throughout the world, including on Nazi looted art. Later in 2003, Eizenstat published a book about this called Imperfect Justice, while Bazyler as an academic wrote his own aforementioned book about the same topic.

Eizenstat convened a conference in 1998 which led to the Washington Principles, which are an 11-point nonbinding international code or framework on how to identify and return Nazi-looted cultural property. This process would start with the creation of a central registry of looted items. Bazyler said that this is what he and Akçam are trying to initiate with AGLA.

Bazyler said that litigation would be the last resort in this process to achieve restitution. The experience with Holocaust cases have shown that often museums or private owners acknowledge that items they possess were looted from Jewish families but are reluctant to give them up and insist that they now belong to them.

One case that was a major success, Altmann vs. Austria, and there was a Hollywood film about it, "Woman in Gold" (2015). Maria Altmann, Holocaust survivor, and



Dr. Michael Bazyler (photo Aram Arkun)

her husband escaped Austria to Los Angeles. Her aunt and uncle, the Bloch-Bauers, were major art collectors, with works of important artists like Gustav Klimt, who did two portraits of Adele Bloch-Bauer. The Nazis took all of his collection, to which Marie Altmann was the designated heir, and eventually the collection ended up in the Austrian National Gallery.

Altmann hired a young attorney, Randy Schoenberg, to sue the gallery through the US Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act. They won in court but Austria appealed to the US Supreme Court, which ruled that Austria was not immune from such a lawsuit. After this, Austria agreed to arbitration by a panel of Austrians, who ruled in 2006 that Austria was obligated to return the paintings to the heirs.

However, after that, Bazyler said, everything just went sideways. Another case of heirs who wanted the return of property looted by Hermann Goring went to the US Supreme Court which said the facts were different so the family couldn't recover their art. A lawsuit against the Metropolitan Museum of Art was lost in 2019 due to the statute of limitations. A loss of a case against Hungary took place in 2024, and a case of Holocaust heirs against actress Elizabeth Taylor for a Van Gogh painting her father purchased in London in the 1950s was also lost at the US Supreme Court earlier in 2007 due to technical reasons. Finally, Bazyler mentioned that the Norton Simon Museum won a case against a Holocaust survivor's heirs for possession of two 16th century paintings of Adam and



Dr. Taner Akçam (photo Aram Arkun)

Eve by Lucas Cranach the Elder due to technical reasons (the act of state doctrine) with the Supreme Court declining to review the verdict in 2019.

Bazyler then turned to the first Armenian case handled by AGLA. Lawyer Vartkes Yeghiayan asked Bazyler to come with him to talk with the Getty Museum in California about some pages from an Armenian illuminated medieval manuscript called the Zeytun Gospels which the museum had obtained. A lawsuit was filed in 2010 and Yeghiayan rented a bus with elderly Armenians to fill the courtroom. The judge decided that the pages were the patrimony of the Armenian people, and did not dismiss the lawsuit, which led to the Getty Center to come to what Bazyler called a Solomonic settlement. The Getty agreed that the five pages belonged to the Armenian Church, because under US law, a thief can never transfer a title. It does not matter whether the possessor knew the items were stolen. A settlement ceremony took place where the Gospel's pages were symbolically handed to the representative of the Western Armenian Prelacy, who in turn declared that for their preservation, they should stay with the Getty.

Bazyler said that they could have gone on to trial, but there is some risk of losing, as the Holocaust art cases he mentioned indicate. Afterwards, he said, "we realized that this is just the tip of the iceberg. There's much more stuff because we were doing research there."

He and Akçam then held a conference in March 2023 called "What's Next?: Armenian Genocide Restitution in the Post-Recognition Era," where Ambassador Eizenstat was the keynote speaker. Carla Garapedian made a documentary about this conference. A second conference in February 2024 at UCLA called Armenian Genocide Looted Art and Restitution examined the role of cultural heritage, Bazyler said.

Over the summer between the two conferences, Bazyler said that AGLA brought together law students, art students, Armenians and non-Armenians to divide the US into regions and search for Armenian art in each area. They reported what they found at the February 2024 conference.

The plan when they find looted Armenian pieces, Bazyler said, is not to immediately sue the museum but instead ask for a fair and just resolution. He said, "What that fair and just resolution will be, I don't know, but it becomes – and I'll use the same term as for Holocaust restitution – a measure of justice."

A lively discussion ensued with questions from the audience, which included pointing out earlier efforts aimed at reparations concerning the Armenian Genocide.

