

Yerevan May Tighten Dual Citizenship Rules For Diaspora Armenians

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia should toughen legal requirements for ethnic Armenian foreign nationals seeking to become its dual citizens, Deputy Interior Minister Armen Ghazaryan said on Friday, August 14.

Ghazaryan cited a sharp rise in citizenship applications received in the last few years.

“Their number exceeded 32,000 in 2025, which is a record high in Armenia’s history,” he said, adding that most of the applicants are ethnic Armenians from Russia.

Ghazaryan suggested that they want to bypass serious travel restrictions imposed by Western nations on Russian citizens following Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine. For them, Armenian citizenship is first and foremost a travel document, he said.



Deputy Interior Minister Armen Ghazaryan speaks during a news conference, Yerevan, August 14, 2026

“This, in my expert opinion, is a problem, and this problem must be addressed... We will soon present a draft of relevant legislative amendments that would address this problem,” the official told a news conference.

Under Armenian law, foreigners can become Armenia’s citizens if they live in the country for at least three years, speak its official language and are familiar with its constitution. Diaspora Armenians are exempt from these requirements.

Armenia’s National Security Service (NSS) already proposed in July 2022 that they should be eligible for fast-track dual citizenship only if they have stayed in the country for at least 60 days over the past two years. The NSS said he would minimize applications from individuals whsee

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Tourists near ancient Greco-Roman Temple of Garni in Gegham mountains of Armenia on sunny autumn day

Russian Official Warns Government Could Advise Tourists Not to Visit Armenia

By Irina Atanyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Russian tourists have a huge presence in Armenia, even though relations between the governments of the two countries is increasingly strained. The most recent example of the worsening relationship was a phone conversation between Speaker of the Armenian National Assembly Ruben Rubinyan and Chairwoman of the Federation Council of Russia Valentina Matviyenko on August 6, the latter stated that if the “systematic arrests” of Russian citizens in Armenia continue, Russia could advise its tourists against visiting Armenia.

The statement did not specify what arrests she was speaking about.

But what impact could this have on Armenia if Russian tourists stop visiting the country?

According to data from Armenia’s Tourism Committee, 198,709 tourists visited Armenia in July 2026. During the same month last year, the number of tourist arrivals stood at 263,592. This means that tourist arrivals decreased by 64,883 compared with July 2025.

During the same period, Russian citizens accounted for the largest share of tourist arrivals, at 40 percent. They were followed by visitors from Georgia at 15 percent and Iran at 8 percent.

This raises the question: if the flow of Russian tourists declines following a possible recommendation from Moscow, what consequences could this have for the Armenian economy?



Russian female tourists using a paper map on Yerevan street.

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Armenia and Ukraine Deepen Ties as High-Level Meetings Increase Throughout August

By Ani Ghulinyan

Armenia’s Acting Deputy Foreign Minister Vahan Kostanyan made an official visit to Ukraine, where he participated in the celebrations of the 975th anniversary of Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra on August 15. The visit is one of many high-ranking interactions between Armenian and Ukrainian officials in 2026, following Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s first-ever visit to Armenia to participate in the European Political Community summit in May.

At the Lavra celebrations, Kostanyan also spoke with UNESCO Director-General Khaled El-Enany, UN World Tourism Organization Secretary-General Sheikh Al Nowais, and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha.

Kostanyan conveyed Yerevan’s congratulations to Zelenskyy and Sybiha on the occasion.

Kostanyan’s Kyiv visit also included separate meetings with the Ukrainian Parliament’s Deputy Speaker Olena Kondratiuk on expanding high-level contacts and strengthening the bilateral agenda; with Deputy Foreign Minister Olexandr Mischenko on activating political dialogue, expanding economic ties, and deepening engagement in multilateral formats; and with the chair of parliament’s Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation Olexsandr Merezhko on the Armenia–Ukraine cooperation agenda.

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Armenia, India Discuss Ways to Strengthen Ties

YEREVAN (Firstpost.com) — Representatives of India and Armenia on Monday, August 17, discussed new avenues to strengthen defense cooperation, underlining the growing strategic partnership between the two countries amid shifting geopolitical dynamics in the region.

Indian Defense Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, who was on a two-day visit to Armenia, met Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan in Yerevan.

The Indian Defense Ministry said the two sides explored ways to further expand bilateral defense cooperation and reaffirmed their commitment to deepening the partnership.

Singh arrived in Yerevan on August 16 and was received by India’s ambassador to Armenia and senior Armenian Defense Ministry officials.

