

Israel Suspends Parliamentary Vote on Recognizing Armenian Genocide

By Etgar Lefkovits TEL AVIV (JSN.org) — A critical Israeli parliamentary vote on recognizing the violence against Armenians by the Ottoman Empire during World War I as a genocide has been suspended, an Israeli official said Sunday, July 12.

The move comes at a delicate diplomatic time with the region facing renewed turbulence following the breakdown of a ceasefire with Iran over its persistent attacks in the Gulf. It also follows a NATO summit in Turkey last week at which Ankara pushed U.S. President Donald Trump to acquire American F-35 fighter jets.

The Israeli Cabinet had unanimously approved a proposal last month to classify the violence as genocide amid fast-deteriorating ties with Turkey over Erdogan’s inflammatory language against Israel, and a vote had been planned in the Israeli parliament to give final approval to the move. The Israeli official told JNS on July 12 that the vote had been suspended.

The Knesset is set to go to summer recess at the end of the week and will be out of session until the October 27 national elections.

A spokesman for Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar, who put forward the proposal in the Cabinet last month, did not return calls or messages for comment on Sunday.

In the past, Israel has refrained from officially labelling the century-old violence as a genocide, but with relations with Turkey in free fall, it went ahead with the move in the Cabinet.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has described the violence against Armenians as a genocide, but until now no formal vote was ever taken on the issue.

Turkey, which has been one of the biggest critics in the world of Israel over the war in Gaza, called the Israeli cabinet move “politically motivated.”

A decision to freeze the parliamentary vote could be seen as part of an international effort to reduce tension between the two countries amid the regional turbulence.

Last month, Azerbaijan condemned the



The Israeli Knesset

Israeli Cabinet’s recognition and urged the government to reverse the move.

The secular Shi’ite Muslim country has historic ties with both Turkey and Israel and has long worked to serve as an inter-

locutor between its two allies. Azerbaijan’s position is both significant and sensitive for Israel as Jerusalem and Baku have long forged a strategic relationship rooted in a centuries-long affinity between the two nations which has blossomed into a robust security- and energy-related focus.

Three years ago, Azerbaijan made history by becoming the first Shi’ite Muslim country to open an embassy in Israel, defying threats of violence from Iran, and has maintained its staunch alliance with Israel throughout this time of regional wars.

‘Red Line’

The Azerbaijani news outlet news.az, quoted the Israeli news outlet Ynet, to report that Baku viewed the move of formally recognizing the Armenian Genocide as crossing “a red line” and warned it could seriously damage relations between Azerbaijan and Israel, News.Az reports, citing Vestnik Kavkaza.

see VOTE, page 5

Armenian Opposition Figure Gagik Tsarukyan Arrested

By Yousef Bardouka Armenian authorities arrested the leader of the opposition Prosperous Armenia party Gagik Tsarukyan for alleged money laundering. The eccentric tycoon had recently run in the June parliamentary elections, but failed to make it to parliament. He has since been placed under investigation for financial crimes and a travel ban.

Tsarukyan appears to have been arrested on the evening of July 6. According to independent media outlet

CivilNet, his lawyer, Yerem Sargsyan, told lawyers that he was charged with aiding and abetting fraud and money laundering. He additionally claimed that he was detained as part of a case where he “should have been recognized as a victim.”

Sargsyan explained that the case involves the creation of a joint Armenian-Iranian chamber aimed at developing economic cooperation between the neighboring countries. He said that the proposed chamber had received necessary permits see ARREST, page 3



Gagik Tsarukyan campaigning in the Tavush region of Armenia in May 2026. Photo via social media.

Scholar, Journalist and Activist Barbara Merguerian Dies

WATERTOWN — Barbara Joyce Merguerian, a scholar, journalist, and activist and the former editor of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, died on July 7. She was 93.

The daughter of immigrants from Kharpert province in Central Anatolia, she and her late brother Zaven were born and grew up in Providence. Her close-knit extended family survived the hardships of the Great Depression, the Hurricane of 1938, and the mobilization of the country during the Second World War. She was class valedictorian see MERGUERIAN, page 8



Mary Ouzghoushian Vartanian, 111-Year-Old Genocide Survivor, Dies

JAMAICA PLAIN, Mass. — One of the last survivors of the Armenian Genocide, Mary Ouzghoushian Vartanian, died on June 28, surrounded by her family, at age 111.

Born on August 17, 1914, in Aintab, Turkey (in historic Cilicia) to Hagop and Maritsa Ouzghoushian, Mary Ouzghoushian Vartanian was the eldest of four children. She had two sisters, Alice and Ani, and their brother Kevork. At the tender age of eight, she and her family were forced to flee their homeland overnight see VARTANIAN, page 9



GERMANY

A Taste of Armenian Wines in Germany

Page 6



ITALY

Armen Agop: Touching the Invisible in Venice

Page 13



IN MEMORIAM

Wolfgang Gust (April 9, 1935 – June 11, 2026)

Page 20





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenia, Albania Discuss Expanding Cooperation

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenia's Ambassador to Albania Tigran Mkrtchyan (based in Athens) met with Erlind Sulo, Albania's Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and Energy, to discuss prospects for expanding bilateral cooperation, with particular emphasis on the energy sector, on July 14.

According to the Armenian Embassy, Mkrtchyan outlined the Armenian government's priorities in developing nuclear, hydropower, solar, and wind energy, underscoring the importance of energy security as a key component of the country's national security.

The ambassador proposed organizing reciprocal visits between the relevant authorities of the two countries and exploring the possibility of establishing a bilateral legal framework for cooperation in the energy sector.

Sulo welcomed the untapped potential for closer cooperation and expressed readiness to promote practical collaboration between the two countries.

European Parliament Discusses Armenians Held in Baku

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A conference titled "Armenian Political Prisoners in Azerbaijan and the Imperative of EU Engagement," took place on July 14 at the European Parliament, the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD) announced.

The conference was jointly organized by Members of the European Parliament Costas Mavrides of the Socialists and Democrats group from Cyprus, Miriam Lexmann of the European People's Party from Slovakia, and the EAFJD.

Its purpose was to provide an updated assessment of the situation of Armenian hostages in Azerbaijan. Participants also addressed concerns over politically motivated prosecutions, arbitrary detention and severe sentences, as well as their implications for Europe's human rights policy and EU-Azerbaijan relations, Factor.am reported.

Armen Ishkhanyan, son of Artsakh National Assembly President Davit Ishkhanyan, who has been illegally convicted in Baku on fabricated charges, is also attending the conference.

It was previously reported that Armenian prisoner of war Ludwig Mkrtchyan, held in a Baku prison, is fighting for his life. His lawyer, Luciana Minassian, disclosed the information.

"His heart is affected: left ventricular hypertrophy, diastolic dysfunction and aortic insufficiency. He also suffers from recurring headaches, dizziness, chest pain and high blood pressure. All this is concealed behind the official conclusion that his 'condition is stable.' No real treatment," Minassian wrote.

Ruben Vardanyan's Lawyer to Appeal to European Court

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A Yerevan-based lawyer representing Ruben Vardanyan, a prominent Armenian businessman jailed in Azerbaijan, said on Friday that she is preparing to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) against a 20-year prison sentence given to him earlier this year.

"We are in the preparatory phase, the case will be filed in a few weeks," Siranush Sahakyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

"We will demonstrate that the accusation is political, that no individual criminal act was ever committed by Vardanyan," she said. "The [Karabakh Armenians'] collective right to self-determination has been illegally qualified [by Baku] as terrorism."

Vardanyan, who held the second-highest post in Nagorno-Karabakh's leadership from November 2022 to February 2023, was arrested at an Azerbaijani checkpoint in the Lachin corridor in September 2023 as he fled the region along with its practically entire ethnic Armenian population. Seven other former Karabakh Armenian leaders were also arrested during the exodus that

followed an Azerbaijani military offensive.

Five of them were sentenced to life imprisonment while the two others as well as Vardanyan received 20-year jail sentences in February at the end of yearlong trials denounced by Amnesty International as a "travesty." They all denied a long list of accusations brought against them.

Unlike them, Vardanyan decided not to appeal against his sentence, saying that he does not want to legitimize the "politically motivated and unlawful" case.

Sahakyan said that Azerbaijani authorities have made the appeal to the ECHR possible by finally providing Vardanyan's legal team with the full text of the guilty verdict against him. In her words, they remain reluctant to do so with regard to the seven other former Karabakh leaders as well as any other Armenians remaining in Azerbaijani captivity.

"I think they are trying to hinder the process of filing international appeals," the lawyer claimed.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and other Armenian officials insist that Yerevan has been doing its best to try to secure the release of the Armenian prisoners. Their critics dismiss these assurances. Vardanyan

has likewise repeatedly accused the Armenian government of being indifferent to the prisoners' fate. He has repeatedly lambasted Pashinyan in statements from an Azerbaijani prison released through his family.

Davit Ishkhanyan, another former Karabakh leader held in Azerbaijan, has gone further, saying that Armenia's leadership does not want Baku to free them. Ishkhanyan repeated his claims in another audio message published by his family on Thursday.

"They [Azerbaijani officials] treat international bodies and the court with scorn and contempt," he said. "The worst thing is that they simply throw such thoughts in our faces: 'If your authorities are not doing anything and are not interested in your return, what do you want from international bodies or courts?'"

Armenian POW Fighting For His Life In Azerbaijani Prison, Lawyer Warns

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — An Armenian prisoner of war held in Azerbaijan is facing life-threatening health complications, his lawyer warned on Tuesday, July 14, accusing authorities of concealing serious medical findings and denying access to independent doctors.

Lyudvig Mkrtchyan, a former combatant captured in 2020, has been diagnosed with left ventricular hypertrophy, diastolic dysfunction, and aortic regurgitation, according to medical records shared by attorney Luciana Minassian. Blood tests also show his white blood cell count at 14.27 — nearly double the normal range — indicating severe inflammation. Despite repeated headaches, dizziness, chest pain, and dangerously high blood pressure, official reports continue to describe his condition as "stable."

"This is deliberate medical neglect of a 2020 POW," Minassian said, stressing that the International Committee of the Red Cross has no access to Mkrtchyan and that he has received no meaningful treatment. She urged the United Nations and international human rights bodies to intervene immediately.

Mkrtchyan and fellow Armenian POW Alyosha Khosrovyan were sentenced in August 2021 to 20 years in prison on charges dating back to the first Nagorno-Karabakh war. Human rights advocates argue that their continued detention violates international law, including the Geneva Conventions, which require the release of prisoners of war after the 2020 ceasefire agreement.

In January, the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR) sent a letter to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, calling Mkrtchyan's prolonged imprisonment and lack of medical care a "serious breach of international obligations." His wife, Hranush Shahbazyan, has also appealed for urgent action.

"Lyudvig Mkrtchyan is fighting for his life in prison," Minassian said.

HIKEArmenia Takes the Armenian National Trail Online: A Nearly 1,000 km Trail from North to South

YEREVAN — HIKEArmenia unveils one of the country's most ambitious long-term tourism and regional development initiatives: the Armenian National Trail (ANT), a nearly 1,000-kilometer village-to-village hiking route stretching across Armenia from north to south. Starting today, the newly launched Armenian National Trail website [https://www.armeniannationaltrail.org/], available in English and Armenian, gives hikers access to the first available trail sections in the Lori and Tavush regions, with maps, route information, insights, and practical tools to plan hikes across Armenia.

Developed by HIKEArmenia, funded by the H. Hovnanian Family Foundation, and strengthened through memorandums of understanding with the Tourism Committee of Armenia and the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia, the Armenian National Trail connects 109 towns and villages across five regions: Lori, Tavush, Gegharkunik, Vayots Dzor, and Syunik. The full trail is expected to be completed by the end of 2030.

In addition, the trail has just been selected to be presented at the upcoming World Trails Conference in October 2026, where the global hiking community comes together to celebrate the power of trails to connect people, cultures, and landscapes.

The trail begins in Akhtala in Lori Province, passes through Tavush, Gegharkunik, and Vayots Dzor, and concludes in Meghri, Syunik. Across nearly 1,000 kilometers, it will take hikers through forested areas, semi-steppe landscapes, rocky sections, river valleys, and the mountains of southern Armenia, showing much of the country's natural diversity in one route.

"Hikers will be able to travel across Armenia while staying in local communities and carrying only a backpack with daily basics, thanks to the trail's village-to-village design. The website will allow visitors to fully plan their route before they begin and prepare their entire journey in ad-

vance," said Shahane Halajyan, executive director of HIKEArmenia.

Visitors will be able to explore routes in advance, access professional trail maps, download navigation data, identify accommodation and food options in communities along the route, receive updated information on trail conditions, and discover locally available experiences across different regions through the website.



The platform will feature interpretive content highlighting the natural environment encountered along the trail. The beauty of Armenia's landscapes will be documented and explained through the website, allowing hikers to better understand and appreciate the natural surroundings as an integral part of their journey.

The trail is being developed not only as an outdoor recreation destination, but also as a platform for rural development and ecotourism. By bringing visitors into villages and small towns, ANT creates opportunities for local guesthouses, food providers, guides, artisans, transport services, and other small businesses.



ARMENIA

Armenian Scientist Co-authors Study Confirming Einstein's Theory with Record Precision

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — A groundbreaking study published in the latest issue of *Nature* has confirmed one of Albert Einstein's key predictions with unprecedented precision, with Armenian astrophysicist Prof. Vahagn Gurzadyan among the international team of researchers behind the achievement.

The paper, titled "LARES-2 Satellite Measures Frame-Dragging Effect Around the Earth," reports the most accurate mea-

surement to date of the frame-dragging phenomenon — a subtle effect predicted by Einstein's general theory of relativity, in which a rotating massive body such as Earth drags the fabric of spacetime around with it.

Gurzadyan, head of the Center for Cosmology and Astrophysics at the A.I. Alikhanyan National Science Laboratory (Yerevan Physics Institute), is one of the study's co-authors. The laboratory partici-

pates in the international LARES mission, a collaboration involving the Italian Space Agency (ASI), the European Space Agency (ESA), and several leading scientific institutions.

The research is based on data collected by the LARES-2 satellite, launched in 2022, together with observations from the earlier LAGEOS and GRACE satellites. According to the researchers, LARES-2's optimized orbit, extremely low surface-to-mass ratio, and highly uniform retro-

reflector distribution enabled scientists to measure Earth's frame-dragging effect with a relative uncertainty of just one part in a thousand — an order-of-magnitude improvement over previous measurements in the Solar System.

The findings provide one of the most stringent confirmations yet of Einstein's general theory of relativity in the near-Earth environment. They also place strong constraints on alternative theories of gravity that predict deviations from general relativity, including scalar-tensor models such as Chern-Simons gravity.

Beyond its significance for fundamental physics, the research has practical implications for geophysics. The combined analysis of the LARES-2 and LAGEOS satellites improves the determination of Earth's lunisolar tides and contributes to more precise studies of the planet's gravitational field.

The study has attracted widespread international attention. *Scientific American* highlighted the findings in an article titled "The Earth Is Dragging Spacetime Around Its Orbit, Just as Einstein Predicted," describing the LARES-2 measurements as among the most precise ever made of the frame-dragging effect. The research has also been covered by *Ars Technica*, Italy's Rai Radio 3 and MeteoWeb, Russia's TASS news agency, and other international media outlets.

The publication marks another high-profile international scientific achievement involving Gurzadyan. In September 2025, the online *Nature Partner Journals* — *Heritage Science* published a study co-authored by Gurzadyan and archaeologist Arsen Bobokhyan on Armenia's unique vishapakars (dragon stones), research that also received extensive international media coverage.



Professor Vahagn Gurzadyan, second from left, with colleagues

Armenian Opposition Figure Gagik Tsarukyan Arrested

ARREST, from page 1
from the state, and that "significant investments were made." However, he said that some Iranian nationals "committed abuses," leading Tsarukyan to sue them.

"Instead of recognizing the organization with his participation as the victim, they decided to make Gagik Tsarukyan the defendant," Sargsyan said, adding that he believed the arrest to be politically motivated.

Citing the Investigative Committee, the state-run media outlet *Armenpress* reported that he had embezzled upwards of 8.1 billion drams (\$22 million) through establishing a logistics and freight link with Iran. It alleged that his group "fraudulently imported 52 vehicles, machinery, fuel, and various other goods from companies owned by Iranian entrepreneurs."

The committee has also accused Tsarukyan of defrauding an Iranian national out of over \$930,000 worth of petrol.

Charges have also been pressed against two other people alleged to be associated with Tsarukyan in the case.

The committee has also said that more than 10 criminal cases involving alleged large-scale fraud, money laundering, and tax evasion have been investigated by the authorities through raids at more than 70 addresses linked to Tsarukyan.

The authorities began their raids on these addresses — including Tsarukyan's home — on the morning of July 6.

According to Tsarukyan's associates, they targeted the Ararat Cement Plant, the Yerevan Brandy-Wine-Vodka Plant, and the Multi Wellness Centre in Yerevan, among others.

Armenpress later reported that the authorities have also confiscated lions Tsarukyan had kept in his residence, transferring them to the Yerevan Zoo. Iveta Tonoyan, a spokesperson for Prosperous Armenia, said the animals had been "kept in the best possible conditions" at the tycoon's home.