Books

Alex Vartan Gubbins' Decoding the Hill of Dead Kings: A New Voice Makes Its Mark



By Christopher Atamian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

In a promising if uneven first collection, *Decoding the Hill of Dead Kings*, Alex Vartan Gubbins produces poetry that is at times profound and mournful.

Born in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, the writer moved to Armenia with his wife, Emily, in 2017 and now teaches at the American University of Armenia while raising their two children. A descendant of Armenian Genocide survivors, Gubbins brings both inherited memory and lived experience to these poems, which explore family, shared memory, Armenia, and the histories of indigenous and displaced peoples.


Alex Vartan Gubbins

Many of the poems about Armenia are moving, suggesting that the poet's long attachment to Armenian culture has at last found fulfillment in his decision to settle there. I found it problematic however that the collection opens with "Declaration," which reads as follows:

"Have you ever lost a country?
The Armenians have
three times
in 108 years.
The latest
2023."

This poem casts Armenian history itself as a narrative of loss and victimhood; one the diaspora seems reluctant to abandon even as many Armenians in the Republic have had to move beyond it to get on with everyday life. As an opening gesture, then, this declaration frames the collection in advance, inviting the poems to be read through a politically inflected historical lens. In "For Artsakh," for example, the verse likewise turns toward a narrative of loss:

"For Ashot the shepherd who lost all but a lamb of his flock
to rocket fire, let us pray (…)
For Armen and Nane of Hadrut, who'll never step into
the orchard they planted their first tree in together,
placed lavash over the shoulders and danced kochari,
heard their daughter cry together for the first time, let us pray (…)
For Vartan, whose grapevines may not know his hands for another harvest,
let us pray."

Gubbins has every right to grapple with the recent trauma of Artsakh, but setting questions of content aside, this poem might also benefit from a more inventive approach to rhythm and imagery. Here, for instance, the refrain "let us pray" feels somewhat facile, as does the catalogue of Armenian cultural markers (church, lavash, apricots, kochari). The repetition of historical material is not in itself the issue; what matters is reworking it with sufficient originality. Lori Bedikian (*Jagadakeer: Apology to the Body*) and Shahe Mankerian (*History of Forgetfulness*) have recently written compelling work on the Lebanese Civil War and its aftershocks, though they are by no means the first poets to tackle this subject matter.

In other places, Gubbins displays an original and lyrical voice, as in "The Dead Grenade," where he writes playfully:

"I break open a pomegranate, choose blackening reds.
Stuck to the hive-like pulp. Pluck them one by one.
The unpucker from skin is like a lover's pull from lips,
when divots are made, when gums feel the sucking cool
between teeth, when fingers learn the weight of dead kernels."

The alliteration of "pluck" with "unpucker," together with the deft use of the latter verb's nominalized form, pleases both eye and ear. "Between teeth, when fingers learn the weight of dead kernels" stands out for its striking imagery.

And then there is the love poem to his wife, "Isn't It Only Stone?", which beautifully captures fragments of time and place:

"I want to pour the sunset into my water bottle, pass it to her,
tell her I'll always put poems about sailing into the seas beneath
her morning glass of orange juice. (…)
But now she stares ahead. Sunrays in pupils.
I tell myself it doesn't matter. The want to make
isn't what the world needs. The rays between us are
what matter. The whispers before we sleep."

Interestingly, it is the sequence of poems on the couple's return to Michigan that proves most effective. Rendered in a prose-poetic style, the language aligns closely with themes of pride and survival against the cold, barren winter landscape that has been home to the Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) people since time immemorial. This effect may stem from Gubbins' greater critical distance from this material. Whatever the reason, these passages vividly convey a sense of oneness between human life and the natural world. Here, his descriptions of the Upper Peninsula's stark terrain become powerful and elegiac. In "Travelogue #1," using simple declarative sentences, the writer seems to merge effortlessly into the surrounding water:

"Crossing into the Upper Peninsula, the pine trees block out the moon, the light slips through the trunks onto the road. We stop at Brule River to hear the rushing water. On the other side of the river at a clean tributary is fresh watercress. I walk in my jeans across the current, rocks and sticks at my feet. I bag chunks of watercress into an empty shirt tied at my arms. When I emerge, my calves are numb."

Never have I read a description of watercress harvesting rendered with such quiet, memorable elegance. Later in the same poem, his homeland also becomes a subject of well-rendered wonder, as the Upper Peninsula and the Georgian Armenian region of Javakhk (which he spells Javakhq) merge in memory and imagination:

"I am back in the field now in Javakhq as we drive through the pine forest nearing Lake Superior. The field and forest become a single feeling."