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OHFAR Works to Bring Focus on Pediatric Dentistry in Armenia

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

ARLINGTON, Mass. — In May, the Oral Health Foundation for Children of Armenia (OHFAR) hosted its inaugural program in the area at the Armenian Cultural Foundation.

On hand were several of the organization’s founders who spoke about their efforts to bring pediatric dentistry, as well as dental hygiene in rural Armenia up to the level of those in developed nations.

Before OHFAR, there was its parent organization, the Armenian International Dental Association (AIDA),

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Dr. Berdj Kiladjian

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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

US Rep. Hamadeh Visits Armenia, Meets With Country's Leadership

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenian National Assembly Speaker Ruben Rubinyan received US Rep. Abraham Hamadeh (R-Arizona) on August 18.

According to the National Assembly's Public Relations and Communication Department, the two sides discussed issues related to deepening Armenia-US inter-parliamentary cooperation.

The sides also discussed recent developments in the region. They stressed the importance of unblocking all transport routes in the South Caucasus, including the implementation of the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) project.

The importance of addressing humanitarian issues and taking the necessary steps in this direction was also emphasized. The sides exchanged views on expanding cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan later in the day met with Hamadeh.

Pashinyan emphasized the importance of the consistent development of Armenia-U.S. relations, noting that ties between the two countries have recently gained momentum, the Prime Minister's Office said in a read-out.

He underscored the need to consistently advance the rich agenda of bilateral cooperation, expressing confidence that Armenia-U.S. ties will continue to expand in the political, economic, and technological spheres.

Hamadeh thanked Pashinyan for the warm welcome and emphasized the importance of further developing dialogue through parliamentary channels.

European Union Partnership Mission Head Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Chief of Staff of the Armenian Prime Minister Lilit Makunts has met with Cosmin Dinescu, head of the European Union Partnership Mission in Armenia, on August 17.

Makunts welcomed the launch of the Mission's activities and highlighted the EU's support in strengthening the resilience of Armenia's state institutions.

The meeting focused on priorities for cooperation within the framework of the Mission's mandate. Makunts stressed the importance of coordinated engagement by relevant state agencies and capacity building in the areas covered by the Mission's mandate.

The sides also exchanged views on the further organization and effective coordination of cooperation.

Armenian Military Officials Fired Over Fresh Noncombat Deaths

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — At least four senior military officials have been sacked due to continuing noncombat deaths of Armenian soldiers which have reignited calls for Defense Minister Suren Papikyan's resignation.

The officials include the chief of Armenia's military police, Ashot Zakaryan, the head of an Armenian Defense Ministry department on army morale, Seryozha Stepanyan, and two advisers to Papikyan.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced Zakaryan's and Stepanyan's impending sacking last week just hours after an army conscript was found shot dead in still unclear circumstances. It was the 12th noncombat death in the Armenian army's ranks reported this year. Most of those soldiers committed suicide, according to military authorities.

Pashinyan insisted both Papikyan and the chief of the army's General Staff, Lieutenant-General Eduard Asryan, are not personally responsible for the fatalities, disagreeing with those who believe they are not doing enough to tackle the problem. He blamed it on soldiers' gambling debts and

other personal problems as well as a "criminal subculture" which he said is prevalent among young Armenian men.

In a statement issued following the sackings late on Monday, August 17, the Defense Ministry claimed to be waging a "systematic fight against the criminal subculture." It said Papikyan formed "groups of officers" from the ministry that will visit various military units to "assist" their colleagues serving there.

Zhanna Aleksanyan, a veteran human rights campaigner monitoring the military, was skeptical about the personnel changes, saying that the authorities and Papikyan in particular simply found new scapegoats for their failings.

"What is the military police chief directly to do with the deaths?" Aleksanyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. "Secondly, if they found it necessary to fire him, they should have found a respected replacement."

The new military police chief, Aram Hovannisyan, is a former chief of Armenia's national police service who personally led crackdowns on antigovernment protesters in the country. Pashinyan unexpectedly fired Hovannisyan in June 2025 one year after security forces led by him hurled doz-

ens of powerful stun grenades during one such protest in downtown Yerevan. At least 83 protesters and 8 journalists were injured as a result.

Hovannisyan's son ran in the recent parliamentary elections on the ruling Civil Contract party's ticket despite facing corruption allegations by Hetq.am, an investigative media outlet.

Pashinyan pledged to successfully tackle noncombat deaths of military personnel after he came to power in 2018. However, the problem has remained chronic since then.

In January 2023, 15 conscripts serving in the Gegharkunik province were found dead at their makeshift military barracks destroyed by a major fire. Papikyan, who is a leading member of Pashinyan's party, faced calls for resignation from their relatives, opposition figures and human rights activists in the wake of the tragedy.