Tsarukyan has been under investigation since June 9, a mere two days after Armenians took to the polls to vote in the parliamentary elections.

At the time, Prosperous Armenia was still awaiting the outcome of vote recounts which would have determined whether it entered parliament. The Central Election Commission (CEC) later announced that the opposition party failed to pass the 4-percent electoral threshold to secure seats in the legislature.

He had apparently attempted to leave the country through Yerevan's Zvartnots Airport before being placed under investigation, but was barred from doing so.

Tsarukyan is one of the wealthiest men in Armenian politics. Having begun his business career in food processing during the 1990s, over three decades he has amassed a stake in a wide variety of industries throughout Armenia, including alcohol and food production, casinos, hotels, mineral extraction, pharmaceuticals, and most recently, bitcoin mining.

The eccentric tycoon has previously been charged under a number of crimes in the past. In 2020, the authorities accused him of electoral bribery allegedly committed in the 2017 elections. He was also under investigation for operating the Shangri La casino without a license. Armenia revoked the

Shangri La's license in late June.

Additionally, Tsarukyan was sentenced for raping two women in 1979, for which he was sentenced to seven years in prison. According to RFE/RL, it is not clear whether Tsarukyan served the sentence imposed by the Soviet-era court.

In 2001, during Robert Kocharyan's presidency, the Armenian Court of Cassation overturned the verdict, exonerating Tsarukyan. Sign in or Become a member to unlock the audio version of this article

Cement Plant to Be Nationalized

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has said the Ararat Cement plant, owned by Tsarukyan, will soon come under state control. The move, announced on July 10, marks the latest blow against Tsarukyan.

"Ararat Cement will very soon become state-owned, and a manager will be appointed according to the established procedure," Pashinyan said, without specifying a timetable for the nationalization process.

It was not the first time Pashinyan had discussed nationalizing the plant — prior to the parliamentary elections on June 7, he described the factory as the "backbone" of Tsarukyan's business empire and alleged irregularities had occurred in its privatization in the early 2000s.

On the same day Tsarukyan was detained, the plant was raided by the authorities and sealed. The plant employs some 1,000 workers, many of whom came out to protest its closure, saying the work stoppage was hurting their pocketbooks.

In turn, Pashinyan said they were violating an "order" from authorities and threatened to fire them, RFE/RL reported.

On that day, Deputy Economy Minister Edgar Zakarian showed up at the plant, where negotiations were ongoing between police and the factory workers. Following a meeting with plant management, Zakarian announced that "the factory is now resuming work."

"Hopefully minor technical obstacles will be resolved in a few hours, and it will be fully operational tomorrow," he added.

Other pillars of Tsarukyan's business empire have also come under threat recently — in June, the operating license of his Shangri La casino was revoked.

At the time, Economy Minister Gevorg Papoyan said financial discrepancies in the gaming machine counters had been discovered after an inspection earlier this year.

Arrests Continue

In an apparently unrelated incident on July 10, Aregnaz Manukyan, an MP candidate for Tsarukyan's Prosperous Armenia party list, was arrested on suspicion of divulging state secrets. The case appears to be connected to a preexisting treason investigation against opposition politician Andranik Tevanyan, also on Tsarukyan's party list.

It is unclear if Manukyan's arrest is connected to the case against Tsarukyan, whose lawyer Yerem Sargsyan said was charged with aiding and abetting fraud and money laundering. Sargsyan additionally claimed that he was detained as part of a case where he "should have been recognized as a victim."

(This report is a combination of two stories that originally appeared on www.oc-media.org, on July 7 and 10.)



ARMENIA

Trump Ballroom Donor to Lead State Department's \$200M Armenia Fund

WASHINGTON (*Guardian*) — Konstantin Sokolov, a Russian-born private equity investor in Chicago, will serve as chairman of a new state department enterprise fund overseeing more than \$200-million designated for a central Asia trade corridor, including investments in transportation, energy infrastructure and critical minerals, the *Guardian* has learned. The state department confirmed his appointment on Friday.

Sokolov was one of 36 donors, including 21 corporations and 15 individuals and family foundations, who Trump said contributed over \$350 million to Donald Trump's ballroom project.

Two-thirds of the corporate donors have since received government contracts, according to research by Public Citizen, a government watchdog group. And several individual donors have received top advisory roles or political appointments, including Benjamin Leon Jr, a Cuban American healthcare magnate who was appointed US ambassador to Spain after his ballroom contribution, and Harold Hamm, an 80-year old Oklahoma oil executive who successfully secured tax breaks for his company and has helped shape Trump's energy policy.

Sokolov is the latest ballroom donor to receive a government position. The sum of his gift has not been disclosed. He has not held a previous government job.

Campaign finance records show that Sokolov has given more than \$12m to Republican campaigns and political groups during Trump's second term, including \$11m to the president's Super Pac Maga Inc, and \$443,000 to the Republican Na-

tional Committee. He was previously a modest Obama donor and contributed \$3,600 to the former president's 2008 campaign.

Sokolov declined a *Guardian* interview request and did not respond to a detailed list of questions about his appointment. The White House referred questions to the state department.

The Tripp+ enterprise fund, where Sokolov serves as founder and chair, takes its name from the Trump route for international peace and prosperity (TRIPP), a 27-mile trade corridor spanning southern Armenia and Azerbaijan. A state department spokesperson said the \$201m fund is authorized to make loans, equity investments, and grants promoting strategic private sector development in the south Caucasus and central Asia, including in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Vice-President JD Vance, during a visit to Armenia's capital Yerevan in February, described the Tripp+ fund as part of a "historic transformation" that would "open up a whole new world of trade, transit and energy flows".

When Marco Rubio, the secretary of state, and Armenian foreign minister Ararat Mirzoyan signed the TRIPP economic and security agreement in late May, Mirzoyan told the press they were "laying groundwork for the sort of economic engagement that allows Armenians to make money and find prosperity and Americans to do the same."

It's unclear exactly how Sokolov or America may benefit from the fund, or if he will receive compensation for his role, but

Sokolov is a major shareholder in Armenia's largest telecommunications company, Viva Armenia, and holds positions with the Northern Pillar Energy Consortium, a clean energy and fiber-optic under-sea cable initiative connecting Europe and Africa, and chair of Pelagos Data Centres, according to his personal website.

He is also the founder of IJS Investments, a Chicago-based private equity firm specializing in "future ready" energy and telecommunications, and Gotthard Investment AG, a Zurich-based private equity firm focused on financial services, energy and global real estate.

A State Department spokesperson said the fund would abide by applicable statutory requirements, including annual reporting and independent audits to ensure transparency and accountability, as well as with applicable grant provisions including conflict of interest requirements.

Four US foreign assistance experts said that it was customary for the White House to select the board of US enterprise funds. Appointees have often had ties to the US administration, said Don Niss, a former program officer for US enterprise funds in eastern Europe, as well as cultural or business ties relevant to the fund.

"It's not unreasonable for politically connected people to get involved," Niss said. "It's an issue when those politically connected people don't have expertise in investment banking, private equity or industries related to the types of investments they'll be making."

Sokolov has been working as an investor for more than 20 years, including in multinational infrastructure and telecommunica-



Konstantin Sokolov

tions projects. His personal biography also notes his background offering strategic counsel to governments and major companies.

A second former USAID administrator said plenty of wealthy political donors used to run the boards of US enterprise funds — including private equity founder Michael Granoff, a major Democratic donor appointed by President Clinton to serve as chairman of the Albanian-American enterprise fund in the 1990s.

Asked about Sokolov, they said: "The question is, does he have the ability to personally benefit from investment decisions? The answer should be no."

The Trump administration has already taken unprecedented steps to deepen its ties with Armenia since the White House helped broker a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan last August, committing \$9bn to boost its nuclear energy sector and selling \$11m of US-made reconnaissance drones to its government, marking America's first-ever military technology sale there.

The Development Finance Corporation, a government investment arm led by private equity scion Ben Black, has also announced plans to incorporate the "Tripp Development Company" to build railways and other infrastructure on the proposed route linking Azerbaijan to its contested exclave, Nakhichevan, and to Armenia and Turkey.

Sokolov's appointment to lead the Tripp+ enterprise fund is only the latest indication of America's commitment to bolstering development in the strategic corridor linking west Asia to Europe.

The US has operated 13 enterprise funds since 1989, when Congress sent \$300m to fund investments in Hungary and Poland after the fall of the Soviet Union. Three years later, Congress authorized the executive branch to create new enterprise funds in any eastern European state. The Tripp+ enterprise fund was set up under the auspices of this post-Soviet legislation.

The Trump administration has asked Congress to expand its authority to create enterprise funds anywhere in the world, according to its 2027 budget request.

There are some indications that Sokolov's funding pool will grow. Jeremy Lewin, a senior foreign aid official at the State Department, told the Council of Foreign Relations in April that the agency had secured \$400m to put towards the Tripp+ fund.

"I think that's, like, one test case of many about how we're trying to reorient foreign assistance, especially in the sort of economic investment space," Lewin said.

Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Hosts Students from Pennsylvania's George School

YEREVAN (*Armenpress*) — The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute hosted students from George School in Pennsylvania as part of its summer school program from July 8 to 11.

The program was organized in cooperation with the Genocide Education Project and aimed to familiarize participants with various aspects of the history of the Armenian Genocide. It marked the first time that students from the United States had visited the museum-institute as part of an educational program on the Armenian Genocide.

According to the statement, the initiator of the summer school, George School teacher Meredith Baldy, participated in 2024 in the annual training program on the Armenian Genocide for U.S. teachers jointly organized by the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute and the Genocide Education Project.

This year, she travelled to Armenia together with her students. As part of the summer school, the participants visited the Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex and the museum.

Over the course of four days, the students took part in guided tours and thematic lectures led by researchers from the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute. Discussions covered various aspects of the Armenian Genocide, including the role of media and



George School students at the Armenian Genocide monument

propaganda during mass atrocities, the importance of survivor testimonies, as well as the life of Aurora Mardiganian and the film *Auction of Souls*.

As part of the program, practical sessions for the students were conducted by George School teachers Meredith Baldy and Prescott Seraydarian.

In addition to the educational program at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, the students also visited the

Matenadaran and several historical and cultural sites across Armenia, gaining a closer understanding of the country's culture and rich historical heritage.

According to the statement, such initiatives play an important role in advancing international educational cooperation, raising awareness of the crime of genocide, preserving historical memory, and promoting awareness of human rights protection among younger generations.



INTERNATIONAL

New EU New Mission to Armenia Denounced by Russia

BRUSSELS (Azatutyun) — The European Union on Monday, July 13, officially launched a new mission to Armenia which it said will help the Armenian government cope with “hybrid threats” emanating from abroad, presumably Russia.

The EU’s decision-making European Council listed “cyber threats, foreign information manipulation and interference and illicit financial flows” among those threats.

“Specifically, the mission will provide strategic advice, technical expertise and institutional capacity building to various national institutions in Armenia to address such threats, and will support a horizontal, whole-of-government approach,” it said in a statement.

The EU first announced the deployment in April, citing a request from Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s government. The latter had implicitly alleged Russian “hybrid” threats to the integrity of parliamentary elections held in Armenia on June 7. Moscow denied those claims and accused

the EU of trying to turn the South Caucasus country into an anti-Russian “outpost” in the region.

“A mission that will claim to fight against interference in the affairs of a sovereign state is itself an instrument of such interference,” the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, said on April 24.

Russian-Armenian tensions have risen further since then, with Moscow pressuring Yerevan to quickly choose between continuing to seek EU membership and remaining part of a Russian-led economic bloc essential for the Armenian economy. In the run-up to the June 7 elections, Russian authorities also banned multimillion-dollar imports of Armenian agricultural products and beverages.

Visiting Yerevan on July 2, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen promised that the EU will open its tightly protected and regulated market to Armenian products in addition to providing

52 million euros (\$60 million) in urgent financial aid to Armenia’s government. She again denounced Moscow’s “economic coercion” after her talks with Pashinyan.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas cited “Russian pressure” on Yerevan in the context of the new mission to Armenia.

“We’ll make sure Armenia does not face external coercion alone,” the European Council statement quoted her as saying.

Pashinyan has made it clear that he will not change his pro-EU foreign policy despite the Russian sanctions. He has also downplayed their impact on the Armenian economy.

Armenian exports to Russia reached almost \$3 billion last year, compared with \$667 million worth of goods exported to EU member states. Russian officials put at \$700 million the annual amount of imports from Armenia affected by the trade restrictions. They have warned of other punitive measures such as a surge in the price of Russian natural gas supplied to Armenia.

South Caucasus Officials Attend Tehran Funeral Of Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei

Leaders from across the South Caucasus attended the funeral of Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on July 3 as millions took to the streets to mourn the country’s longtime leader, killed in US-Israeli strikes in the opening salvo of the war against Iran in February. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Georgian President Mikheil Kavelashvili traveled to Tehran for the funeral, while Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev did not attend, with the country instead sending a delegation headed by Parliamentary Speaker Sahiba Gafarova,

Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev, and Prime Minister of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic Jabbar Musayev.

In official statements on their respective trips, Pashinyan, Kavelashvili, and the Azerbaijani delegation said they met with

at the height of the war, Azerbaijan said Iranian drones had struck Nakhchivan, injuring several people.

The three South Caucasus countries have tread lightly throughout the war and its aftermath. Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and other Iranian officials and offered their condolences.

The official Armenian statement said Pashinyan “once again expressed his condolences on the death of the Supreme Leader of [Iran] Ali Khamenei, stressing that Armenia shares the grief of the Iranian people.”

In turn, Pezeshkian said “Iran highly appreciates the position adopted by the government of Armenia and the humanitarian support it has shown towards Iran in its difficult situation.”

Kavelashvili wrote about his visit on Facebook, saying he “once again extended condolences over the tragic events that took place in Iran and paid respect to the memory of the deceased”.

Georgia “supports all efforts aimed at achieving peace, stability, and de-escalation in the region,” Kavelashvili added.

Coverage of the visit by the Azerbaijani delegation indicated similar sentiments, albeit in less detail.

The inclusion of Nakhichevan’s Prime Minister in the delegation garnered attention on social media, with many noting that

all have complex ties with Iran, but Baku and Yerevan have also sought to strengthen their relations with Washington, while Tbilisi has repeatedly stated its desire to get back in the good graces of the US.

US Representative Joe Wilson, likely the most outspoken opponent of the ruling Georgian Dream party in Congress, criticized Kavelashvili’s decision to attend the funeral, but made no mention of the presence of Pashinyan or the Azerbaijani delegation.

Previous visits by Georgian leaders to Iran have also drawn condemnation from Wilson and other US officials.

US President Donald Trump also weighed in, making typically inflammatory comments to Axios.

“They are all there. One shot [and we can take them all out], but we are not going to do that because then we would have nobody to negotiate with”.

Mojtaba Khamenei, Ali Khamenei’s son and his successor as supreme leader, was absent from the funeral, further fueling questions about his whereabouts.

(This story was originally published on the website www.oc-media.org on July 3.)

Israel Suspends Parliamentary Vote on Recognizing Armenian Genocide

VOTE, from page 1

According to the news.az story, Azerbaijan was angered not only by the Israeli cabinet’s decision to launch the recognition process but also by the way it was handled diplomatically. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar reportedly contacted his Azerbaijani counterpart, Jeyhun Bayramov, only after the decision had been made public, effectively presenting Baku with a fait accompli rather than consulting it beforehand.

According to the report, following protests by Azerbaijan’s Foreign Ministry and other officials, the initiative was shelved before reaching parliament.

During contacts with Israeli officials, Azerbaijan stressed that officially recognizing the events of 1915 as the “Armenian genocide” would directly undermine ties between the two countries, the report said.

The Azerbaijani position was reportedly supported by a number of Israeli political analysts and journalists, who argued against weakening Israel’s relationship with Azerbaijan. Israeli newspaper Haaretz, citing unnamed diplomatic sources, reported that the government’s initiative offered “no benefit whatsoever” to Israel.

INTERNATIONAL

Kremlin Wants Closer Relations with Azerbaijan

MOSCOW (TASS) — The Kremlin has said that despite Russia and Azerbaijan holding different positions on the war in Ukraine, those disagreements should not overshadow bilateral relations.

Speaking at a briefing on July 14, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov acknowledged that Moscow and Baku have differing views on the situation in Ukraine but stressed that Russia takes a pragmatic approach to such differences.

“We have close relations with a number of countries that hold positions we categorically disagree with. Yes, this is an area of disagreement,” Peskov said.

“At the same time, we do not believe this should cast a shadow over our bilateral relations. We take a pragmatic approach,” he added.

Peskov emphasized that Russia intends to continue strengthening ties with Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan Is Armenia’s ‘Reliable Source of Fuel’

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Azerbaijan has unilaterally lifted all transit restrictions it had imposed on Armenia, President Ilham Aliyev announced at the 4th Global Media Forum in Shushi this week.

Aliyev noted that more than 40,000 tons of various cargo from Russia, Kazakhstan and other countries had been transported to Armenia through Azerbaijan, according to Azerbaijani media reports.