The passage concludes with two powerful sensory images — one visual and one olfactory: "I sketch with my eyes. The pine scent enters the field."

In "Into the Forest," the couple goes to live in the woods among Ojibwe as they await the birth of a child. Here the reader feels drawn into a dark, beautiful, and almost magical world:

"Our neighbor's mother is Anishinaabe, which makes him Anishinaabe, which most people know as Ojibwe, the language he uses for the land dips with the environment, madwezigaashkaa heard something far off in the waves, as we lie in bed at night ignoring the waiting the ice croaks in the eaves, aashkaa aashkaa, I whisper."

By implicitly comparing Anishinaabe and Armenian history, these entries invite readers to move beyond purely nationalist discourse—as an increasing number of queer and young leftist Armenian scholars are doing—and to interrogate the role of capital and racial supremacy in the global dynamics of colonization and ethnic cleansing.

Overall, Gubbins has produced a layered and welcome first collection with an arresting title. While some poems feel more fully realized than others, the book reveals a poet of promise. If he continues to develop both his formal range and thematic concerns, this poetic cocoon may indeed give rise to something impressive.

Decoding the Hill of Dead Kings is available for purchase from Wayne State University, HFS Books, Dussman, and Amazon.

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.

JUNE 27-SEPTEMBER 13 — Armenian Museum of America, "Father" exhibit by Diana Markosian tracing her journey through photography, video, and archival materials, exploring themes of loss, identity, and belonging. Markosian creates a poignant narrative that resonates across generations and diasporic experiences. U.S. debut. Curated by Anahit Gasparyan. Sponsored by the JHM Charitable Foundation. Please visit: https://www.armenianmuseum.org/diana-markosian Thurs.-Sun., 12pm-6pm 65 Main Street, Watertown.

AUGUST 2 — Saints Vartanantz Annual Church Picnic, 12 Noon – 5:00 p.m., Music – Food – Dancing featuring the Jason Naroian Ensemble. 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford.

AUGUST 11 — An evening of conversation with Chris Bohjalian and Nancy Kricorian celebrating the launch of Bohjalian's latest novel, The Amateur. 7 p.m. Armenian Museum of America, 65 Main Street, Watertown. For details & to RSVP, visit https://www.armenianmuseum.org/events/celebrating-the-amateur-chris-bohjalian-with-nancy-kricorian or call 617-926-2562 x102.

AUGUST 23 — ANNUAL PICNIC 12-5 p.m. Lamb Shish Kebab, Chicken Kebab, Losh Kebab and Kheyma. Pastries Table and Armenian Coffee. Live music by the Jason Naroian Ensemble. Holy Archangels Armenian Church, 1280 Boston Rd., Haverhill.

SEPTEMBER 15 — ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT at Hickory Hill Golf Course 200 North Lowell Street, Methuen. 7:30 a.m. registration, 9:00 a.m. Shotgun Tee-Off; sponsored by Holy Archangels Armenian Church; for more information, contact Mark Kazanjian (508) 633-7447 or Markkaz55@gmail.com

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.

COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR
SINCE 1932

An ADL Publication

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EDITOR
Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR
Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR
Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

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

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT
Haykaram Nahapetyan

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755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472-1509
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FAX: 617-924-2887
www.mirrorspectator.com
E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com
For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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Will the Results of the June 7 Elections Ever Be Finalized?

The absence of a credible, nationally recognized supervisory institution renders the political atmosphere in Armenia unhealthy.

The national elections of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia took place on June 7 in an unprecedentedly tense atmosphere.

The central message of our pre-election statements was to keep the voting public aware that, especially in the case of these current elections, the outcome is not simply the election of a government with one or another political orientation. Rather, the outcome of the elections will determine the fundamental changes to be adopted in the national character of our homeland for many years to come.

The focus of all the countless discussions and analyses was clear. One side, led by the Civil Contract, used as its main promise to convince the voters that its primary policy was to ensure peace in Armenia, at the cost of making every concession to Turkey and Azerbaijan. The other side, adhering to our traditional national values and sanctities, and the defense of the state, among its priorities, also promised a peace, which, however, would also preserve the dignity of the Armenian people.

It was under these conditions that the elections took place.

While in every place and in every country, in the course of elections, some small number of electoral violations inevitably occur, what occurred in Armenia was totally unacceptable.