The mother of one of the deceased soldiers confronted Pashinyan and blamed him for the deaths when he held an election campaign rally in Metsamor, a town 40 kilometers west of Yerevan, in May. Pashinyan berated the woman before her voice was drowned out by "Nikol Prime Minister!" chants from the premier's supporters.

Armenian Prime Minister's Wife Launches Campaign against Domestic Violence

YEREVAN (Jam-News) — The wife of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Anna Hakobyan, has announced the launch of a campaign against domestic violence. She received death threats shortly after calling for a public discussion of the issue. However, she continues to actively promote her initiative.

"The first stage will involve drafting comprehensive and effective legislation and discussing it in the National Assembly," she said.

According to Anna Hakobyan, the Criminal Code should define domestic violence separately as "a distinct and independent crime." She plans to invite female MPs from the parliament's two opposition factions to join her initiative. If they do, she believes there is a chance that "parliament will unanimously approve the bill."

Hakobyan posted a video message on social media in which she said she intended to continue fighting domestic violence. According to Hakobyan, Armenia's traditional family model, which hides various forms of violence, should give way to a model of a "family with no place for violence, based on mutual love and respect." She proposes amending the Criminal Code to achieve this goal:

"An individual article should be added to the Code to establish criminal liability for all forms of domestic violence. Alternatively, different chapters of the Code could include provisions covering specific forms of domestic violence, including beatings, psychological abuse, economic abuse, bodily harm, sexual violence and others."

According to Anna Hakobyan, eradicating violence requires clear, realistic and effective legal mechanisms.

Before presenting the bill to parliament, she initiated discussions with independent experts and female MPs. Together, they plan to examine gaps in the existing legis-

lation. Once the law comes into force, she has promised to launch the initiative's second stage. This will involve: organizing an awareness campaign; improving the skills of staff at relevant agencies; ensuring the effective implementation of the new regulations.

"At the same time, a group of respected experts is preparing a nationwide study to collect the most accurate and comprehensive data possible on the prevalence of domestic violence against women in Armenia," she said.

This is not the prime minister's wife's first post about domestic violence. She has been actively raising the issue on her social media pages. At the end of July, she said she had received threats after a particular post, including threats to kill her.

"I hope the state authorities can prevent such a development, as it would seriously damage the country's reputation if the prime minister's wife became a victim of violence," Hakobyan said.

At the same time, she urged women to overcome their fears and report cases of violence.

The Prosecutor General's Office took note of her report. The Investigative Committee said it had opened a criminal case under the article on "hooliganism using information and communication technologies."

"In addition, within the framework of another criminal case concerning public calls for violence, a warrant has been issued for the arrest of one person. The person has been placed on the wanted list," Investigative Committee spokeswoman Kim Avdalyan said.

Statistics on Domestic Violence

The Investigative Committee said it opened 1,794 criminal cases related to domestic violence in the first half of 2026:

712 cases carried over from 2025; 1,082 cases opened in 2026.

Authorities sent 204 criminal cases to court and charged 213 people.

Of the 213 defendants in the cases sent to court, 150 were spouses of the victims, 20 were partners, 15 were parents or grandparents, five were brothers or sisters, 16 were children or grandchildren, one was the husband's sister or brother, and six were sons- or daughters-in-law.

Of the 213 victims, 192 were over 18, while the rest were minors. Of those, 13 were under 12, three were aged 13-14, and five were aged 15-18.

Yerevan May Tighten Dual Citizenship Rules For Diaspora Armenians

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want Armenian passports in order to more easily migrate to other parts of the world and/or simply "have nothing to do with Armenianness."

The security service singled out ethnic Armenians from Lebanon, Syria and other Middle Eastern countries subject to serious US and European Union visa restrictions. A relevant bill drafted by it never reached the Armenian parliament.

According to Ghazaryan, the annual number of citizenship applications averaged between 7,000 and 8,000 before the war in Ukraine. It surpassed 20,000 in 2023.

Nelly Davtyan, the head of Armenia's Migration and Citizenship Service, 14,770 individuals received Armenian passports in the first half of this year. Most of them are refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, she told reporters.