In addition, Azerbaijan itself has begun exporting petroleum products to Armenia.

Turkish Court Issues International Arrest Request for Netanyahu

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A Turkish court hearing the case related to the Sumud humanitarian flotilla has issued an interim ruling seeking an international arrest notice for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu through an Interpol Red Notice on July 14.

Halk TV reported the decision.

According to the report, an Istanbul criminal court issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and the other defendants on charges including crimes against humanity, genocide, unlawful deprivation of liberty, ill-treatment, intentional bodily harm, robbery and seizure of a vehicle.

The report said the court had previously opened criminal proceedings against Netanyahu and 34 senior Israeli officials based on an indictment prepared by the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office, which seeks life imprisonment for the defendants.

In November 2025, the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Israel’s leadership on charges including genocide, the mass bombardment of the Gaza Strip and obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid.



INTERNATIONAL

A Taste of Armenian Wines in Germany

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LORSCH, Germany — While the American communities in most German cities invited their German friends to join them in barbecues featuring hot dogs, hamburgers, potato chips, and beer (or a soft drink for the children) on July 4, members of the Armenian community in Hessen hosted a Weinprobe, a traditional German wine tasting event, with Armenian wine. Given that Germany is more famous for its wine than its beer, and that Hessen is home of the most prestigious and bountiful vineyards in the Rhine valley, (Rheingau) this was a significant, if not bold initiative....

Hosting the event was NOAH e.V., a non-profit association dedicated to promoting cultural relations between Armenia and Germany. The venue for the wine-tasting was the historic Königshalle Kloster Lorsch (King's Hall, Lorsch Monastery), located in Lorsch, a wine-growing city on the Rhine. Arrangements for use of the adjacent Klosterschänke — literally “monastery tavern” — were made by the family of Ernst-Ludwig Drayss, co-founder and treasurer of NOAH. This magnificent Carolingian monastery, a UNESCO world cultural heritage site, dates back to the times of Charlemagne, when wines were first produced there; today it is known for its Riesling and Pinot Noir wines.

Germany, and the Rheingau in particular, is proud of its 13-century-long tradition of excellence in wine production. Although the Armenian wines tasted on Independence Day were produced in recent years, the



Ernst Drayss, Aram Antonjan (NOAH), Michael Strauss, 2nd, 3rd and 4th from left, King's Hall in background. July 4th in Germany, Armenian-style (Photo courtesy of E. Drayss)

oldest from 2020, Armenian wine-making dates back 6000 years. The vintners explain the quality of the “new” wine in the continuation of an age-old tradition, based on a unique terrain, still present today. This is characterized by the combination of high altitudes, volcanic soil, and microclimate.

More than 30 guests gathered for the wine-tasting, Germans and Armenians. Michael Strauss, chairman of NOAH, selected the six wines to be tasted, and moderated the proceedings under the motto: “Discovering the vast array of Armenian wines.” The wines he offered started with Stork Kangoun 2023, a dry white wine from Ararat/Ara Region, and two dry white wines from Vayots, Dzor Region, Ariats Voskehat 2024

and ARIATS Voskehat Orange Reserve 2023. The first red wine was an Arctur, Karmahyut, from Byurakan, Aragatsotn, whose name “describes the uniqueness of the wine – like Arcturus, the brightest star in the northern hemisphere.” The second red wine was Hazarvaz, Areni Noir 2022, the grapes harvested from a century-old vineyard in Yerevan/Vayots Dzor region, with only 1000 vines. The last wine, a Vozkevas Karasi Collection, Haghtanak 2020, from Ararat/Aragatsotn Region, is an amphora wine, made from a native Haghtanak grape found only in Armenia.

Vintners in Germany organize wine-tasting events to present the produce of their recent harvests and acquire new customers. The hosts in Lorsch stressed the fact that a wine-tasting is far more than merely sampling; it is an intercultural encounter, an exchange which brings together the customs, history, and climate conditions of different regions. Noteworthy was the presence among the guests of Franconian-Armenian

vintner Garnik Harunyan. When it comes to tasting Armenian wines in the heart of Germany Rhine Valley, one might imagine that after the first two or three glasses, intercultural exchange might lead to engaging participants in profound inquiries regarding, for example, the relative excellence of Germany's and Armenia's viniculture. As for the relative antiquity of viniculture in the two peoples' history, that is not a matter of debate. But, as host Strauss (with a wink of the eye) explained, Georgians and Armenians do argue about who was first to cultivate grapes for the purpose of producing wine. The answer, he said, was to be found in the Bible. In the Book of Genesis, it is related that after the flood, Noah's ark landed on Mount Ararat. When the waters had receded, God told Noah to leave the ark with all his family and the livestock, and he did so. “And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard; And he drank of the wine, and was drunken....” (Genesis, 9, 20-21).



From left, Christian Drayss, Alexander Löffelholz, Nelli Hakobyan display Armenian wines. (Photo courtesy of E. Drayss)

Georgia Detains Azerbaijani Man Suspected of Tbilisi ‘Honor Killing’

By Mikheil Gvadzabia

Georgia's Interior Ministry has announced the detention of a man suspected of killing 20-year-old Fatima Karimova, an Azerbaijani woman found murdered in Tbilisi in early July. The man is believed to be Emin Aliyev, Karimova's cousin. Earlier reports said that he had fled to Turkey after killing Karimova.

The Georgian authorities reported on July 11 that the man was detained at Batumi International Airport.

While they did not disclose his identity, Georgia's Prosecutor General's Office had previously confirmed that Aliyev was the main suspect in the case. Both Aliyev and Karimova are Azerbaijani citizens. The woman is believed to have been the victim of an “honor killing.”

The Interior Ministry said the arrest was carried out “in close coordination

with Turkish and Azerbaijani counterparts, as well as with the direct involvement of Georgia's police attaché in Turkey.” However, it did not specify whether the individual was extradited from Turkey first. OC Media contacted the agency's press office, but had not received a response by the time of publication.

“The suspect [...] inflicted life-threatening injuries on a relative at a temporary residence in Tbilisi, causing the victim to die at the scene,” the statement read, adding that the police “promptly identified the alleged perpetrator and issued a wanted notice for him.”

Meanwhile, the Prosecutor General's Office charged Aliyev in absentia on July 7. He was accused of strangling Aliyeva on the grounds of “intolerance towards the equality of women and men” — a term that appeared in Georgian legislation in 2025 after the ruling party re-

moved the word “gender” from all laws and replaced it with “woman and man.”

Aliyev faces up to 20 years in prison or life imprisonment if found guilty. The Prosecutor General's Office told OC Media that he was already remanded to the pre-trial detention.

Aliyev arrived in Georgia on June 3 — after hearing news that Karimova, who had herself arrived in the country in mid-May with her boyfriend, was first assaulted by the boyfriend and then abandoned. Aliyev's declared purpose was to rent Karimova an apartment in Tbilisi for a few months, waiting until the family's anger died down, after which he would help her return to Azerbaijan.

According to the Prosecutor General's Office, Aliyev and Karimova allegedly spent several weeks in a rented apartment, where the cousin “prohibited the woman from communicating with family

members and people of her choosing, and restricted her right to leave the house and move freely.”

“Aliyev made unilateral decisions even regarding whether she could leave the house, communicate with other people, and matters related to her meals, thereby unlawfully attempting to assert his superiority as a man over Fatima Karimova,” the Prosecutor General's Office said.

There is a clear discrepancy between the dates of the murder given in the statements by the Prosecutor General's Office and the Ministry, with one citing 25 June and the other 27 June.

On 4 July, Azerbaijani media reported that Aliyev, who had allegedly fled to Turkey after the murder, had been detained by Turkish law enforcement and that efforts were underway to extradite him.

(This article originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on July 12.)



Community News

NAASR Panel to Explore Healthcare Problems in Armenia

BELMONT, Mass. — The Boston University – Armenia Medical Partnership is co-hosting a free panel discussion on “The State of Healthcare in Armenia,” on July 23 at 7:30 p.m. at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building. Seven Armenian physicians will take the stage to share their perspectives on healthcare in Armenia. A reception will follow.

These visiting physicians are degree candidates in Boston University’s Master’s of Health Professions Education program and are wrapping up their year-long program with a six-week intensive summer session at Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine and Boston Medical Center. The program is sponsored and funded by the Boston University–Armenia Medical Partnership (BU-AMP), with support from the HENAR Foundation and the Armenian-American Medical Association of Boston. These physicians are leaders at their institutions tasked with improving post-graduate medical (residency) education in Armenia, hence improving medical care of all Armenians.

“This is a great opportunity for diasporan Armenians to hear first-hand accounts about healthcare issues in Armenia,” said Aram Kaligian, director of the BU-AMP. “Most Armenian Americans don’t realize that in Armenia people still die of rabies, tetanus, and measles every year, and still suffer diseases unheard of in the U.S.”

Their visit comes at a pivotal moment: Armenia launched Universal Health Insurance in early 2026 — the most consequential health-system reform in the country since independence.

The event is open to all, and Boston’s medical community is especially encouraged to attend. Armenian American physicians, nurses, and healthcare professionals will find rare common ground with colleagues who have trained and practiced in a system they may know only by reputation — and who are eager for that dialogue.

The panelists are: Alvard Hovhannisyan, MD, PhD — Infectious Disease, Yerevan State Medical University, Mikayelyan Institute; Hrachuhi Ghazaryan, MD, PhD — Pediatrics, NIH Armenia / Wigmore Women’s & Children’s Hospital; Hripsime Apresyan, MD — Pediatrics & Infectious Disease, Yerevan State Medical University, Muratsan Hospital; Lilit Marutyan, MD — Family Medicine & Pediatrics, National Institute of Health Armenia, Wigmore Family Health Center; Suren Brutyan, MD — Pediatrics & Infectious Disease, Yerevan State Medical University, Muratsan Hospital; Zaruhi Tavadyan, MD — Neurology, National Institute of Health Armenia, Somnus Neurology Clinic and Henry Louis, MD — Family Medicine, Program Director, HENAR Foundation / Syunik Community Health Worker Program.

The panel will be moderated by Kaligian. Admission: Free and open to the public

Visit NAASR’s Events Page to learn more and/or register to join virtually



The members of the clergy at the anniversary

From Its Lowell Roots to Artsakh: Saints Vartanantz Marks 110 Years Through Service

CHELMSFORD, Mass. — When the founders of Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church laid its first bricks in Lowell in 1916, many were Armenian genocide survivors who had arrived in America with little more than their faith, determination, and hope for a better future. One hundred and ten years later, their descendants chose to honor that legacy in a meaningful way: by helping another generation of displaced Armenians rebuild their lives.

As part of its 110th anniversary celebration, Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church of Chelmsford raised \$15,000 through the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) to support displaced Artsakh families, women entrepreneurs, and children with special needs in Armenia. The fundraising effort exceeded its original goal of \$10,000, transforming a milestone anniversary into an opportunity for service.

The weeklong celebration was blessed by Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, who joined parish pastor Father Khachatur Kesablyan and parishioners for commemorative events that included a visit to the church’s historic Lowell sanctuary, ordinations, and a reception hosted by the Women’s Guild.

For members of Saints Vartanantz, supporting displaced Armenians from Artsakh felt deeply personal.

The church itself stands as a testament to the resilience of Armenians who were forced from their homeland. Consecrated on April 16, 1916, during the opening months of the Armenian Genocide, the church became a spiritual home for immigrants and survivors building new lives in Massachusetts.

“The church was consecrated in 1916,” said Father Kesablyan. “What’s significant is that that was almost the beginning of the Armenian Genocide, the darkest day in Armenian history. Here you have people who escaped the genocide, and what do they do? They build a church. They build a church to keep their faith alive, even though they’re thousands of miles from their homeland.”

That history helped shape the anniversary committee’s decision to direct a portion of the proceeds toward FAR’s Restoring Home program, which helps families displaced from Artsakh rebuild their lives in Armenia’s southern Syunik region.

“The outpouring of support from Saints Vartanantz is a testament to the parish’s deep faith and enduring commitment to serving others,” said Bree Carriglio, executive director of development and institutional marketing at FAR. “For 110 years, this community has preserved its Armenian heritage through action. Their generosity toward the people of Armenia today reflects the same spirit that has sustained the church since its founding.”

The donation will help provide essential household furnishings and appliances such as refrigerators, washing machines, and beds to families who arrived with

see ANNIVERSARY, page 12



Church members with some of the food prepared

Rep. Dina Titus Introduces Joint Resolution of Disapproval to Stop Sale of Jet Engines To Turkey

WASHINGTON — Rep. Dina Titus (D-Nev.) on July 2 introduced a Joint Resolution of Disapproval to stop the \$700 million sale of F110 jet engines to Turkey. Such a sale would undermine regional stability and pose a threat to U.S. allies while rewarding a repressive, dictatorial, and revengeful government led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

“The regime of Turkish President Erdogan has made repeated threats of military action against NATO allies and other partner nations throughout



Rep. Dina Titus

the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean,” Titus said. “Sale of these jet engines to Turkey will embolden it to pursue those threats. Turkey already is destabilizing the region with its continued illegal occupation of Cyprus, antagonism toward Greece, close association with designated terrorist organizations, support of Azerbaijan’s campaigns against Armenia, and threats to invade Israel. We should not be rewarding Erdogan’s bad behavior by expanding Turkey’s military might.”

The Trump administration formally notified Congress of the transaction on June 24, opening a 15-day review period during which lawmakers can move to block the sale. The resolution introduced by Congresswoman Titus provides a platform for Congress to act.

The F110 jet engines are intended for Turkey’s next-generation KAA combat aircraft, a project Turkey has pursued as part of its broader effort to expand its military capabilities.

The Arms Export Control Act (AECA) gives Congress the statutory authority to review major foreign military sales. Through a Joint Resolution of Disapproval, Congress can officially halt or block an arms transfer during the review period.

Titus expressed concern that the Trump administration is committed to further aiding Turkey with advanced platforms like the F-35 in violation of the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. “President Trump saying he has a ‘gift’ for Turkey that will make it ‘very happy’ should alarm all of us. Congress needs to act now to stop the administration from aiding an enemy of our allies.”



OBITUARY

Scholar, Journalist and Activist Barbara Merguerian Dies

MERGUERIAN, from page 1
at Cranston High School and attended Pembroke College at Brown University as a first-generation college student, continuing to live at home while studying international relations.

After earning her BA, she began her career as an intelligence analyst in Washington, D.C., before attending Harvard University where she earned her MA and PhD in Russian history. While at Harvard, she became active in the local Armenian community and met her future husband, the late Arshag Merguerian, at the then newly-established National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). She later became a journalist, first for the *Patriot-Ledger* in Quincy and then for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* in Watertown. She served two stints as editor of the *Mirror-Spectator* during the 1970s and 1980s, during which she developed a deep knowledge of the Armenian community locally, nationally and internationally.

Barbara and Arshag settled in Wellesley, where they raised two daughters, and became active in the local civic organizations. They also continued to be active in the Boston area Armenian community for the rest of their lives.

Over the course of Barbara's career,

she served as editor of the *Journal of Armenian Studies*, vice president of the Society of Armenian Studies, and served on the boards of NAASR, the Armenian Cultural Foundation, the Armenian Museum of America, the Armenian Assembly of America, and St. Nersess Armenian Seminary. She had a particular interest in advancing the study of Armenian women's history.

Barbara was a guest lecturer at Yerevan State University, California State University Fresno and Tufts University. Her published research on missionary work in the Ottoman empire and afterwards highlighted the role of women in the advancement of education in the Armenian community and in attempts to protect Armenians during the Genocide. Her work also called attention to the role of missionaries in supporting and revitalizing Armenian communities across the worldwide diaspora after the First World War. She chaired the "Armenia and Armenians" exhibition at the Massachusetts State House in 1987 and assisted in the development of the Armenian Museum of America's permanent exhibition on the Armenian Genocide, later collaborating on an installation about the work of the Armenian Legion volunteer corps in the genocide's wake.

In 1991, Barbara, along with Eva Medzorian and the late Olga Proudian, established the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) where she served in leadership positions for over three decades. Under her leadership AIWA supported research and scholarship on women, drew attention to problems like domestic violence and equity in health care, and fostered Armenian women entrepreneurs. She spearheaded the organization's scholarship program, growing it over time from its inception in 1996 to today. And she launched AIWA's publications program—editing and publishing the "Treasury of Armenian Women's Literature" series of English-language translations of works by pioneering women authors.

Barbara also organized AIWA's international conferences around the world including in Yerevan, Buenos Aires, Paris, San Francisco and London, bringing Armenian women together to share and draw strength from one another. She was also a driving force behind AIWA's membership in the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women and attended the United Nations' Fourth International Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. As current AIWA president Silva Khachigian says, "Her spirit and legacy gave life to AIWA and sus-

tained its mission with clarity, courage, and compassion. AIWA's ongoing voice and work stand as a lasting testament to her vision and determination."

Barbara loved to travel and to attend cultural events with her husband Arshag, particularly classical music concerts and the theatre. She enjoyed meeting new people, drawing them out, and hearing about their life experiences. She had a knack for finding people's unique skills and strengths and how best to involve them in contributing to the community initiatives she was a part of.