This article is neither the place to present the unusually long and detailed list of violations of internationally accepted electoral standards committed throughout the entire process of holding these elections, nor is there space enough here to do so. It is a fact, however, and we can confirm without exaggeration, that following the elections, both the outgoing government, which today presents itself as the party that secured the majority of votes, and the collective of opposition parties, are accusing and qualifying each other as the party that committed the most extreme and widespread electoral violations.



This extreme situation is simply unacceptable for the Armenian people, especially considering, as we have underlined, the fateful nature of the current elections. So, to start with, in order to exclude any partisan position, we are led to conclude that these elections are invalid. However, let it also be definitely known that when, and if ever, the true facts are revealed, we and the entire Armenian people are ready to bring our unwavering harsh condemnation to the guilty parties, whichever they may be.

In civilized countries, electoral violations are immediately subjected, with very few possible exceptions, to the scrutiny of politically unquestionable, balanced election-supervising bodies accepted by all, and in the end, the final results announced are not disputed.

That is why it is outright shameful, revolting and condemnable that, contrary to the great promises of democracy and justice in our modern Armenia, the aforementioned politically balanced and unquestionably accepted supervisory bodies worthy and expected of a civilized country, are clearly absent.

Indeed, in today's Armenia, it is now common knowledge that the two bodies that are supposed to be "impartial" and "respectable" — the Central Electoral Commission, and above that, the Constitutional Court — although both formally and supposedly independent, are practically and openly subordinate to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and the Civil Contract party.

As an inevitable consequence, today, weeks after June 7, for the general public of Armenia, all election results are considered disputable for one reason or another.

In any case, in order to be able to go a few steps further in this presentation, we will focus today on only one current case of heated controversy as a concrete example of arbitrariness. Indeed, in the current uneasy general situation, where there is still almost no real final agreement on the election numbers, perhaps we can consider the following picture, as initially accepted of the mandates, as the closest thing to the final figures for the parties receiving the most votes, apart from one major objection. The Civil Contract had received 61 seats, the Strong Armenia alliance 29, and the Armenia Alliance 12. The main subject of current debate is the Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK)'s 5 seats. Indeed the Central Electoral Commission, supposedly suddenly having "discovered" that a few dozen votes were missing from the thousands of votes received by the BHK, considered void those few dozen votes of the BHK and "in accordance with the electoral law" decided to completely cancel the BHK's 5 seats and also transfer 4 of the latter to the Civil Contract.

For the Central Electoral Commission, this indecent application of the current convoluted constitutional laws of Armenia has a fateful consequence, because the new government to be formed, which in any case has not received an absolute constitutional majority, having unjustly taken over these mandates from the BHK, will apparently have certain constitutional rights to appoint directly subordinate candidates to important positions, especially in the fields of justice and defense.

That is why the unjust and complete cancellation of the above-mentioned mandates of the Prosperous Armenia Party is the primary subject of today's debates, although as we mentioned, the movement to declare the entire election invalid has already gained great momentum.

Therefore, today the political atmosphere in Armenia is clearly extremely troubled.

Concluding our overview of this brief discussion of the election results, we regret to note that after an unprecedented period of 35 years of independence, the political administration in Armenia today is still in a clearly primitive and unacceptable state.

The worldwide Armenian diaspora, given its powerless position, is just following the explosive political developments that are taking new forms in Armenia every day.

Clearly, Armenia has not yet grasped the meaning of true democracy. The latter is merely a word used by the authorities to gain sympathy in domestic and foreign circles. However, the reality behind it is different and cannot be hidden for long.

The most important question for the Armenian people today is that if the June 7 elections, due to countless electoral violations, failed to transform the country's internal political atmosphere to one of constructive calm, what other means exist to inspire hope, at least to some extent, and to at least permit taking a few steps towards that goal so necessary for our nation.

Although this may be considered wishful thinking by some, we can optimistically propose one possibility, as a first and great step of national cooperation in our history, counting on the sincere and idealistic willingness of all, the formation of an Emergency and Independent Commission for the Evaluation of the June 7 Elections as soon as possible. The latter would encompass highly qualified groups and individuals who enjoy the trust of the general public, especially in Armenia, as well as in the diaspora. This commission should be given the extremely difficult mandate of conducting a substantive examination of all the data and violations of the June 7 elections and determining the methods of their revision. In the event of this becoming impossible, then following successful international examples, a fundamental reform of the electoral rules, acceptable to all, should be formulated, so that the country of Armenia can organize new and acceptable elections under peaceful conditions within the next one or two years, with fair and indisputable results expected.