ARMENIA

Armenia’s Samvel Terteryan Crowned U20 World Wrestling Champion

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenian Greco-Roman wrestler Samvel Terteryan won the U20 World Championship in Bratislava, Slovakia, in the 77kg weight category, on August 17. In the final, Terteryan faced Azerbaijan’s Javidan Nahmatov. The closely contested bout ended 1-1, with the Armenian wrestler



Rent Support Offered to Some Artsakh-displaced Families

YEREVAN (Pan.am) — Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Arsen Torosyan this week announced partial rent compensation for certain groups of families displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh. Under the measure, part of the rental costs has been reimbursed to families that waived their right to benefit from the state housing assistance program. Families may qualify for the program if they: have 1-3 members and met the conditions established under the program or canceled their certificate under the housing assistance program for families displaced from Karabakh; are included on the waiting list to receive accommodation from the state social housing fund; have a family member with a permanent Group 1 or Group 2 disability, a permanent profound or severe degree of functional limitation, or a member aged 60 or older, in the case of a two-member family; have a combined age of at least 115 years, or, for a three-member family, at least 175 years. Applications were accepted online. Before submitting an application, applicants were required to visit a territorial center of the Unified Social Service to be placed on the waiting list for the social housing fund.

Yerevan-based Group Posed as US Carriers, Stole Freight And Converted Proceeds to Crypto, Armenian Police Say

By Phil Brink

YEREVAN (Freight Waves) — Cyber police in Armenia raided commercial space inside a Yerevan hotel on July 23. Investigators accuse occupants of posing as employees of American freight carriers. The suspects allegedly redirected shipments, sold the goods and converted proceeds into crypto assets. Authorities have not disclosed the total loss or cargo types. The Armenian Interior Ministry announced the operation August 14. Criminal Police Cybercrime Department officers worked alongside the country’s Investigative Committee. Teams conducted a surprise search following an extensive intelligence investigation. Officials seized

evidence considered important to the criminal inquiry. Investigators learned that the group used specialized computer equipment and software inside the hotel. Officers identified the suspected members and their individual roles before conducting the raid. The ministry described the operation as an organized scheme involving thefts of “particularly large amounts.” However, officials provided no monetary figure for that description. “Members of the organization presented themselves as employees of companies transporting freight within the United States,” the translated ministry statement reads. The suspects then gained trust from businesses arranging transportation services. Participants moved those shipments to different locations instead of completing the intended deliveries. Group members later sold the stolen goods. The organization transferred proceeds into accounts controlled by its members, according to the ministry. Those participants then exchanged the money for various crypto assets. Authorities did not identify any financial institutions, digital currencies or account holders. The announcement also withheld information about how investigators traced those transactions. The Armenian Investigative Committee opened criminal proceedings after receiving a report about the suspected activity. Its cybercrime officers continue working with unidentified U.S. law enforcement agencies. The joint effort seeks additional

evidence about the organization’s methods. Investigators also want to locate similar groups operating within Armenia. Police continue searching for individuals and businesses affected by the suspected scheme. The ministry did not identify any impersonated carriers or American victims. Officials also withheld the number of stolen shipments, participating suspects and possible arrests. Authorities offered no details about the freight’s origins, destinations or pickup locations. This case shows how criminals can direct American cargo theft from offices thousands of miles away. Brokers and shippers may interact with overseas suspects before a fraudulent carrier ever reaches the pickup.

Armenia and Ukraine Deepen Ties as High-level Meetings Increase Throughout August

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The visit followed a series of exchanges that began after the formation of a new parliament and government in Armenia following the June 2026 elections. On August 4, Sybiha congratulated his newly reappointed Armenian counterpart, Ararat Mirzoyan. In a social media post, Sybiha said that he looked forward to strengthening ties between the two countries and advancing regional peace and stability. The same day, Armenian Parliamentary Speaker Ruben Rubinyan spoke by phone with his Ukrainian counterpart, Ruslan Stefanchuk, who congratulated him on his election. They agreed to strengthen parliamentary ties and explore new areas of cooperation. On August 11, Mirzoyan and Sybiha spoke again, this time by phone, discussing the bilateral agenda and the regional situa-

tion. The following day, Zelenskyy held a call in which he congratulated Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on his reappointment. They discussed bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on regional and global developments, emphasizing the importance of achieving sustainable and lasting peace. During the August exchanges, officials from both countries emphasized the goal of broadening the relationship beyond trade and parliamentary exchange to include cultural and humanitarian ties. Armenia’s deepening ties with Ukraine coincide with the country’s turbulent relationship with Russia, which, since early May, has continued to ban various Armenian goods. (This article originally appeared on August 17 on www.oc-media.org.)



Vahan Kostanyan during his meeting with the Ukrainian Parliament’s Deputy Speaker Olena Kondratiuk (photo Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia)

INTERNATIONAL

Erdogan Speaks with
New UK Premier

ISTANBUL (Armenpress) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan this week spoke with British Prime Minister Andy Burnham in a phone call, during which they discussed bilateral relations as well as regional and global developments, the Anadolu news agency reported citing a readout from the Turkish government.