Barbara is survived by her daughters Gayane Karen Merguerian (Malik Mufti) of Woburn, MA and Elaine Tamara Merguerian (Rick Morris) of Brooklyn, NY, granddaughters Setenay Ani Mufti and Lousig Angela Morris, and nephews John and Ed Merguerian of Glendale, California.

Funeral services were held at St. James Armenian Church, Watertown on Thursday, July 16 and interment took place at Woodlawn Cemetery in Wellesley.

Memorial donations may be made to the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), 395 Concord Ave., Belmont, MA 02478 or UNICEF, PO Box 781419 Philadelphia, PA 19178-1419.

Arax Aroosian Balakian 1927—2026

FORT LEE, N.J. — Arax Balakian died peacefully at her home, surrounded by her family, in Fort Lee, NJ, on July 13.

She was born in Paterson, NJ, on July 3, 1927, and graduated from East Orange High School.

Having graduated at the age of 15, she spent a year working at the Irvington Varnish Company that was then making parts for parachutes for the World War II effort,



and this helped her pay for her first year of college.

She attended Bucknell University (class of '48) where she earned a B.A. in chemistry. A campus leader and resident of the Senior Honors House, she was listed in Who's Who Among Students 1947-48.

After graduation she worked as a junior chemist in organic research in the laboratories of Ciba Pharmaceutical Company (now Novartis AG) in New Jersey.

In 1950 she married Gerard Balakian, physician and sports medicine pioneer, and they raised their four children Peter, Pamela, James and Janet first in Teaneck and then Tenafly. Vivid portraits of Arax can be found in her son Peter's memoir, *Black Dog of Fate*.

Arax's parents, Bedros Aroosian and Nafina Shekerlemdjian, were refugees and survivors of Ottoman Turkey's genocide of the Armenians. After the bloodbath of the Abdul Hamid Massacres decimated the Armenian community of Diyarbakir in the 1890s, Bedros fled and arrived in Paterson in 1902. Nafina, the daughter of prosperous silk merchants also of Diyarbakir, survived a death march to Syria in the summer of 1915 and experienced the mass killing of her entire family, except for her two young daughters Zivart (Gladys) and Arshalois (Alice). She arrived in New Jersey in 1920 and married Bedros that year and Arax's sister Lucille was born in 1922. Arax was close and devoted to all three of her sisters.

She was active in local community and school organizations and a charter member of St Thomas Armenian Church in Tenafly, New Jersey, where she lived for fifty-two years. In the 1960s, she assisted her husband

Dr. Gerard Balakian in the development of Sportade, the electrolyte replenishment drink that he invented in 1965, and which was groundbreaking in the sports drinks market in the late '60s and early '70s.

After her husband's death in 1981, Arax worked as a realtor with Weichert Realities and Friedberg Properties from 1987 to 2022.

Anyone who entered the Balakian home was greeted with Arax's warm hospitality and superb cooking which she continued into her early nineties.

A staunch liberal, she was a supporter of economic and social justice, civil rights, LGBTQ and women's rights, environmental policies and global human rights. She could be seen wearing her Gloria Steinham t-shirt that read "women get more radical with age."

She and her sisters Gladys and Lucille worked assiduously with the Armenian Diocese for earthquake relief in the years fol-

lowing the 1988 Armenian earthquake. In 2004 she was invited with her son Peter to plant a family memorial tree in the special copse at the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan. On a family pilgrimage to historic Armenia in eastern Turkey in 2015 when she was 87, she visited Diyarbakir — her parents' home city and site of the mass killings of the Skekerlemedjian and Aroosian families — and called it the most profound trip of her life.

She is survived by her daughters Pamela and Janet; son Peter and former wife Helen Kebabian, grandchildren Sophia (Michael), James (Lucianna) and great-grandchildren Samara and Leo; and son James and his wife Janet and their children Alexandra, Katherine, and Nicholas. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to your local PBS or NPR station, World Central Kitchen, or Children of Armenia Fund, St. Thomas Armenian Church, Tenafly. A memorial service will be held in late September.

DENNIS M. DEVENY & SONS Cemetery Monuments

Specializing in
Armenian Designs and Lettering

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

Telephone (617) 924-7400

Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN

James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC

Mark J. Giragosian

Giragosian
FUNERAL HOME

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



OBITUARY

Raffi P. Yeghiayan

Brilliant Engineer, Dedicated Armenian Activist

Raffi P. Yeghiayan, born in 1938 in Beirut, passed away on June 28.

He was the beloved husband of the late Carol Ann (Hadidian) Yeghiayan; father of Arra Yeghiayan, Sona Yeghiayan and her husband Christian Staebe, and Sylva Yeghiayan and her husband Scott Zaleski; Medzbaba of Lincoln, Kendall and Cole Zaleski and Sevag, Daron and Arek Bardt. He was the son of Puzant and Lucy Yeghiayan and sibling of Arpi Simonian and Hasmig Maserejian.

Raffi's extraordinary life reflected deep commitment to family and heritage.

Intrigued by the space program, Raffi applied and transferred to MIT in August 1958 and earned his Bachelor of Science in aeronautics and astronautics in 1962. He completed his Master of Science in mechanical engineering at both the University of Michigan and Northeastern University.

Raffi dedicated his life to his family and the many Armenian organizations he served passionately, including St. James Armenian Church (choir director and parish council member for many years), the

National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (member since the early 1960s and chairman for 2 terms), Knights of Vartan (Commander of the Ararat Lodge), Council of Armenian Executives, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (district committee chair of New England), the Friends of Armenian Culture Society (executive committee), among others.

Those fortunate enough to work alongside Raffi beheld a soul of superhuman dedication, who dove enthusiastically into countless projects, always completing them with skill, precision, good humor, and grace.

Raffi supported and held leadership positions in many organizations, including NAASR, St. James Armenian Apostolic Church, Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), Armenian Apostolic Church of America - Eastern Prelacy, Armenian General Benevolent Union, Fund for Armenian Relief, Children of Armenia Fund, American University of Armenia, and Armenian Missionary Association of America.



He loved travel and arranged countless trips with family and friends, covering the planet via planes, trains, automobiles and nautical vessels, especially favoring cultural destinations.

He cherished the performing arts, attending many productions and even singing and acting in several local performances over the years.

A brilliant engineer and creative genius, Raffi tackled projects of all types without

hesitation and with supernatural patience, working through details to achieve results that always exceeded the expectations of collaborators.

Raffi and Carol were hosts extraordinaire, gathering family and friends at every opportunity for events of all sizes at their Lexington and Cape Cod homes.

He consistently demonstrated innovation and efficiency in his engineering design projects, including the design of robust personnel communications shelters and a patent for an air-bearing invention that enables one person to easily move loads weighing tons.

He had remarkable range, from designing and building a multi-story rooftop deck with spiral stairs, to providing a complete drinking water system for a remote Nagorno Karabagh village.

On Raffi's 80th birthday, his lifelong friends and colleagues united to contribute their heartfelt thoughts and experiences with him, which was published in book form.

Funeral Service were held at St. James Armenian Church, Watertown, on Thursday, July 2. Interment followed at Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge. Expressions of sympathy may be made in his memory to St. James Armenian Church or NAASR.

Mary Ouzghoushian Vartanian, 111-Year-Old Genocide Survivor, Dies

VARTANIAN, from page 1

during the severe mass exodus of all remaining Armenians of Ainteb and to seek refuge in Aleppo, Syria. She attended Armenian school until grade 6 at the Grtasirats Armenian School in Aintab. During her youth she would spend her time doing crocheting and needle work. Mary was also very skilled at carpet weaving in the original Armenian traditional patterns of Aintab. Though she lost the homeland of her birth, she never lost her identity. She carried her homeland in her heart every day of her life.

In Syria, she met the love of her life, the renowned violinist and composer, Hovhannes Vartanian. Hovhannes, like his own father, was a talented violinist and also a composer. He performed for the Armenian Radio of Aleppo and was eventually awarded the Syrian National Medal of Recognition for his musical achievements. His career took him across the Middle East, where he frequently performed. Mary was immensely proud of her husband's achievements. Together they built a beautiful family and were blessed with six children — four sons and two daughters, Sarkis, Zaven, Garbis, Flora, Lisa and Avedis.

In the late 1960s, the family moved to Beirut, Lebanon. During that time, she had the opportunity to travel to Yerevan, Armenia which had been a lifetime dream for her. But life once again tested Mary's strength. Within a few short years, her beloved husband passed away, leaving her a widow. Many people would have been broken by such hardships. But not Mary. She was a woman of extraordinary courage, resilience, and faith. She carried her burdens with dignity and continued forward with determination and love for her family.

When two of her sons immigrated to the United States, Mary soon followed them in 1972 to Watertown, Massachusetts. Later, in 1976 her daughter and her husband, Hagop and Lisa Darian and children, also settled there. Although her sons eventually relocated to California, Mary chose to remain in Watertown, where she laid down her roots and built a life centered around faith, family, and service. She lived independently for decades, devoted to her daughter Lisa and her grandchildren, and



109-year-old Mary Vartanian is photographed with state and Boston police after the formal State House event (photo David Medzorian)

her beloved church family at Saint James Armenian Church, the Ladies Guild, and the AGBU Ladies Guild.

Mary loved to travel. She never missed an opportunity to visit those she loved — whether it meant flying to California to see her sons and her sister Alice and all their families, returning to Lebanon to visit the families of daughter Flora Khederian and her sister Ani Tavitian or traveling all the way to Venezuela to spend time with her brother, Kevork Ouzghoushian and his family. Even in her early nineties, her adventurous spirit never faded. She traveled throughout Europe with the AGBU Ladies Guild, embracing every opportunity to see the world. At the age of 100, she traveled with her daughter, Lisa and son-in-law Hagop, to visit their daughter, Jeanine and her husband Raffi Shememian's family for the Christmas holidays.

Mary was a resident of Watertown for 45 years. Always active, she lived by herself until she was 101. After a fall, she decided to move into the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center where she was be-

loved by fellow residents and staff.

In April of 2024, at the age of 109, Mary received a special recognition from the Armenian Genocide Committee of Greater Boston during the annual commemoration at the Massachusetts State House. She was honored by the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate with the Resolution "Commending Mary Vartanian for contributions to the Armenian American community in the Commonwealth". How fitting it was that a woman who had spent her entire life preserving memory and educating others would receive such an honor.

Mary's life spanned nearly 112 years. She witnessed generations of her own family growing and flourishing, with 15 grandchildren, 21 great grandchildren, and two great-great grandchildren. She lived through genocide, displacement, widowhood, and unimaginable changes. And yet, through it all, she remained steadfast in her faith, devoted to her family, and proud to be Armenian.

Throughout her life, Mary understood that she was not simply living for herself

— she was carrying the memory of an entire people. Mary was one of the last known survivors of the Armenian Genocide when she passed away six weeks shy of her 112th birthday. If Mary had one mission in life, it was to pass on this message to her children, her grandchildren and everyone she met during her long life: "Armenians, do not forget April 24, 1915."

Her most notable achievement of her lifetime was her beautiful needlework. She created poster-sized pieces bearing those powerful words, in Armenian lettering, "Հայեր Թող Չմոռնան Ապրիլ 24" (Armenians, Do Not Forget April 24), referring to the Armenian Genocide, with the Armenian cross at the center and her initials embroidered below. These works of love and remembrance became her legacy. She gifted them to her family, to grandchildren and relatives and to churches throughout the Boston area. She gifted embroidery to the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin in Armenia.

During his official visit to the Eastern Prelacy in October 2024, Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia (Antelias), visited Mary Vartanian at the Armenian Nursing Home. The Catholicos praised her resilience, faith, and dedication to the Armenian heritage and bestowed a special blessing upon her life. With great humility and pride, Mary gifted her last remaining "April 24" needlework to him.

She wanted every generation to remember. She wanted us never to forget the suffering of our ancestors, but also never to forget their strength, their resilience, and their triumph over adversity. But above all else, Mary's greatest love was Armenia and the Armenian people. She was immensely proud of her Armenian heritage, culture, language, and Christian faith.

Funeral Services honoring and celebrating Mary's inspirational life were held at St. Stephen's Armenian Church in Watertown on Tuesday, July 7 and interment followed at Ridgeland Cemetery in Watertown. The family requests memorial donations may be made in Mary's memory to both St. Stephen's Armenian Church, 38 Elton Ave., Watertown, MA 02472 or St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn Steet, Watertown, MA 02472.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Assembly Applauds House Passage of Bill Honoring Former Secretary of Navy Paul Ignatius

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America applauds the U.S. House of Representatives' passage of H.R. 4662, legislation introduced this week by Congresswoman Laura Friedman (CA-30) to designate the United States Postal Service facility in Glendale, California, as the "Paul Ignatius Post Office." The bipartisan measure, previously championed by Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) in the 117th Congress, honors former Secretary of the Navy Paul Ignatius, whose extraordinary lifetime of public service, leadership, and dedication to the nation has left an enduring legacy.

"We applaud the House for passing this well-deserved tribute to Secretary Paul Ignatius," stated Armenian Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny. "As the son of Armenian immigrants, Secretary Ignatius rose to become one of our nation's most respected public servants, serving with honor as Secretary of the Navy and inspiring generations through his integrity, patriotism, and unwavering commitment to the common good. We commend Congresswoman Laura Friedman for advancing this bipartisan legislation."



Paul Ignatius is sworn in as secretary of the Navy by Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, right, at a 1967 Pentagon ceremony (UPI, Washington Post)

During House consideration of the legislation, Congresswoman Friedman paid

tribute to Secretary Ignatius' remarkable career and enduring contributions to the United States, underscoring the profound impact of his leadership and service.

The Armenian Assembly has long recognized Secretary Ignatius' extraordinary contributions to the United States and the Armenian-American community. In September 2023, the Assembly presented Ignatius with the George Deukmejian Award during a special tribute in Washington, DC, attended by Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi, Sen. Gary Peters, Rep. Anna Eshoo, Members of Congress, Administration officials, military leaders, and community members. At the event, Speaker Emerita Pelosi praised Secretary Ignatius' patriotism and described him as an "example of the American Dream," while Assembly leadership highlighted his distinguished service in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, his tenure as Secretary of

the Navy, and his continued leadership in the private sector and civic life.

Born in Glendale to Armenian parents from the Kharpert region, Ignatius devoted his life to serving the United States with distinction. Throughout his career, he was deeply proud of his Armenian heritage, but he knew that his duty was always to represent the interests of the United States with unwavering commitment. In addition to serving as Secretary of the Navy from 1967 to 1969, he held senior leadership positions in both government and the private sector, including as President of The Washington Post and President of the Air Transport Association.

Upon his passing on November 6, 2025, a memorial service took place in December 2025 at the Washington National Cathedral. He was later laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va.



The Assembly Board with Secretary Paul Ignatius and his family, September 2023

Sheriff Koutoujian Receives Universidad de Alcalá's Honorary Silver Medal

BILLERICA, Mass. — As schools and families across the county celebrate graduation season, Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian and the Middlesex Sheriff's Office received a unique, international academic honor for pioneering and innovative leadership in public service.

Recognizing his 15 years of work in building public-private partnerships, Spain's Universidad de Alcalá presented Koutoujian with the university's Honorary Silver Medal for the 2025-26 academic year.

The Universidad de Alcalá was founded in 1499 by Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros to be the crown jewel of the Spanish higher education system. Its students over the centuries have included luminaries such as the writer Antonio de Nebrija, physician Francisco Valles de Covarrubias, and two saints in Ignatius of Loyola and Juan de la Cruz. Its best known patron, Miguel de Cervantes, lived by the institution for decades. The university awards the Cervantes Prize every year, considered Spain's highest honor in literature.

Today the university serves nearly 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Its status as one of the first-ever planned university campuses also earned the school a

designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1998.

Koutoujian was honored alongside Ambassador Alfredo Martínez Serrano, Spain's emissary to Canada, as well as Belén Garijo, the CEO of Sanofi Pharmaceuticals and alumnae of the Universidad de Alcalá. University Rector José Vicente Saz presented the Silver Honorary Award to Sheriff Koutoujian and spoke to his enduring efforts to promote the Middlesex Sheriff's Office locally and globally.

"It was a pleasure to honor Sheriff Koutoujian as this year's Silver Honorary Medal recipient on behalf of the Universidad de Alcalá," said Rector José Vicente Saz. "His dedication to academic partnerships, mentorship and scholarship, and the universal values of public service made him a deserving honoree. We are proud to recognize his accomplishments from Massachusetts to Madrid."

In addition to receiving the medal during a formal ceremony, the Sheriff also spoke on lessons of leadership in public service at a conference organized by the university and the Franklin-UAH Institute, an academic program focused on North American studies.

"I am incredibly humbled to be presented



Sheriff Peter Koutoujian and other honorees at the Universidad de Alcalá

with the prestigious Silver Honorary medal," said Koutoujian. "Public service isn't a job, it's a calling. I never expected that calling would bring me honorifics from a Spanish university, but I did always know it was the most noble thing I could do with my life. From serving as a bar advocate, an assistant district attorney, a state legislator

and now as sheriff, I have never lost the sense of reverence for public service that I learned from two of the best civil servants I have known: my parents Connie and Peter. I've been fortunate to have a career that has allowed me to help my neighbors, serve my community and hopefully make the Commonwealth a better, healthier place to live."