Please do not be hasty in greeting this proposal with a grin. We know that this solution is very difficult to implement and will also be considered dreaming by many "smart" circles and individuals. Therefore, when people get ready to reject this proposal, it is expected that a better, workable version of a solution be proposed instead, in which case we are ready to give it our full support.

The main point, dear compatriots, is that the current situation of a post-election politically uncivilized Armenia is unacceptable. To say the least, it is a great shame for us.

Armenia cannot be allowed to continue to languish, stuck in its current primitive political administrative practices.

The Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Coordinated Press
June 22, 2026

(The above editorial has been translated from the Armenian original.)

COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan May Strip the Citizenship of Armenians Who Didn't Vote for Him

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is becoming increasingly intolerant to all those who disagree with him.

In the midst of the June 7 parliamentary elections, Pashinyan illegally ordered the arrests of hundreds of opposition members and several parliamentary candidates; prevented the leaders of opposition parties from leaving the country; and threatened to imprison them and ban their political parties.

Next, Pashinyan may not allow Armenians who oppose him to vote at all and may strip them of their citizenship. Does anyone still think that the government can be changed through elections?

The latest problem began when Pashinyan heard that a large number of Armenian citizens living in Russia were planning to travel to Armenia to vote in the June 7 parliamentary elections. Initially, he falsely claimed that he was not worried about them, since he was certain that they would be voting for his political party. However, not believing his own claim, he announced that they would be intercepted when entering Armenia and subjected to a 25-day military training. In addition to preventing these Armenians from voting, he denigrated the patriotic act of military service by presenting it as a form of punishment.

When Armenians ask why Diaspora Armenians who are not citizens of Armenia are not allowed to vote in the Armenian elections, I tell them they should be much more concerned about the fact that around one million Armenian citizens, who have lived abroad since the country's independence, are not allowed to vote in their homeland's elections, unless they are in Armenia on election day. No one has the right to deprive Armenian citizens who live overseas of exercising their fundamental right to vote. This is why over 150 countries allow their overseas citizens to vote.

The problem became much more serious after Pashinyan's government decided to place residency requirements on Armenian citizens who travel to Armenia to vote. To make sure that never again those who are opposed to the regime can fly to Armenia at the last minute to vote, Pashinyan's parliamentary allies announced last week that they are planning to amend the law to require that all citizens who come to Armenia from overseas to vote can only do so if they have lived in Armenia for at least six months prior to the elections.

This is wrong and discriminatory. Pashinyan has no right to treat the citizens of Armenia who live overseas as second-class citizens. No one has the right to deprive Armenian citizens of the right to vote.

Instead of recognizing that the Diaspora is a valuable asset, Pashinyan is trying to discourage its members from any involvement in their homeland. The Diaspora is much more than a "milking cow." They can contribute to Armenia's prosperity through their investments and expertise. A small nation, having survived centuries of persecution, massacres and even genocide, should not be split into smaller factions. Pashinyan has already divided them into former vs. current leaders, Hayastantsis vs. Artsakhtsis, Hayastantsis vs. Diasporans, and now internal vs. external citizens. He should follow the call for unity issued by prominent poet Yeghishe Charents: "Oh, Armenian people, your only salvation is in your collective power."

When Pashinyan first came to power in 2018, he dismantled the Diaspora Ministry, the only existing link between Armenia and the Diaspora. Instead, he created "The High Commissioner's Office of Diaspora Affairs of Armenia" headed by Zareh Sinanyan, who proceeded to destroy all the bridges between Armenia and the Diaspora. Pashinyan himself has made derogatory remarks about Diaspora Armenians, while meeting with them during his travels overseas.

Ironically, Armenia's enemies, Azerbaijan and Turkey, are the ones that recognize the importance of the Diaspora. Over the years, both President Erdogan of Turkey and President Aliyev of Azerbaijan have repeatedly commented that they have excellent relations with the Armenian government, but they are alarmed that "the powerful" Diaspora is interfering in their plans to exact maximum concessions from Armenia.

The Turkish and Azeri governments have given specific instructions to their embassies and consulates to follow closely the activities and statements of local Armenian communities. They monitor the Armenian media to be aware of the messages they communicate and the activities they are planning. The collected information is transferred to the foreign ministries of Azerbaijan and Turkey.

A recent example is the "Diaspora Mobilization Conference" which was held in Paris on April 11-12, 2026 in the presence of 170 Armenian activists from 26 countries, including three former Prime Ministers of Armenia and representatives from the Artsakh government.

Ilaha Khantamirova, an analyst at the Center for Eurasian Studies (AVIM) based in Ankara, wrote an extensive two-part analysis of the Paris conference. Here are excerpts from her report: "Pashinyan stands out as the first political leader in the history of independent Armenia to openly antagonize both the Armenian Church and the Diaspora. In particular, his shift in rhetoric regarding the Karabagh issue in recent years -- has caused serious rifts within Diaspora circles. Pashinyan's explicit acknowledgment that Karabagh constitutes Azerbaijani territory…signifies a major departure from traditional Armenian nationalist discourse."

Khantamirova also mentioned my speech at the Paris conference: "The proposal to establish a 'Diaspora Parliament' — put forward by writer Harut Sassounian — is significant insofar as it illustrates the magnitude of the tension that has currently emerged [between Armenia and the Diaspora]."

How can the leaders of Azerbaijan and Turkey be more interested in what the Diaspora is saying or doing than the Prime Minister of Armenia?

Armenia Between Russia and Europe

By Suren Sargsyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

In recent weeks Russia appears to have become increasingly concerned about developments taking place around Armenia. While it is reasonable to assume that the Russian leadership has received assurances from the Armenian government that Armenia does not intend to join the European Union, Moscow seems to be growing skeptical of those assurances.

Russian officials understand very well that EU accession is not a unilateral process. It is a long-term undertaking that requires commitment from both Yerevan and Brussels. Nevertheless, Moscow is clearly irritated by what it perceives as Armenia's search for opportunities to shift its geopolitical orientation.

Russia is also uneasy about the increased activity of both the European Union and the United States in the South Caucasus and particularly in Armenia. While the United States is pursuing its own state interests, Moscow believes that the EU is increasingly trying to draw Armenia into an anti-Russian political framework. Such a course does not serve either Armenia's national interests or even the interests of its current government.

As paradoxical as it may sound, the interests of the Armenian state and those of the Armenian government are not always identical. For Armenia, abruptly severing ties with Russia and burning bridges could create significant security and economic risks. For the Armenian government, however, such a move could also undermine its political position both domestically and internationally. Therefore, it is unlikely that the authorities would take such a drastic step.

Armenia's leadership appears to be attempting to balance the interests of both Europe and Russia, avoiding actions that would directly threaten either side's vital interests. However, there are growing signs of concern in Moscow that Armenia is trying to sit on two chairs at once — a position Russia finds unacceptable and has increasingly stated openly.

In essence, Moscow is sending Yerevan a clear message: if Armenia chooses the path toward the European Union, Russia will begin to treat Armenia in much the same way it treats the EU itself — that is, as an adversary.

It should be emphasized once again that Armenia still has a very long road ahead before EU membership could become a realistic possibility. Nevertheless, Moscow may decide not to wait until that process advances significantly and could instead begin taking preventive measures at an earlier stage to discourage such a trajectory.



These tensions are further heightened by statements coming from the European Union suggesting that Armenia should gradually reduce its dependence on Russian influence. Such rhetoric only adds to the growing unease in Moscow regarding Armenia's future geopolitical direction.

Moscow is taking very seriously everything related to the European Union and the prospect of its further enlargement. This is understandable, given the increasingly hostile nature of relations between Russia and the EU.

At the same time, the need for Armenia to deepen its ties with the European Union and diversify its foreign policy is also understandable. Efforts to diversify Armenia's external relations were undertaken under all previous Armenian administrations and generally produced positive results.

However, the current situation is fundamentally different. Russia now openly declares that it is engaged in a direct confrontation with the European Union on the Ukrainian front, making all parties involved far more sensitive to developments than in the past. It is precisely in this tense environment that Armenia and the EU are attempting to deepen their relations, while European actors are providing direct political support to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. Naturally, Moscow views these developments negatively.

As a result, Armenia may find itself under growing pressure to make a choice between competing geopolitical centers of power. Yet Armenia is in no position to make such a choice at this stage, because any decisive move toward one side would likely be interpreted as a hostile act by the other.

Consequently, the current circumstances require Armenia to exercise considerable caution, patience, and strategic restraint. Avoiding actions that touch upon the most sensitive issues for either side may be essential, as missteps in such a complex geopolitical environment could lead to serious and potentially far-reaching consequences.