COMMUNITY NEWS

Kamurjner Cultural Connections, Inc. Continues Building Bridges Through Music, Community and Charity

BOSTON — This spring, 136 young performers from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire came together for the United in Music Festival 2026, organized and presented by Kamurjner Cultural Connections, Inc. Held over three Sundays in May and featuring six concerts across Massachusetts, the festival celebrated young talent while advancing

“United in Music has become much more than a concert series,” said Izabella Djevalikian, founding director of Kamurjner (Bridges) Cultural Connections. “It is a place where young musicians from different communities and cultures come together to share the stage, build friendships, and offer their talent to serve a meaningful charitable purpose. Every child who performed, every teacher who prepared students, every family who attended the concerts, and every donor and volunteer became part of something

meaningful.”

The festival’s impact extends far beyond the concert stage. Through funds raised during last year’s festival (2025), Kamurjner was able to complete several important improvements at School No. 2 in Ayntap Village, Armenia, that serves approximately 1,100 students in grades 1 through 12, as well as 170 preschool children from Ayntap and neighboring communities.

The school administration identified several urgent needs affecting the daily environment and comfort of students and staff. Thanks to the generosity of festival participants, donors, and supporters, KAMURJNER was able to help address some of these challenges.

The first project was the replacement of four deteriorated entrance doors that had become severely worn and no longer provided proper insulation or protection from rain and cold weather.



New entrance doors installed in August 2025

The new doors purchased and installed by Kamurjner created a safer, warmer, and more comfortable environment for students and staff.

The second project was the purchase of a new computer workstation for the school administration, replacing outdated equipment that no longer met the school’s needs. The workstation included a computer with all the required software installed, along with a monitor, soundbar, keyboard, and mouse, providing modern tools for the school’s daily educational and administrative operations.

Kamurjner’s support for the school did not end there. Continuing its efforts to improve the learning environment, the organization undertook an additional project to replace two hundred worn-out chairs in the school’s auditorium.

This latest initiative was funded through Kamurjner’s International Women’s Day fundraiser – “A Musical Gift for Her” - a special concert followed by dinner and dancing held on March 8, 2026.

Implemented in partnership with the Armenian School Foundation, the project provided two hundred new chairs, which were delivered in May 2026, just in time for the school’s end-of-year ceremonies and celebrations.

The new chairs have transformed the auditorium, creating a more comfortable and welcoming space for students during performances, celebrations, and community events for years to come.

The true impact of these projects is reflected in the students who benefit from them every day. Accompanying this article is a short video message from students at School No. 2 in Ayntap Village, Armenia, expressing their gratitude to everyone who supported Kamurjner’s charitable efforts.

Kamurjner Cultural Connections plans to continue expanding its cultural and charitable initiatives in the years ahead.

One of the organization’s upcoming programs is Celebrate Armenia 2026, presented in collaboration with the Friends of Armenian Heritage Park in honor of Armenia’s Independence Day. The event will take place on September 19, from 1 to 8 p.m. at Armenian Heritage Park in Boston and will be open to the public.

Featuring music, dance, cultural performances, children’s activities, and community engagement, Celebrate Armenia highlights our heritage while bringing together diverse communities from across Greater Boston.

Kamurjner means bridges in Armenian, and through programs such as the United in Music Festival, Celebrate Armenia, and other initiatives, Kamurjner continues to build meaningful connections between communities while creating educational opportunities and improving learning environments for children in Armenia.

TUM 15
THE NEXT FIFTEEN YEARS

15TH
ANNIVERSARY
GALA

Celebrating 15 years of free,
world-class tech and design
education for teens.

Join us in supporting
the next chapter in Armenia.



September 20, 2026

Vibiana | Los Angeles



COMMUNITY NEWS

Ekmekcioglu Named Head of MIT's History Section

By Benjamin Daniel



CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Lerna Ekmekcioglu, the McMillan-Stewart Professor of History, has been named head of the History Section, effective July 1. A faculty member since 2011, Ekmekcioglu examines how communities survive, adapt, remember, and make claims on justice under difficult political conditions.

"Lerna is an exceptional scholar and a proven leader. I am confident that she will guide the unit with thoughtfulness, wisdom, and a deep commitment to its continued success. I very much look forward to working with her in the years ahead," says Agustín Rayo, the Kenan Sahin Dean of the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences.

Ekmekcioglu, who joined the MIT faculty in 2011, is a historian of the modern Middle East, the Ottoman Empire, and Turkey, Armenian history, gender, feminism, genocide, and minority politics. She served as director of the Program in Women's and Gender Studies from 2022 to 2025, where she remains an affiliated faculty member.

Ekmekcioglu succeeds Malick Ghachem, who was named head of the History Section on July 1, 2023.

"As I begin this new role, my first priority is to sustain and expand the remarkable momentum already underway in the unit. It is truly an exciting moment to be head of History," says Ekmekcioglu. "We have ambitious new initiatives, extraordinary faculty work, and — this is not a

small thing — a group of colleagues who actually like and trust one another."

She cites the History of Now, launched in 2025, as one of several exciting initiatives underway, adding that her role will be ensuring the section's projects are sustainable, visible and intellectually fruitful.

"The work ahead is both practical and intellectual: supporting faculty research and teaching, sustaining new initiatives, expanding public engagement, and demonstrating why historical inquiry is indispensable to MIT's mission," she says.

Ekmekcioglu's first monograph, *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey* (Stanford University Press, 2016), explored the Armenian community in Turkey after the Armenian Genocide and the limits of minority belonging in the early Turkish Republic.

It won the Der Mugardechian Society for Armenian Studies Outstanding Book Award.

Her forthcoming book, *Feminism in Armenian: Lives and Texts Through Empire, Genocide, and Diaspora*, co-authored with Melissa Bilal of the University of California at Los Angeles, continues her long-standing work on Armenian feminist thought, activism, and archives across empire, violence, and dispersion.

Ekmekcioglu is a 2016 recipient of the James A. and Ruth Levitan Award for excellence in teaching. She also organizes the biannual McMillan-Stewart Lecture Series on women, gender, religion, politics and law across the Middle East and North Africa.

Ekmekcioglu earned a B.A. from Bogaziçi University in Istanbul 2002 and a PhD from New York University in 2010.

Armenia Fest Returns to Royal Oak for An Evening of Food, Music and Dance

BIRMINGHAM, Mich. — The warmth, flavors and joyful spirit of Armenia will fill the Royal Oak Farmers Market, located at 316 E. 11 Mile Road, when Armenia Fest returns on Saturday, August 22 from 5 to 10 p.m.

Presented by the Metro Detroit Armenia Fest Committee in partnership with the Detroit Knights of Vartan, the free community festival welcomes guests to share in an evening of Armenian food, music, dance, culture and friendship.

Recognized as the first ethnic festival ever held in the City of Royal Oak, Armenia Fest has become a beloved Southeast Michigan summer tradition. Guests are encouraged to bring lawn chairs, arrive hungry and settle in for a lively evening where Armenian heritage is proudly shared with the community.

For one night, the Royal Oak Farmers Market will take on the colorful atmosphere of a lively Armenian bazaar, featuring Armenian bakers and chefs, artisan vendors, cultural exhibits, children's activities, a silent auction and the popular Great Choreg Bake-Off.

The aroma of grilled kebabs will greet festival goers, along with stuffed grape leaves, lahmajoon (Armenian pizza), freshly baked breads, pastries and other traditional Armenian favorites. The Beer and Wine Garden will offer Armenian and American wines and brews, while the outdoor cigar bar will feature premium cigars paired with rich Armenian cognac.

The Armenia Fest All-Star Band, led by Fest Co-Chair and Emcee Vaughn Masropian, will fill the evening with spirited traditional music. The Hamazkayin Arax Dance Troupe will bring Armenian culture to life through captivating folk dances performed by local youth in beautiful traditional costumes.

Major sponsors confirmed as of publication include the Hagopian Family of Companies, the Mardigian Foundation, the Robert Ajemian Foundation, the Anusbian Family for Westborn Market, Mark and Dina Artinian for Crispelli's Bakery and Pizzeria, the Beatrice and Raymont Paul Foundation, the Herman Hintiryan Family, Susan Licata and Edward Haroutunian, Matthew Bedikian for MAC, and Shakeh Basmajian and Family.

Proceeds will benefit the Knights of Vartan Economic Sustainability Program, which supports job creation, entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities in Armenia.

With more than 70,000 Armenians living throughout Metro Detroit's tri-county area, Armenia Fest is more than a cultural celebration. It is a gathering of generations, a sharing of treasured traditions and a heartfelt invitation for the entire community to experience Armenia close to home.

For more information, see the Armenia Fest Michigan Facebook page or use the link <https://www.facebook.com/share/1F7M5xWrE2/?mibextid=wwXlfr>



From Its Lowell Roots to Artsakh: Saints Vartanantz Marks 110 Years Through Service

ANNIVERSARY, from page 7

few possessions after the forced displacement of Artsakh's Armenian population in 2023.

"Those who built Saints Vartanantz had to leave everything behind," said Father Kesablian. "They had no means of survival in this new country. But they had Armenian brothers and sisters who helped them."

"As the offspring of the generation who survived the genocide and came to this country, we wanted to do the same thing and help our brothers and sisters who left Artsakh. They had to leave everything. While we still hope and pray that they will return, we wanted to do something to help alleviate some of their burdens and sorrows."

The decision to partner with FAR grew out of years of familiarity with the organization and the relationships parishioners had developed with FAR staff.

Committee member Isabelle Shamshoyan Hamel recalled hosting FAR Ayo! program director Sarah Stites during a visit to the community.

"We took her on a tour of Lowell and visited the historic church and other key sites so she could get a firsthand feeling for the community perspective," Hamel said.

That visit helped establish a connection between FAR's work in Armenia and the parish's mission in Massachusetts.

Vice Chair Deacon Ara Jeknavorian said Stites's ability to spotlight overlooked communities resonated strongly with parishioners.

"She made a personal connection," Jeknavorian said. "She showed pictures and some of the handiwork that was made

by the SheCan women. Sarah tends to focus on projects that are underreported and underrepresented. The fact that she highlights these causes speaks to the heart of the people of our church."

The anniversary fundraising effort was modeled after FAR's successful "Donate Your Birthday" campaign, which is headed up by Stites. The program has supporters ask friends and family to make charitable contributions in lieu of gifts. For the anniversary celebration, parishioners chose to expand on the idea and launched a "Donate Your Anniversary" campaign, inviting the community to recognize the church's milestone by helping others.

"I have always been so warmly welcomed by the Saints Vartanantz community — it's such a pleasure to visit. So when Isabelle called to share what her parish had chosen to do, I was deeply moved, but somehow not at all surprised. Later, I was blown away when she told me how much they had raised! I believe that other churches will follow in Saints Vartanantz's footsteps — what a beautiful example they have been."

Father Kesablian noted FAR's transparency and track record were major factors in the church's decision and in the program's success.

"The trustworthiness is number one," he said. "We have made other contributions through FAR before, and we have experienced firsthand the fruit of those contributions. Recently we visited Armenia and saw the impact our donations make at both the soup kitchen in Gyumri and the Children's Center in Yerevan."

The anniversary committee itself reflect-

ed another longstanding Saints Vartanantz tradition of strong leadership by women of the parish.

The church's Women's Guild (then called the Ladies Aid Society), founded in 1910, has played a central role in parish life for more than a century.

Jeknavorian praised their efforts. "The Women's Guild deserves so much credit for getting the church organized and saying that if we're going to keep the faith in this country, we have to have a church. They were the ones who drove it from the beginning."

It was Hamel who suggested the Women's Guild spearhead the anniversary committee. "It was important to honor the past while encouraging future generations, and that's how we ended up putting this project forward and celebrating the church's 110th anniversary."

The committee directed part of the proceeds to FAR's SheCan program, which provides business and entrepreneurship training to women, including many displaced from Artsakh. The donation will enable three women to participate in the program, gaining skills to help them establish businesses and achieve greater financial independence.

"Women are always the backbone of the church," Jeknavorian said. "God bless them. I think we're in the sixth generation now of our Women's Guild. When it comes to outreach, they're the first ones to take on any project, whether locally or in Armenia."

The church also chose to support FAR's Center for Children with Learning Disabilities in Yerevan, helping fund the refurbish-

ment of a therapy room for children with special needs, including some displaced from Artsakh.

The center provides free therapeutic services, such as clay and music therapy, to children and families who might otherwise have limited access to specialized care.

A commemorative plaque recognizing Saints Vartanantz will be placed on the therapy room door, creating a lasting connection between the parish and the children who will benefit from the space.

For Father Kesablian, supporting young people was a natural extension of the church's mission.

"The youth are the present and the future," he said. "We want to give opportunities to our children and support them. I'm personally from Armenia, and it is critical to make sure they have the means to prosper and grow."

As Bishop Mesrop concluded the anniversary weekend, he encouraged parishioners to continue the mission of the church's founders and carry their faith into the future through service to others.

The response from parishioners demonstrated that message had resonated.

"There was a lot of emotion and excitement that comes from knowing we are helping others," Father Kesablian said. "There were no concerns or questions about why the community decided to give to this worthy cause. We were helping our brothers and sisters in Armenia."

"When we put our faith into action," Father Kesablian said, "we demonstrate Christ's love while preserving our Armenian faith, identity and heritage, and pass those values down to the next generations."



Arts & Culture

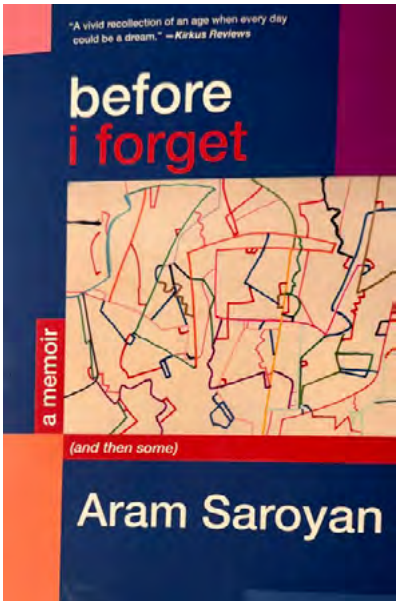
BOOKS

before i forget: a memoir: Aram Saroyan's Quiet Odyssey

By Arpi Sarafian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The image of “the steadfast mountain, unmoved by the sound and fury of an individual destiny,” a reference to the celebrated Beat writer Jack Kerouac and his novel *Desolation Angels*, sets the tone for Aram Saroyan’s *before I forget: a memoir* (and then some) (Three Rooms Press, 2026). The memoir can be seen as Saroyan’s attempt to transform the “terror and chaos” of a childhood of “violent misery that tore the family apart twice by the time I was eight,” into the “stillness” surrounding the mountain peak in Kerouac’s novel.

Aram recalls the monstrous behavior of his father, William Saroyan, the “international literary sensation” of almost mythic fame, who dominated



the literary scene of the 1930s and ‘40s America. More than four decades after his father’s death, and after the son himself has risen to international fame — Aram is the author of many books of prose and poetry, a multiple-awards-winning writer, best known for his minimalist poems — the “flamboyant literary figure” of the father, to borrow the son’s words, frames the memoir.

before i forget opens with the chapter titled “Family Portraits” where Aram depicts a life that started with the brutality and the rejection of “a self-made tyrant and compulsive gambler.” It concludes with an accidental encounter in the streets of New York between the now divorced, “embittered” Saroyan and his ex-wife Carol walking arm-in-arm with his “old buddy” Walter Matthau, the actor she had married after a dual-divorce from his father. “If you walk around New York long enough, sooner or later you meet your family,” says Bill in his “booming voice . . . with a jovial look at the two of them.” This final chapter, “The Sound of Love,” offers Aram the closure and the reassurance he seeks. It recalls for me the line, “What thou lovest well remains,” of the Ezra Pound poem see SAROYAN, page 16



A video interview of Felix Bakhchinyan was screened

Felix Bakhchinyan Bridging Armenia and Fridtjof Nansen

YEREVAN — The late Armenian writer, literary scholar, and translator Felix Bakhchinyan was the author of more than sixty books and numerous literary translations, leaving a lasting contribution to Armenian literature and cultural life. Although Bakhchinyan passed away in 2024, his work continues.

As executive director of the Fridtjof Nansen Institute Foundation Hayarpi Khachatryan notes, he left behind a notebook in which he had carefully outlined his future plans, point by point. Today, his colleagues continue to implement those projects, guided by the vision he set down.

The Tekeyan Cultural Association of Armenia organized a memorial evening dedicated to Bakhchinyan’s life and legacy on June 30, which featured an extensive recorded video interview with the writer, while literary scholars reflected on his literary achievements.

It was largely through Bakhchinyan’s scholarship that many Armenians came to know the life and work of the renowned Norwegian polar explorer and great friend of the Armenian people, Fridtjof Nansen.