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

Review: Weaving Culture — from Nagorno-Karabakh to Yerevan, Knot by Knot

By Mariam Shonia

For decades, traditional Armenian carpets have worked within a strict grammar: the double-knot technique; a color palette drawn from the land — madder root, pomegranate rind, walnut bark; and rarely more than 10 to 12 colors in a single piece. The motifs are geometric and symbolic.

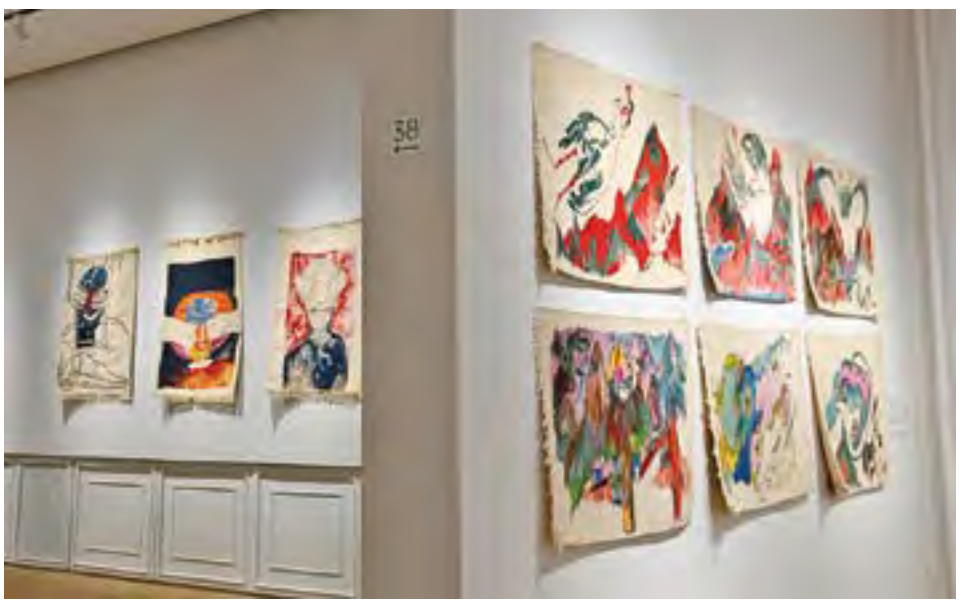
Walking into Weaving Culture at the National Gallery of Armenia, that grammar is immediately, and deliberately, changed.



The exhibition was conceived by the curatorial practice AHA collective and curated by Nairi Khatchadourian. It presents 37 handmade carpets and tapestries produced over nine months by six women weavers displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh, working from drawings made by the Armenian-Egyptian-Canadian artist Anna Boghiguian during her residency at AHA's studio in July 2025. The exhibition is Boghiguian's first solo project in Armenia.

The show is structured in three acts across four gallery halls, though in practice the space reads as continuous — the visual consistency of the works, their shared palette and sensibility, creates the feeling of moving through a single extended argument rather than through separate rooms.

The first gallery opens with the landscapes of Armenia: suns, mountains, cattle. Here the carpet becomes an inhabited space. A crouching female figure appears in 'Meghri, The Earth Rises', invested with mythological force — at once a portrayal of a guardian and an allegory of resistance, setting the tone for what the exhibition's own text describes as 'a fragile territory where this feminine presence emerges'.



Anna Boghiguian's Weaving Culture exhibit at the National Gallery of Armenia (photo Xandie (Alexandra) Kuenning/OC Media)

In the second gallery, the narrative shifts. The carpet becomes a woven garden, a symbolic threshold, transporting the viewer toward the river Aras. By the third, the work has moved from the real to the imaginary, and from the imaginary to the metaphysical.

The carpets range from painting-sized pieces to large-scale works. The largest are the most immersive: what you read from a distance transforms as you approach and the texture of the weave asserts itself. The woven surface adds a physical weight and warmth which Boghiguian's watercolors, while surprisingly still bright, are lacking in intensity.

The color is the first provocation when entering the space — nothing like what a visitor expecting a carpet exhibition might anticipate. Boghiguian's drawings transformed into wool required more than 200 distinct dye formulas, the work of two dyers: Evgenya Shabazyan, a chemist with 40 years of secret formula notebooks, and Mariam Nalbandyan, who forages wild Armenian flora for natural pigments. Shabazyan's notebooks — handwritten columns of chemical ratios with wool swatches tucked between pages — are displayed alongside the finished carpets.

One practical issue is worth noting. Armenia's National Gallery is a large institution with a great deal in it, and Weaving Culture is not staged in a way that actively draws in visitors who have not specifically come to see it. For anyone entering the building without prior knowledge of the exhibition, it risks being missed.

Weaving Culture is on view at the National Gallery of Armenia in Yerevan until August 15, 2026.

(This article originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on June 22.)

LETTERS

Coverage of Armenia Distorts Reality

To the Editor:

I am writing as someone from the Watertown Armenian community who has long valued the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, and also as someone now living in Armenia on a permanent basis.

My concern is not that Armenia's government should be spared criticism. Quite the opposite. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his government should be questioned, criticized and held accountable, as should any democratic leadership. Armenia faces serious challenges, and honest scrutiny is necessary.

But I am increasingly concerned by the cumulative tone of some of the opinion pieces regularly published about Armenia. Too often, the message presented to diaspora readers is one of fear, despair, illegitimacy and suspicion, with limited counterbalance from voices offering a more nuanced view of life and politics inside Armenia today.

Two recent examples illustrate the problem.

Suren Sargsyan's article on Armenia's relations with the European Union framed Yerevan's foreign-policy diversification largely through Moscow's fears and sensitivities. It warned that Russia may treat Armenia as an adversary if Armenia moves closer to Europe, but it gave far less attention to Armenia's own sovereign right to diversify after Russia repeatedly failed to act as a reliable security partner. The result was a message that sounded less like balanced analysis and more like a warning that Armenia must avoid upsetting Moscow.

Harut Sassounian's recent article, "Pashinyan May Strip the Citizenship of Armenians Who Didn't Vote for Him," raised a legitimate debate about possible residency requirements for voting, but turned it into a far more alarming claim unsupported by the facts presented. A proposal affecting voting eligibility, however serious and debatable, is not the same as stripping citizenship from political opponents.

These are not isolated concerns. When diaspora readers are repeatedly exposed to articles portraying Armenia as hopeless, illegitimate, anti-diaspora, or captive to one man's alleged dictatorship, the cumulative effect can be damaging. It may discourage people from visiting, investing, volunteering, supporting institutions, or engaging with Armenia in a serious and constructive way.

Living here, I see an Armenia that is not perfect, but very much alive. People are working, building businesses, renovating homes, raising families, studying, investing, debating politics and trying to strengthen the country under extremely difficult circumstances. That Armenia is too often missing from the tone of diaspora commentary.

I have also noticed what appears to be a decline in seasonal Armenian-American visitors from the United States in recent years. Of course, many factors may explain that. But I cannot help wondering whether the constant stream of alarming and one-sided portrayals contributes to hesitation among diaspora Armenians who might otherwise visit, invest, or become more involved.

The concern is not that writers such as Sassounian or Sargsyan should not be published. They are entitled to their views. The concern is whether such commentary is being presented with sufficient balance, context, and editorial scrutiny, especially when serious allegations are made or when Armenia's choices are framed primarily through the fears and interests of outside powers.

There are many legitimate criticisms to make of the current government. But criticism loses credibility when nearly every development is framed as betrayal, dictatorship, capitulation or hostility to the diaspora, while Russia's conduct, the failures of Armenia's former leadership, and the pro-Moscow orientation of much of the opposition receive far less scrutiny.

The Armenian diaspora should be encouraged to engage with Armenia — not only emotionally, but practically: through travel, investment, education, cultural support, professional exchange, and long-term institution building. That requires trust, realism and honest debate, not a steady diet of fear and political despair.

The *Mirror* has an influential platform and a respected history. I respectfully hope it will use that platform to encourage fuller context, greater editorial balance, and a more responsible conversation about Armenia's challenges and choices.

Armenia-diaspora relations are too important to be shaped by sensational headlines, one-sided narratives, or commentary that deepens mistrust rather than understanding.

Berge Jololian
Yerevan/Watertown

Editorial Note: The *Mirror-Spectator* attempts to present wide-ranging coverage of news in Armenia and the diaspora, as well as a variety of editorial commentary. It covers many positive developments (e.g. Nvidia and the tech sector or achievements in arts and sciences), as well as more problematic issues like corruption or misuse of power, whether oligarchic or governmental. Editorial commentary, where at times expressions of anxiety over the policies of a variety of countries, such as Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, the US, or even Armenia, may appear, is kept distinct from news items..

The political scene in Armenia is inspiring a lot of debate, which is reflected in the pages of the *Mirror-Spectator.* Our newspaper attempts to preserve an openness to various points of view while context is present within the limitations of the newspaper format.