Hayarpi Khachatryan

Khachatryan recalled that even Norwegians were astonished by the extraordinary scope of Bakhchinyan’s research. Through years of dedicated study, he explored and presented the many facets of Nansen’s life and achievements with exceptional depth and breadth.

Several films about Nansen were produced from Bakhchinyan’s screenplays, and he also founded the Fridtjof Nansen Museum, helping to preserve and promote Nansen’s legacy in Armenia.

Bakhchinyan introduced Armenian readers to the literature and cultures of other nations through his translations, building cultural bridges between Armenia and countries around the

world. As a young scholar, he studied at Vilnius University, where he specialized in Armenian–Lithuanian literary and cultural relations.

A member of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Armenia, Bakhchinyan received the Vahan Tekeyan Annual Award and was honored with numerous state, literary, and public awards and medals in recognition of his contributions to Armenian culture.



Some of Felix Bakhchinyan’s publications

Armen Agop

Touching the Invisible At the Venice Biennale

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/PIETRASANTA, Italy – Armen Agop, née Armen Guerboyan (Cairo in 1969) is a contemporary artist. At the age of thirteen, he began studying drawing and painting with Simon Shahrighian. He later studied sculpture at Helwan University in Cairo. After graduating, he received an assistant researcher scholarship and taught sculpture at the university for three years. Between 1997 and 2000, he participated in numerous exhibitions across Egypt, Qatar, Italy, Belgium, USA, UAE and won the Sculpture Prize of the Autumn Salon in 1998. In 2000, he received Egypt’s prestigious Prix de Rome, the State Prize of Artistic Creativity. He spent time in Rome and later settled in Pietrasanta. He is known for his ascetic approach to abstract sculpture, primarily using black granite and basalt. Agop gained international recognition for his contemplative sculptures and painting series such as Touch, Sufic, and MANTRA. His works are included in major collections such as the Egyptian Museum of Modern Art, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, and the Barjeel Art Founda-



Armen Agop, Intangible (curtesy of the artist)

tion.

For more about Armen Agop visit: <https://www.armenagop.com>

Armen, some say classical stone sculpture is currently facing a certain crisis worldwide. Do you agree?

I don’t see it that way. I see that there is a generation that became distant from the process of making in general and became detached from the material due to the influence of conceptual works. However, I always see ARMEN AGOP, page 14

ARTS & CULTURE

Armen Agop: Touching the Invisible in Venice

ARMEN AGOP, from page 13

believed that that couldn't continue for long, we can't forbid children from enjoying to draw and paint, so I have been waiting for the change. I see it's changing now, and maybe going to the extreme opposite, where we start to see craft-oriented works, maybe even exaggerated.

Italy remains one of the world's main centers of sculpture, and it is often difficult to imagine non-Italian sculptors achieving major recognition there. In your opinion, what new perspectives do you bring to today's Italian contemporary sculpture scene?

I want to clarify that despite graduating from the sculpture department and becoming known in my first years more as a sculptor, I have always painted and drawn. The last nine years I have exhibited painting alongside sculpture and actually more paintings than sculptures. My exhibitions are more multidisciplinary. And my activity is not focused only on Italy, maybe I am more present abroad.

In a broader sense, the Italian art scene is inclusive, many artists are strongly present in the contemporary scene, like Mitorjoi, Koonelis and Medhat Shafik. Italians are very curious and open to different cultures, they may not be ready to embrace it, but absolutely ready to get aquatinted. I was pleasantly surprised when I was invited to participate in an exhibition in which the local inhabitants voted on a project to be realized near their train station and my sculptural fountain won the Mastroianni award. With Italy's long history of fountains, I wasn't expecting that they can be open and interested to a contemporary contemplative work like mine.

This year, you are representing Egypt at the Venice Biennale. What is your approach and the main concept behind your presentation?

My approach is to continue working the same way, regardless of the enormity of the event.

The visitor is asked to be silent and not take photos or use the phone inside the pavilion, which is called the "SILENCE PAVILION: Between the Tangible and the Intangible." I believe that silence can give the chance to the visitors to unite with themselves. Silence may help open pathways to their inner voice.

There are three spaces that at their core offer pathways to the inner worlds. The invitation to connect with the intangible in the first space through a sculpture and painting. Followed by a second room where there is an invitation to touch a granite sculpture. As granite comes to us from the heart of the earth, the invitation is to connect with the core of the earth I believe it may lead us to connect to the core of our essence. The last room is an invitation to observe the invisible and have a contemplative experience with a large painting and sculpture. The painting is done through a meditative process in which dots are applied to the canvas with the smallest pen nib in a "gestural mantra." The accumulation of dots over time invokes luminosity from darkness. The painting becomes a materialization of time through the ritual of the "gestural mantra." I hope that the artworks help visitors to unite with themselves, and when that happens it is a unification with the whole universe and is a cosmic event. In the Silence Pavilion, there is also a sound piece and a perfume diffusion accompanying the painting and sculpture in the last room, the contemplative zone for an immersive experience.

You coined the term "Transcontemporary" to describe an artistic concept aimed at creating works not limited to

a particular cultural context. Nevertheless, do you — or art critics — identify any specifically Egyptian or Armenian elements in your work?

Transcontemporary emerged from the belief that the core values in art and our humanity have always existed in the course of our existence. I don't think that cave art is more distant from me than a contemporary artwork and why should it be? Every authentic artwork that is made honestly contains a human experience and it radiates an energy that can be interiorized by other human beings. When I look at an art work I don't think of it as new or old, it either touches me or not, all the narratives around it are irrelevant to me.

Growing up in Egypt and being surrounded by ancient sculptures that transmitted their own inner energy, I could perceive pride, dignity and sacredness, which made me wonder about how I can perceive these energies after all these millennia. This means that certain values are eternal just as much as the material, they usually speak about the granite which survives time, but not only, that sacredness, that inner energy survives as well.

How familiar are you with Armenian fine art?

I am not updated with the current art scene in Armenia. I was following more when I was younger, and I wanted to study in Yerevan, I applied in 1987 but never got an answer.

Every Armenian Diaspora family has an interesting and often heartbreaking history. What is your family's story?

My grandfather was from Musa Dag, and his brother was the leader of the revolt at Musa Dag in which the book, Forty days of Musa Dag details. When they fled



Armen Agop (© Karim Kaddal)

it was a French boat directed by a colonel who did not wait for permission but sent a boat to save them. The boat went to Port Said, Egypt, where my grandfather stayed and created a life while his brother went to Lebanon.

Organizing exhibitions abroad is highly cost-intensive. Nevertheless, do you

think it is possible that one day we will see your exhibition in Armenia?

Absolutely, and I hope soon! One of my first art books I had when I was young was about the National gallery of Armenia. It was one of my dreams to exhibit there and many of my dreams came true!

*Tekeyan Cultural Association Greater New York
in collaboration with the Armenian Radio Hour
of New Jersey presents*

ROMANTIC SOUL: MASTERPIECES FOR PIANO TRIO

Featuring works by
*Khachaturian, Mendelssohn,
Naregatsi, Babajanian
and others*



**TANYA
GABRIELIAN**
piano



**ANI
KALAYJIAN**
cello



**ERIC
SILBERGER**
violin

Sunday, September 27, 2026

4PM

West Side Presbyterian Church
6 S Monroe St, Ridgewood, NJ 07450

Tickets \$75, \$50, \$40





ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe
Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



HyeFeastLA: Armenian Yogurt
Soup with Meatballs

LOS ANGELES — If you’re looking for traditional comfort food, make a bowl of this nourishing Armenian Yogurt Soup with Meatballs (Madzoon ov kofte), often called tanabour (usually made with barley) or spas. It’s a dish from HyeFeastLA that is sure to satisfy. Lena Ghadianian Artunian, a third generation chef, has been cooking since the age of 7. She is a gifted creator, private chef, and food blogger. Born in Lebanon into a culturally rich family, Lena developed a keen interest in food at a young age. Her family owned Zouhour Restaurant since 1970 in Aleppo, Syria, then to Beirut, Lebanon, before coming to the U.S. in 1978.

“My grandfather and father owned Zouhour Restaurant in North Hollywood. Later, my father opened and operated Mihran’s Restaurant in Tarzana for over 20 years. It was ranked the Top 10 Best Middle Eastern Restaurant in the San Fernando Valley by the Los Angeles Times. My father passed away due to a heart attack in 2011 at the age of 60. I promised myself I would keep his memories and traditions alive by cooking the recipes that I learned from him and my family.”

Lena shares old family recipes, often forgotten today and difficult to find, and how to reproduce them with the proper skill and knowledge. “Dried mint is often used in Middle Eastern cooking; its flavor is quite different from that of fresh mint, so if you can’t find it, it’s better to omit it than to substitute fresh. Chicken broth gives this soup added depth, but it can be replaced with water or vegetable broth. You can serve this dish as an alternative to chicken soup to soothe cold and flu symptoms. It can also be served cold during the hot summer months,” adds Lena.

- Chicken Broth Base:**
- 1 whole organic chicken, rinsed
 - 1 bay leaf
 - 1 cinnamon stick
 - 5 whole allspice berries
 - 1 small onion, cut in quarters
 - 1 tablespoon salt, to taste

Place all ingredients in a large pot, add water to cover the chicken, and boil for 1 1/2 hours; if liquid evaporates, add more water to cover the chicken.

- Kufteh (Meatballs):**
- 1 lb. extra lean eye round beef, finely ground (found in Armenian or Middle Eastern markets as chikufteh meat)
 - 1 1/2 cups fine #1 bulgur (soaked and knead until softened)
 - 1 teaspoon ground allspice
 - 1 tablespoon Aleppo pepper
 - 1 tablespoon black pepper
 - 1 teaspoon salt, to taste

Combine all ingredients in a flat sheet pan and mix with some water until well combined. Dip hands in a bowl of ice cold water, then roll meat-bulgur mixture into a golf ball about 3/4-inch to one inch in size. Make a small hole in each

meatball, add some of the butter with onion stuffing (below) inside, seal with your fingers, and round it off with your palms with some water.

- Butter and Onion Stuffing:**
- 1 stick unsalted butter, cubed in small pieces
 - 2 tablespoons finely chopped onions

Sprinkle the salt, Aleppo pepper, black pepper, and some dried mint on the butter pieces, and mix together.

- Yogurt mixture for the broth:**
- 2 cups plain yogurt
 - 2 tablespoons labneh
 - 1 beaten egg
 - 1 tablespoon flour or cornstarch
 - Dried mint, if desired

With a hand or immersion blender, mix the above ingredients from the yogurt mixture until it is smooth and without any lumps.

Once the chicken has boiled, remove the chicken, bay leaf, and onions, and clean the broth with a mesh strainer. Shred the chicken and set it aside. Add the meatballs to the boiling broth and let them cook for 10-15 minutes, until they float to the surface. Remove meatballs using a slotted spoon and place on a paper towel. Add a teaspoon of crushed dried mint and Aleppo pepper to the broth.

Slowly add the chicken broth one ladle at a time into the yogurt egg mixture until it is a smooth consistency; this process is called tempering. Once all of the yogurt broth has been added, stir with a wooden spoon so yogurt does not separate. Add the meatballs back into the broth and continue to cook at a low heat for 10-15 minutes, stirring continuously. Serve immediately.

Lena learned to master traditional Syrian, Lebanese and Armenian recipes and did not stop even after her father’s death. She felt responsible for keeping her family’s legacy alive. To make her dream come true, she began HyeFeastLA 12 years ago on Instagram. Lena had a strong determination when it came to her mission: to share her family’s recipes while helping others establish meaningful connections with traditional Middle Eastern cooking and skills. For information about private cooking classes or special orders, contact Lena at: (818) 421-0119 or at hyefeastla@gmail.com.

Lena offers private cooking class packages for individuals and groups interested in learning how to cook like a professional



Manti Class at HyeFeastLA

For this recipe, go to:
<https://m.facebook.com/armenianandmiddleeasterncooking/posts/10159154963550794/>
<https://www.facebook.com/armenianandmiddleeasterncooking/photos/a.285910765793/10158261645170794/?type=3>

For Lena’s recipes, see: <https://hyefeastla.com/>

Connect at:

<https://www.facebook.com/HyeFeastLA/>
<https://www.instagram.com/hyefeastla/>
<https://www.youtube.com/@hyefeastlacookingshow/about>
<https://hyefeastla.com/cooking-classes>

See:
<https://euronewsdaily.com/an-archive-of-tastes-this-is-how-hyefeastla-by-lena-artunian-is-helping-people-connect-with-old-family-recipes/>
<https://www.netnewsledger.com/2023/04/09/meet-chef-lena-artunian-who-is-on-a-mission-to-preserve-her-familys-recipes-from-armenian-syrian-lebanese-culture/>

For other recipes, see:
<https://mirrorspectator.com/2021/12/23/the-silkiest-soup-andrew-janji-gians-tanabour-armenian-yogurt-and-barley-soup/>



ARTS & CULTURE

before i forget: a memoir: Aram Saroyan’s Quiet Odyssey

SAROYAN, from page 13
Aram uses as his epigraph.

Along with a fascinating account of Aram’s journey to literary fame, the memoir paints a vivid picture of the 1950s and 1960s, the scene the adolescent grew up

celebrated poets, artists and movie stars of the day. The memoir is full of casual mentions, such as “our neighbor, the poet Bill Berkson . . .” It might be worth noting here that, at times, being introduced to a few too many names and to stories of divorces and break-ups that seem disjointed, can be confusing. Ultimately, however, these stories come together to create a faithful portrait of the times.

With not much enthusiasm for academia, Aram fails his first year at Trinity, “the venerable all-boys private school” in Manhattan, from which he nonetheless graduates in 1962. An early encounter with the iconic photographer Richard Avedon, however, leads to a beautiful two-page layout in the January 1958 issue of *Seventeen* magazine, under the heading “Lens on Europe,” of eight photographs of kids he had taken while on a cruise ship to Europe. The layout wins Aram an Art Directors Award. The fifteen-year old is greeted as

consciousness. “Having so large a number of ‘certified’ artists and writers tends to create a watered-down version of art itself,” notes the writer-turned-faculty-member. Aram taught at USC’s Master of Professional Writing Program for 15 years.

Aram’s honest and truthful accounts in this recent memoir inevitably take the reader to his 1982 *Last Rites: The Death of William Saroyan*, an earlier memoir based on the journal he kept during his father’s final days at the hospital. In the journal, Aram allows himself to feel the anger and the frustrations as the son of a famous man who he knew was not the person people take him to be, the public legend universally adored for his “sweetness.” *Last Rites* exposes “this gap between the public image and the reality I knew,” with the son ultimately making peace with the dying man.

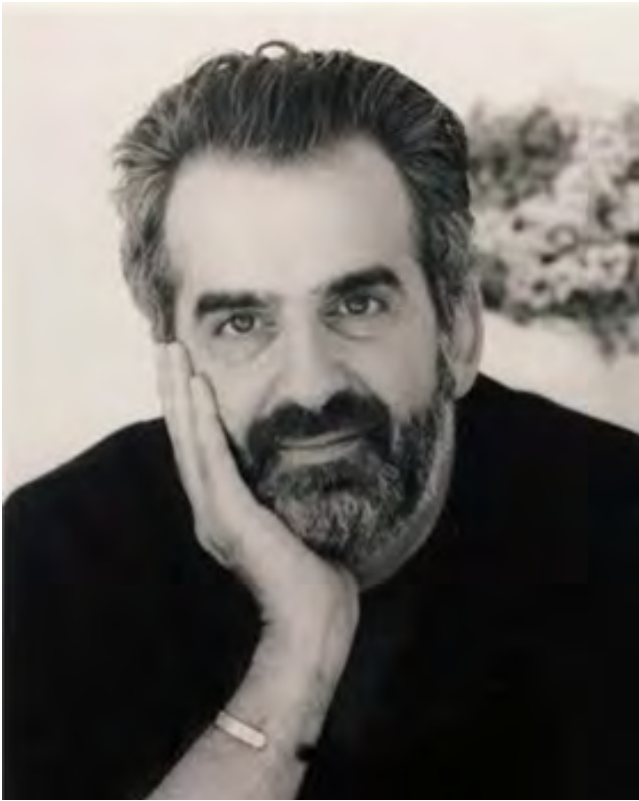
“If he could be impossible — and he could be — knowing him was nonetheless a great gift of my life,” writes Aram. *before i forget* draws a highly appreciative portrait of his father’s career as a writer. “He was already a stylist, master of a prose light years beyond all but one or two of his most accomplished contemporaries,” affirms the son with pride and joy. Aram has praise for a father, “after all, but the son of Armenian immigrants who had made literary high modernism funny and easy in the middle

of the dark hours of the Depression.” William Saroyan did indeed teach Americans to keep their faith and their love alive, even in the face of death.

That William Saroyan who, in 1943, the year his novel *The Human Comedy* was published, “was arguably the most famous writer in America,” to borrow Aram’s words, in no way diminishes the son who attained literary fame in his own right. Aram’s poem “light” is acclaimed as the world’s most famous one-word poem. The father’s enormous popularity could in fact add to the merit of a son who was able to measure up to the name he will always be associated with.

Aram has recently put aside his career as a writer and devoted himself entirely to the visual arts. He is, in fact, one of the participants in “Convergence,” the ongoing exhibit featuring the work of over twenty diasporic artists of Armenian descent at the Forest Lawn Museum in Glendale (March 21-August 9, 2026). Aram’s contribution to the exhibit, an abstract painting of colorful lines in paint marker on canvas, graces the cover of his memoir.

More than 20 pages of vintage photographs of the Saroyan family and of their celebrity friends bring the characters in the memoir closer to the reader and add greatly to the book’s appeal.



Writer Aram Saroyan

in. Aram recounts his psychedelic experiences, both chemical and non-chemical, of growing up in a counterculture that promoted “free love” and believed in the use of drugs to expand human consciousness. Leaders of this counterculture, Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, are ever-present. So are Bob Dylan, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Gloria Vanderbilt, Oona O’Neill, among others. Whether in Los Angeles, Bolinas, London or New York, Aram moves in the world surrounded with the

“a prodigy.” Most engaging are Aram’s candid and incisive comments, sprinkled throughout, on art and the culture that surrounds him. His observation on Significant Form, “that had to do with finding certain abstract paintings satisfying . . . without understanding why,” resonates with many viewers. His assessment, on the other hand, of the proliferating MFA programs, which “in effect promote an idea about art that is fundamentally false,” shakes the reader into a new con-

Qanon Virtuoso Marianna Gevorgyan Reaches The Final Round of the ICMA Awards

LOS ANGELES — Qanon (kanun) player Marianna Gevorgyan has become a finalist in the prestigious InterContinental Music Awards (ICMA) competition in the “Best Musician” category.

ist representing the Republic of Armenia, proudly carrying the Armenian flag, Armenian surname, and showcasing Armenian culture through the traditional national instrument — the qanon.

The InterContinental Music Awards (ICMA) is a global music recognition platform that honors musicians based on their cultural and continental origin. Founded in Los Angeles, ICMA supports independent and professional artists worldwide by providing expert judging, international exposure, and career-advancing recognition.

In 2025, Gevorgyan was honored with the title of Global Icon Awards world-recognized virtuoso musician. In 2020, she received the Grand Prize at the World Folk Vision international competition and has been the recipient of numerous first-place awards at international music competitions.

Marianna Gevorgyan is also a solo qanon performer with the Tagharan Ensemble of Ancient Music of the National Centre of Chamber Music of Armenia named after Komitas, under the artistic direction of Sedrak Yerkanyan.



This year, the competition has attracted participants from more than 100 countries, with several 3500 musicians taking part. Marianna Gevorgyan is the only final-

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.stjames-watertown.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 — Celebrating Contributions! Gala to benefit the Armenian 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

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

CONTRIBUTORS

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

**REGIONAL
CORRESPONDENTS**

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepiyan, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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

Baikar Association, Inc.

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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

Russian-Armenian Relations Enter New Phase

By Suren Sargsyan*Special to the Mirror-Spectator*

Russian-Armenian relations have entered a rather interesting phase. On the one hand, there are no major contentious issues in the bilateral relationship between the two countries. On the other hand, external factors have created challenges that affect their bilateral ties.

In other words, these challenges stem primarily from Armenia's relations with the West, which, in turn, influence Armenia's relationship with Russia. Viewed in this context, it becomes clear that issues directly related to bilateral relations can generally be resolved through working-level discussions. However, when the discussion shifts to Armenia's broader foreign policy, disagreements begin to emerge.

A few days ago, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin held a telephone conversation. According to official statements, they discussed the agenda of Armenia-Russia cooperation, including trade and economic relations, science and technology, and cultural and humanitarian cooperation. It is noteworthy that the phone call was initiated by the Armenian side.

At the same time, several Armenian media outlets reported that Prime Minister Pashinyan had initially sought to speak with Russian President Vladimir Putin but was unable to do so. In reality, from Armenia's perspective, both the Russian president and the prime minister can be considered counterparts to the Armenian prime minister. Pashinyan regularly meets with both of them, participating in intergovernmental events with Mishustin and in meetings of heads of state with Putin.

Judging by the official readout, the conversation with the Russian prime minister focused exclusively on economic, trade, and practical cooperation rather than political issues. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that the remaining political matters will be discussed with President Putin at a later stage.

Another notable point is that President Putin has not yet congratulated his Armenian counterpart on the victory in the recent parliamentary elections. Of course, no congratulatory message has been issued so far, and the most likely explanation is the ongoing proceedings before Armenia's Constitutional Court and the fact that the final election results have not yet been officially confirmed. Moreover, it is generally not customary to congratulate a leader merely on winning parliamentary elections; such congratulations are usually extended after the individual is officially elected or appointed prime minister.

Nevertheless, the discussion of the aforementioned topics with the Russian prime minister demonstrates that dialogue between the two countries continues. In fact, it is Armenia that is taking the initiative to maintain this dialogue, while simultaneously emphasizing at various levels that relations with Russia remain a foreign policy priority and that Armenia has no intention of leaving the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

This gives the impression that these statements are intended as assurances of goodwill toward Russia, aimed at easing tensions. The Armenian government appears to recognize that Moscow has grown increasingly uneasy over Yerevan's expanding ties with the West.

Russia undoubtedly expects loyalty from Armenia. However, it is equally evident that Moscow no longer possesses the same degree of leverage and coercive influence over Armenia that it once did. As a result, Russia understands that Armenia could, at least in theory, gradually move out of its sphere of influence and deepen its integration with the United States or the European Union.

It is equally clear that Armenia's leadership does not wish to find itself in a situation where it is forced to choose between Russia and the West. Avoiding such a binary choice remains one of the key objectives of Armenia's current foreign policy.

The Armenian leadership recognizes that having a country

like Russia as an outright adversary would be highly detrimental to Armenia's national interests. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the government will do everything possible to reduce the current tensions in bilateral relations.

As for the West, Armenia is most likely neither being considered nor is it likely ever to be considered a candidate for European Union membership. However, amid the deepening confrontation between Russia and the West, there appears to be an expectation that Armenia will increasingly align itself with the Western bloc by integrating as closely as possible without formal membership, while simultaneously withdrawing from the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and developing privileged relations with Western partners outside the framework of EU accession.

Such a scenario would not serve Armenia's national interests. It would leave the country in a strategically difficult position, severing its ties with Russia while at the same time failing to become a full-fledged member of the European political and economic community.

It is a fact that Armenia has traditionally pursued a foreign policy based on balancing its relations with both Russia and the West. The objective has been to avoid becoming entangled in their geopolitical rivalry, thereby minimizing the risk of being forced to choose one side over the other or provoking tensions with either partner.



Under the current government, however, Armenia has increasingly found itself at the center of these geopolitical contradictions. This has visibly irritated one side, while Armenia has not secured meaningful economic, political, or security guarantees from the other. From a strategic perspective, Armenia would arguably have been better served by maintaining a more neutral position and minimizing its involvement in highly sensitive issues until tensions between Russia and the West begin to ease.

Such a cautious approach might have made it more difficult for the current government to secure political re-election. Without leveraging these geopolitical tensions in the domestic political arena, and without framing the elections as a choice between a Western-oriented future and a Russian-oriented one, it is unlikely that the government would have received the level of direct political support from Western partners that accompanied the electoral process.

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



COMMENTARY

The Next Election or the Next Generation? When Politics Ceases to Be a Means of Building a State

By Avedis Bakkalian

“Politicians count votes; statesmen count generations.”

Another well-known version of this saying reads: “Politicians think about the next election, while statesmen think about the next generation.” Although its precise authorship remains uncertain, the idea has become one of the defining principles of political thought. It captures, in a single sentence, the essence of statesmanship.

Politics is not an end in itself. It is a means of building a nation, promoting the public good, strengthening institutions, and laying durable foundations for the future.

This distinction reflects two fundamentally different approaches to public leadership.

One approach is centered on immediate political gain: winning the next election, preserving power, and securing short-term public approval. The other looks beyond the next electoral cycle and asks a far more consequential question: What kind of country will future generations inherit, and what kind of state are today’s decisions creating for tomorrow?

For Armenia, this question has never been more urgent.

In every democracy, elections are indispensable. They give citizens the authority to choose their leaders and hold them accountable. Yet elections alone do not build nations.

A country does not become stronger simply because one party wins an election. It becomes stronger when its leaders possess the vision and the courage to think beyond the next campaign — to plan not merely for years, but for generations.

When political life is reduced to the logic of the next election, the state gradually loses its long-term direction. Politics then ceases to serve the nation and begins to serve its own political survival.

Political Visibility vs. State Vision
Today’s political environment around the world is defined by speed. Social media platforms, instant reactions and a constant news cycle push political figures to maintain a continuous presence in the public arena.

Armenia is no exception. Too often, the political agenda is shaped not by the issues that will determine the country’s long-term

future, but by events that briefly capture public attention.

One day, political discussions may revolve around a leader riding a bicycle; another day, around a politician’s appearance on a live broadcast; and the next day, around a video circulating widely on social media.

Such initiatives may have their own value as tools of communication. Political leaders, naturally, need to maintain contact with citizens and remain connected to society. Public visibility is part of modern political life.

The problem arises when symbolic actions begin to replace a serious national agenda.

Citizens need more than to simply see their leaders. They need to understand where those leaders are taking the country.

While we discuss the images and events of the day, we should also ask a more important question: Who is speaking about the Armenia of 2050?

A nation’s future cannot be built only through daily political reactions. It requires a vision that extends beyond the immediate news cycle and addresses the challenges that will define the lives of future generations.

The Statesman and the Politician

A statesman and a politician are not the same.

Every statesman is a politician, but not every politician becomes a statesman.

A politician seeks to gain the trust of the people. A statesman seeks to prove worthy of that trust.

A politician addresses today’s problems. A statesman builds the foundations that can prevent tomorrow’s crises.

A politician counts votes. A statesman counts generations.

True statecraft requires the willingness to make decisions that may not always be immediately popular, but that serve the national interest in the long term.

Leading a nation does not mean simply following the moods and expectations of the moment. Leadership also means preparing the future.

The responsibility of a leader is not only to respond to today’s demands, but also to anticipate tomorrow’s challenges.

History often judges leaders not only by the decisions they made during their time in

office, but by the institutions they built, the opportunities they created, and the future they prepared for their people.

This is the difference between political management and true leadership.

Armenia’s Real Challenges

The challenges facing Armenia cannot be addressed through the limited perspective of a single electoral cycle.

Demographic decline, emigration, education, science, economic development, national security and the strengthening of state institutions are long-term challenges that require consistent attention and strategic planning.

No serious nation has ever solved such fundamental issues through slogans or short-term political measures alone.

They require a national strategy, professional expertise and sustained commitment.

Armenia is a small state with limited human and economic resources. For this reason, the cost of our mistakes is far greater. We do not have the luxury of losing years without a clear direction and a well-defined vision.

Every strategic decision made today can influence the destiny of future generations.

The future of a nation is not shaped only by the decisions made during moments of political urgency. It is shaped by the priorities established, the institutions strengthened and the investments made when the challenges are not yet beyond control.

For Armenia, long-term thinking is not simply a political choice. It is a national necessity.

Lessons from History

History shows that major transformations have taken place when leaders were able to think beyond the limits of their own terms in office.

The history of modern Armenia also offers examples of leaders whose vision extended beyond immediate political concerns. The name of Karen Demirchyan is associated, for many Armenians, with a period when long-term development, industrial capacity and the creation of major infrastructure were central elements of state planning.

Opinions about his political legacy may differ, but it is difficult to deny that his approach was shaped not only by the challenges of his time, but also by a broader vision of

Armenia’s future development.

The example of Lee Kuan Yew demonstrates how a small country can transform itself into a strong and competitive state through long-term vision, disciplined governance and consistent policies.

During the leadership of Konrad Adenauer, Germany’s reconstruction was based not only on economic recovery but also on the establishment of strong democratic institutions and a stable state structure.

Charles de Gaulle was likewise guided by the conviction that the interests of the state must rise above short-term political calculations.

These examples confirm a simple truth: States are not built for elections. Elections must serve the building of states.

Who Is Thinking About Armenia’s Future?

This question is not only about the government or the opposition.

It is also a question of responsibility for political parties, expert communities, the media and society as a whole.

When citizens demand only quick answers and immediate solutions, political life naturally adapts to those expectations. But when society begins to demand vision, planning and long-term responsibility, the political environment is compelled to change.

A mature society does not judge its leaders only by the promises they make before elections, but also by the future they are capable of building after elections.

Today, Armenia’s greatest question is not only who will lead the country tomorrow.

A more important question remains: What kind of Armenia will be inherited by the children who are sitting today at the desks of Armenian schools?

If we fail to answer this question today, tomorrow may be too late.

History, in the end, does not remember only who won one election or another. It remembers those who succeeded in creating a safer, stronger and more dignified future for their people.

Armenia does not lack politicians today. Armenia needs statesmen.

(The Armenian version of this article was originally published in Abaka weekly on July 13, 2026.)

Israel’s Recognition of the Armenian Genocide Isn’t Enough

By Michael Rubin

On June 28, 2026, Israel formally recognized the Armenian Genocide. Armenians should welcome the recognition, even if it is rooted more in diplomatic cynicism than principle. After all, there is no doubt except in extreme denialist circles about the scale, scope, and intent of the murders of the Armenians and, concurrently, the Pontic Greeks.

The move comes decades late, as successive Israeli governments feared angering Turks and the Turkish government who have never come to terms with Turkish culpability. Many Jewish groups, meanwhile, feared recognizing the Armenian Genocide would somehow detract from the uniqueness of the Holocaust, never mind that Nazi German leader Adolf Hitler cited the Ottomans’ ability to get away with their slaughter of the Armenians to justify his own policy against the Jews. To make an ahistorical analogy, Israeli non-recognition of the Armenian Genocide would be akin to U.S. governments refusing to recognize the Holocaust because they feared upsetting German trade deals or Arab countries that were hostile to Israel.

Israel’s motives in its recognition may not be fully

principled, but the result — acknowledging historical fact — Armenians should nonetheless welcome.

Israelis may object to such an interpretation but, if so, they should go further. Realpolitik defines Israel’s relationship with Azerbaijan. Israelis insist that their investment in Azerbaijan paid huge intelligence and military dividends during the recent Iran war.

Still, the Israeli tendency to advocate for Azerbaijan with the same uncritical endorsement that U.S. Ambassador Tom Barrack advocates for Turkey can backfire. To rationalize Azerbaijani ethnic cleansing of Armenians and the destruction of Armenian churches, monasteries, and graveyards is to give the diplomatic and antisemitic lynch mob that wants to see Israel’s destruction or denies Jewish heritage in the Holy Land a precedent that would enable ignoring Palestinian bulldozing of Jewish cites and archaeological ruins in Jerusalem and the West Bank. While the late Ambassador Dore Gold long spoke of the need for defensible borders, Israel’s refusal to grant Armenia the same principle undermines Israel in future diplomatic negotiations.

Israel’s tight relations with Azerbaijan can be valuable if Israel uses its position to moderate Azerbaijani racism and incitement against Armenians. There is no strategic or logical reason why Azerbaijan should have destroyed the ancient cemetery at Julfa, for example. Israel should use its access to Azerbaijani leader Ilham Aliyev to counsel against the repetition of such destruction, especially as Azerbaijani forces destroy churches and graveyards in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Diplomatic ties and partnerships should not require

moral compromise or acquiescence to an ideology that amounts to continued cultural genocide.

Likewise, Azerbaijan has maneuvered itself into a corner with its unjustified arrest and kangaroo court trials of elected Nagorno-Karabakh political leaders like philanthropist Ruben Vardanyan and brilliant scholar-turned-diplomat Davit Babayan. Their imprisonment might satisfy Azerbaijani bloodlust, but Azerbaijan’s continued detention of prisoners of war — now for more than 1,000 days — only soils a reputation about which Azerbaijan is increasingly sensitive. Ilham Aliyev may believe Azerbaijan deserves a reputation akin to that of the United Arab Emirates, but such gratuitous attacks on Christians, the violent pursuit of diplomatic grievance, and multiple corruption scandals make Americans and Europeans increasingly see Azerbaijan more as the Algeria, if not Eritrea, of the Caucasus.

Diplomatic ties and partnerships should not require moral compromise or acquiescence to an ideology that amounts to continued cultural genocide. Instead, Israel should use its good offices to speak truth to Aliyev and advocate for an end to Azerbaijani policies that do nothing but undermine Azerbaijan’s reputation on the world stage. Israel should relieve Azerbaijan of the notion that its current strategy of transforming think tankers and academics into lobbyists, if not court jesters, will suffice to stop Azerbaijan’s continued reputational decline.

(This article was originally published in the *Middle East Forum Observer* on July 5, 2026.)



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Good News: EU Signs Letters of Intent With Six Armenian Organizations

Finally, some good news from Armenia. In a positive development, the European Commission signed the first-of-its-kind “Letters of Intent” with six Armenian organizations during the EU-Armenia Summit in Yerevan on May 5. The document was titled “Cooperation for People-to-People Connectivity.”

The signing ceremony was held at the Armenian Presidential Palace in the presence of President Vahagn Khachaturyan, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and European Council President Antonio Costa.

The Letter with the AGBU was signed by Adrienn Kiraly, European Commission’s “Director for Eastern Neighborhood and Turkey,” and Vasken Yacoubian, President of the Armenia Chapter of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and a member of AGBU’s Central Board.

The Letter stated that both sides “express their interest in exploring possible cooperation to contribute to stronger economic and societal links between Armenia and the European Union.” It explained that “The Armenian Diaspora has strong communities across Europe and globally in business, research, culture, and public policy. AGBU, the largest Armenian Diaspora non-profit organization, has a long-standing track record in education, entrepreneurship support, and international cooperation, supported by a broad international network.”

The purpose of this joint effort is to “explore cooperation to help mobilize the Armenian Diaspora in support of investment, mentorship, and strong partnerships between the European Union and Armenia. This cooperation could also build on AGBU’s Armenia Virtual College to reinforce digital outreach and engagement.”

The six Armenian organizations that signed the EU Letters of Intent were:

- “Amber Capital Armenia: Mobilizing private equity to connect Armenian SMEs [Small and Medium-sized Enterprises] with European capital and standards;
- Synopsys Armenia: Strengthening semiconductor skills and links between education and industry, benefiting Armenia and the European Union’s competitiveness;
- Firebird.ai: Developing strategic digital and energy connectivity to position Armenia as a regional digital hub;
- TUMO Center for Creative Technologies: Scaling digital and creative skills for the next generation;
- AGBU: Boosting people-to-people links and Diaspora-driven investment;
- Creative Armenia: Expanding creative industries and connections with European cultural networks.”

The letter, described by the EU website as a “non-binding agreement,” explained that it “does not create any legal or financial obligations for either party. It represents a declaration of intent and an openness to explore cooperation,

with the understanding that any future collaboration would remain subject to further discussion, applicable procedures, the availability of resources, and the conclusion of any final agreements.”

In a lengthy interview, Vasken Yacoubian of AGBU spoke with journalist Anush Trvants about the signed letter and other important issues. The interview was published exclusively by the Istanbul-based Armenian newspaper *Jamanak*.

Yacoubian commended the EU for appreciating the potential of the Diaspora through this initiative. Asked if this indicated that previous Armenian attempts had not been fully successful, Yacoubian disagreed. He stated that during previous governments, when there was a Diaspora Ministry, substantial work was done. “The potential of the Diaspora is enormous,” he said.

When asked about recent intra-Armenian tensions, the problems with the Church, internal divisions, and polarization, Yacoubian explained that when Armenia’s internal problems are taken overseas, the Diaspora gets confused. “These issues relate to our identity, the Genocide, putting a question mark on Artsakh, and other problems. Unfortunately, divisions have also begun to arise in the Diaspora around these subjects.”

Yacoubian then stated: “Our [AGBU’s] work is always with the state in favor of statehood, regardless of who is in power at the time. This does not mean at all that we agree with all the steps of the authorities, but, we cannot sit back and simply boycott, saying that since we disagree on an issue, therefore, we will not cooperate. That’s the wrong approach. At the same time, there are many other areas where we consider the work done by the authorities to be correct.... Maintaining this balance is quite difficult, but this role is not new for us. We have always had it and will continue to play that role, contrary to various opinions. We are convinced that 70% of our national potential is in the Diaspora. Is it wise to ignore that force, when we have important political or military goals before us, and time, unfortunately, is working against us?”

In answer to a question about Istanbul Armenians, Yacoubian said: “I visited Istanbul about two or three years ago.... I went, and I can say that I returned amazed and delighted, because I saw a community that has firmly clung to its environment, convinced that it is at home, and not a Diaspora in the classical sense.... But I also experienced heartache because we, as a nation, including our Union [AGBU] and the government of Armenia, have not been able to develop a serious strategy for collaborating with and cultivating relations with the Armenian community of Istanbul.”

Answering a question about whether there will be a solution to the government’s attacks on the Church, Yacoubian said: “We consider the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church to be the most important pillar of our identity. ...We hope the solution will be correct and just in favor of the Armenian nation. After all, the Armenian Church serves the Armenian nation. Our Church is different in its essence. When we talk about the potential of our people, and emphasize that we will use that potential in the right direction, then in order to achieve our goals in the shortest possible time, we must not forget that our Church has enormous potential, both in Armenia and in the Diaspora. Throughout the Diaspora, each Church and flock is a separate potential, and the Diaspora itself is united around the Church. So, why ignore or try to undermine the foundations of this potential?”

Israel Recognizing Armenian Genocide Doesn’t Go Far Enough – They Must Protect Armenians

By Bedross Der Matossian

The Israeli government’s recognition of the Armenian Genocide has generated mixed reactions in the public sphere around the world and in Armenia itself.

Some have welcomed the decision, while others have argued that a government itself widely accused of committing crimes against humanity in Gaza lacks the moral authority to recognize another people’s genocide, suggesting that Israel is even exploiting the issue for gain.

While I understand the criticism, it rests on a fundamentally flawed understanding of geopolitics.

States do not recognize genocides because they have suddenly discovered a moral conscience. They do so when it aligns with their political, strategic, diplomatic, or domestic interests.

International relations have never been governed by moral idealism but by realpolitik. If morality were the driving force behind statecraft, genocides would not have occurred in the first place, nor would governments have ignored or enabled them whenever it suited their interests.

The notion that recognition of the Armenian Genocide is — or has ever been — a purely moral act is a comforting illusion.

Most states that have recognized the Armenian Genocide have not done so solely out of moral conviction, without domestic lobbying, geopolitical calculations, electoral considerations, or strategic interests.

Every recognition has taken place within a political context. Israel is no exception, and that does not detract from finally doing the right thing.

It is also important to note that while successive Israeli governments refused to recognize the genocide for decades, it was the Armenian National Committee of Jerusalem (ANCIJ), together with several Israeli scholars and public figures and academic organizations such as the

Zoryan Institute, that sustained the campaign for recognition.

They devoted a huge effort to educating Israeli society, lobbying decision-makers, and ensuring that the Armenian Genocide did not disappear from the Israeli national conversation.

Considering that, the Israeli government should, as part of the recognition, also have taken concrete steps to address the terrible conditions faced by the Armenian community in east Jerusalem.

Its several thousand members continue to experience discrimination and harassment from ultra-nationalist Jewish groups. Incidents such as spitting on clergy, verbal abuse, and the desecration of sacred sites have become part of the daily reality for many Armenians.

The climate of impunity surrounding these acts has turned such groups into an existential threat to the Armenian community of Jerusalem.

This raises an important question: recognition without meaningful measures to protect a vulnerable minority is little more than ink on paper. This pattern has been evident in many cases of genocide recognition.

Genocide acknowledgment without a genuine commitment to prevention is ultimately of limited value.

Recognition must go hand-in-hand with action

Israel was directly or indirectly complicit in the ethnic cleansing of the Armenians of Artsakh (known in Israel and elsewhere as Nagorno-Karabakh) through its extensive military cooperation with Azerbaijan.

Some estimates suggest that Israel supplied approximately 70% of Azerbaijan’s arms imports between 2016 and 2020. Haaretz, for example, reported that 92 Azerbaijani military cargo flights landed at Israel’s Ovda Air Base between 2016 and 2020.

During this period, Azerbaijan acquired a wide range of Israeli military equipment, including intelligence-gath-

ering drones, Hermes UAVs, Harop loitering munitions (“kamikaze drones”), Spike anti-tank missiles, ATMOS self-propelled artillery systems, Cardom mortars, Barak air defense missiles, Searcher and Heron drones, naval patrol vessels, and Typhoon weapon stations.

Equally troubling is the fact that many states that formally recognized the Armenian Genocide failed to take meaningful measures to prevent the ethnic cleansing of Artsakh.

Despite their official recognition of the genocide of 1915, they did not impose significant sanctions on Azerbaijan or take other effective steps to deter the forced displacement of the Armenian population.

As a result, Armenians were uprooted from their historical homeland in Artsakh and continued to witness the destruction of their cultural heritage in territories they inhabited for centuries, all in full view of states that had previously acknowledged the Armenian Genocide.

This raises a fundamental question: What is the value of genocide recognition if it is not accompanied by a commitment to prevent similar crimes against vulnerable communities?

Since the 19th century, the Armenian question has too often become a pawn in international politics, with the so-called “civilized world” invoking it selectively to advance geopolitical interests rather than consistently defending the rights and security of the Armenian people.

Recognition, if it is to have genuine moral significance, must be accompanied by concrete action to prevent persecution, protect vulnerable populations, and uphold international law.

(The writer was born and raised in the Old City of Jerusalem. A Guggenheim Fellow, he is professor of Modern Middle East history and Hymen Rosenberg Professor in Judaic Studies at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. This piece originally appeared in the *Jerusalem Post*.)



COMMENTARY

IN MEMORIAM

Wolfgang Gust

(April 9, 1935 – June 11, 2026)

By **Taner Akçam**

Some people remain largely invisible and little known, yet they are the principal actors behind the scenes. They are creators and builders. The most fitting description for them is that they are “worker bees.” Our field has lost one of its finest worker bees: Wolfgang Gust. I would like to say a few words about him and share some lesser-known aspects of his remarkable life and work.

I received the news of Wolfgang Gust’s passing on June 11, just as I was about to board my flight. I was scheduled to be in Hamburg from 12 to 16 June and had been looking forward to seeing Wolfgang and his beloved wife, Sigrid. Sadly, that visit was never to happen.

I first met Wolfgang Gust toward the end of 1991. At the time, he was a journalist with *Der Spiegel*. He was then preparing a series of articles on the ongoing war in Nagorno-Karabakh, which appeared in the magazine in 1992. We quickly became close friends.

Our friendship developed to the point that, in May 1993, thanks to Wolfgang’s support, one of my own articles was published in *Der Spiegel*. Around the same time, after seventeen years in exile, I returned permanently to Turkey. One of my greatest ambitions was to establish a documentation center covering the period from 1876 to 1940.

My Turkish adventure, however, did not last long. When I was forced to leave the country in 1997, Wolfgang and I met again in Hamburg. He had just retired — or was about to retire — and was searching for a new direction.

“I may work on the peace treaties signed in Paris in 1919 and 1920,” he told me. He was particularly interested in the treaties concluded with the so-called “small nations,” such as Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.

During one of our conversations, I mentioned that I possessed a collection of German Foreign Office documents relating to the Armenian Genocide, covering the years 1914–1918, which I had purchased for the Documentation Center I had hoped to establish in Turkey.

“If you’d like, you can take a look at them,” I said.

He replied that he would be delighted to examine them if I were willing to lend him the entire collection.

The documents were on microfilm and required a special reader. Simply in order to study them, Wolfgang purchased a microfilm reader.

Then he made a decision that, at the time, seemed almost unimaginable. He would digitize the German documents and make them freely available online for everyone. At the same time, he decided to undertake a comprehensive study of Germany’s role in the Armenian Genocide.

The idea sounded simple enough, but formidable obstacles stood in the way. First, placing hundreds—indeed thousands — of documents online raised serious copyright concerns. Wolfgang had to resolve these issues with the Archive of the German Foreign Office. At the time, website technology was still in its infancy, and there were significant technical challenges to overcome. Moreover, another crucial question remained: according to what scholarly standards should these documents be digitized and presented online so that historians could trust and use them?

I have never encountered anyone who worked with Wolfgang’s combination of

meticulousness and perseverance. With the patience of an ant and the diligence of a worker bee, he overcame every one of these obstacles. He did far more than simply read the documents. In order to make them fully searchable and easily accessible, he had each document painstakingly transcribed.

Beyond the collection I had lent him, he purchased many additional documents himself, financing the entire undertaking from his retirement savings without seeking support from anyone.

Determined to ensure that the online archive would meet the highest scholarly standards, Wolfgang consulted numerous historians about the best methods of presenting the documents. An Armenian computer specialist, Vagharshak Lalayan, volunteered to develop a custom software platform for the project. The result was nothing short of extraordinary.

I would encourage everyone to visit this website in memory of Wolfgang Gust: <http://www.armenocide.de/armen.../armgen-de.nsf/WebStart-En...>

What began as a digital archive of German Foreign Office documents relating to the Armenian Genocide of 1914–1918 gradually expanded to include a wealth of other original source materials. Among them are the original records of the League of Nations Home for Armenian women and children orphaned in the aftermath of the genocide in Aleppo, as well as the official records of the 1919–1922 Istanbul trials of the Committee of Union and Progress, published in *Takvim-i Vekayi*.

Over time, the archive also incorporated virtually every significant collection of documents relating to the 1909 Adana massacres, the 1913–1914 Armenian Reform negotiations, and Germany’s *Orientpolitik*.

Because Wolfgang read virtually every document with extraordinary care, he was able to solve several mysteries that had long puzzled those of us working in this field. The first concerned the authenticity of the German official documents published by the German Protestant pastor Johannes Lepsius during the Paris Peace Conference in an effort to demonstrate that Germany had played no role in the Armenian massacres.

For decades, questions had surrounded Lepsius’s volume, which contains nearly 450 German diplomatic documents and has long been one of the principal source collections for scholars of the Armenian Genocide. Historians who compared a handful of documents with the originals had noticed discrepancies between the official German records and the versions published by Lepsius.

The first serious investigation into the matter was undertaken by Vahakn Dadrian. He even interviewed Lepsius’s surviving secretary and concluded that Lepsius himself had not falsified the documents. Yet the central question remained unanswered: Were these really the original documents? If not, who had altered them?

Wolfgang’s painstaking research finally resolved the mystery.

The documents had indeed been tampered with. The principal responsibility lay with the German Foreign Office itself. Before sending the documents to Lepsius, officials had edited them, deleted passages, and in some cases substantially revised entire documents. Lepsius himself also made a number of minor alterations, but these were comparatively insignificant beside the extensive changes introduced by the Foreign Office. The underlying objective was clear: to demonstrate that Germany had played no role in the Armenian massacres. Lepsius willingly participated in this effort, having



Dr. Taner Akçam, at left, with Wolfgang Gust

himself begun to work voluntarily for German military intelligence during the final years of the war.

Wolfgang presented his findings in a lengthy study, placing the altered versions alongside the originals for all scholars to examine. Yet this was only one of the major contributions he made.

A second fundamental question remained: What had Germany’s actual role been during the massacres? Had it advised the Ottoman government and acted as a direct architect of the genocide? Or was its involvement limited to helping conceal the crimes because Germany and the Ottoman Empire were wartime allies?

Drawing together an enormous body of documentary evidence, Wolfgang published his monumental study in 2005. In the book’s extensive introduction, he essentially resolved this question as well. Germany’s involvement went beyond reluctantly helping to cover up the massacres simply because they were politically inconvenient. Although there were important differences of opinion between the German Foreign Office and the German General Staff, it was ultimately the latter that determined German policy. And the German General Staff was, by and large, not particularly troubled by what was being done to the Armenians.

Wolfgang’s book, originally published

in German, was later translated into both English and Turkish with the support of the Zoryan Institute in Canada. The online archive was expanded accordingly, making the German Foreign Office documents available to researchers in all three languages. By then, very little mystery remained concerning Germany’s role. Everything was there, readily accessible to anyone who wished to examine the evidence. Anyone interested in the subject could visit the website and read the documents in the language of their choice.

And so our field has lost one of its finest worker bees.

Whenever I came to Hamburg, I made a point of visiting him. I would like to include the accompanying photograph as a small remembrance. This time, however, I was not granted the chance to see him one last time.

Dear Wolfgang, you left us at the age of 91, but the archive you created will endure. As one of its regular visitors, I know that every time I return to those pages, I will remember you and the extraordinary legacy you left behind.

Truth comes to light only because of people like you — patient, tireless workers in the service of truth.

Rest in peace.

(The Turkish version of this article appears in medyascope.tv.)

LETTERS

Israel’s Recognition of Armenian Genocide Is Insincere and Inadequate

To the Editor:

June 28th’s recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Israel’s cabinet (but not yet its Knesset) was driven neither by memories of the Holocaust nor by moral integrity.

The long-overdue recognition was, instead, mainly a rebuke to an increasingly anti-Israeli Turkey, the Genocide’s unrepentant perpetrator.

It’s well-known that, for decades, Israel and leading Jewish American organizations colluded with Turkey to deny/diminish the Armenian Genocide and defeat U.S. Congressional resolutions on that mass extermination.

(For background, please see my *Hypocritical Jewish Organizations and the Armenian Genocide* in [Foreignpolicyjournal.com](http://foreignpolicyjournal.com))

Had Armenia and Armenian American organizations ever taken analogous steps regarding the Holocaust, Israel and Jews worldwide would have blown their tops.

Israel, Jews, and their supporters would have demanded that Armenians apologize and undertake reparations, perhaps including payments to Washington D.C.’s Holocaust Museum.

Armenian American organizations must, similarly, demonstrate the courage to insist that Israel and culpable Jewish American organizations:

- Apologize to Armenians everywhere
- Make appropriate amends
- Publish all documents, including correspondence with Turkey, pertaining to activities taken against Armenians

Otherwise, Israeli recognition of the Armenian Genocide will remain meaningless and, even worse, insulting.

David Boyajian
Boston