Erdogan congratulated Burnham on his new post and said he believed the two countries would take their relations to a higher level in the days ahead.

Erdogan said Türkiye and the UK had made significant progress in cooperation across all areas, particularly the defense industry. He also highlighted the importance of the Strategic Partnership Framework Document and the Security and Defense Partnership Document signed by the two countries.

He said the two countries would continue working together to boost bilateral trade and reach their investment targets.

Syria Strongly
Condemns Israeli
Strikes on Military
Airfield in Idlib

DAMASCUS (Armenpress) — Syria strongly condemned Israeli air strikes on the Abu al-Duhur military airfield in Idlib province, describing them as an unjustified act of aggression and a blatant violation of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Syrian news agency SANA reported on August 18, citing a statement from Syria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates.

"Syria notes that these Israeli attacks have continued since December 8, 2024. At a time when Syria is exercising restraint and working to strengthen stability and avoid escalation, the Israeli occupation's attempts to undermine these efforts and drag the region into further tension and instability are once again being exposed," the statement said.

The ministry also stressed that Syria holds Israel responsible for the escalation and called on the international community and the UN Security Council to unequivocally condemn the aggression and take a firm stance against Israel's repeated violations of Syrian sovereignty.

"Syria will continue to defend its rights and national interests through legitimate means guaranteed by international laws and norms," the statement said.

Earlier, Syrian media reported that the Abu al-Duhur military airfield in south-eastern Idlib province was targeted by four air strikes on the morning of August 18.

The US envoy for Syria said Israel was responsible for the attack on the airbase.

Pashinyan Softens Rhetoric on Russian
Control of Armenian Railway

By Shoghik Galstian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Two weeks after threatening legal action to end Russia's management of Armenia's railway network and triggering stern warnings from Moscow, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on August 13 that he is open to a "compromise" deal on the issue.

Pashinyan made clear that his government will not unilaterally scrap a 30-year management contract with the Russian Railways (RZhD) monopoly signed in 2008. He also seemed to walk back on his threats to charge RZhD as much as \$2 billion annually for its management rights.

"I suggested this as one of the possible development scenarios without having any-

thing specific in mind," he told reporters.

"We want an amicable solution, we don't want a [contract] dissolution," he said. "We can always do it, we can do it today, but we don't want to go down that path."

The remarks contrasted with what Pashinyan said on July 30 three days after an apparently tense phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin. He declared that there is "no alternative" to ending the Russian control of Armenia's railways.

"If there is a disagreement, then we will go to arbitration to do something, to discuss," he said.

The RZhD chairman, Oleg Belozarov, responded by saying that Yerevan would have to compensate his company for about \$400 million in investments it claims to have made in the network since 2009. Russian Minister for Economic Development Maksim Reshetnikov echoed the warning. Reshetnikov said Armenia would also pay a heavy price for its exit from the Eurasian Economic Union.

Moscow has since continued to press Yerevan to call a referendum on remaining part of the Russian-led trade bloc or continuing to seek membership of the European Union. Pashinyan remains reluctant to do that, mindful of the Armenian economy's heavy dependence on Russia.

Pashinyan first called for an end to RZhD's presence in Armenia in February. He said the Armenian railway should be run by another, non-Russian company because its current status discourages Turkey and Azerbaijan from using a much larger section of Armenian territory for transit purposes.

The Russian Foreign Ministry dismissed Pashinyan's statement as "bizarre" and "not acceptable." Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk similarly brushed aside April Pashinyan's declared rationale for stripping RZhD of its management rights. He argued that Turkey is already building a railway that will run from the eastern Turkish city of Kars to Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan exclave by-passing Armenia.

Excavation Uncovers Underground Levels beneath
Tbilisi's Iconic Melik-Azaryants Building

By Nanuka Mglakelidze

TBILISI (Georgia Today) — The Armenian Report has shared an article describing renovation work on Tbilisi's historic Melik-Azaryants building, which has uncovered previously hidden underground

its original owner, Alexander Melik-Azaryants, a prominent Armenian businessman, industrialist and philanthropist who was born in Tbilisi in 1847 and became one of the wealthiest residents of Georgia.

Melik-Azaryants commissioned the building in 1912. Designed by architect Nikolai Obolonsky, it was completed three years later and became known for its distinctive towers, bay windows and ornate facade.

The building had unusually advanced infrastructure for its time, including independent electricity, water, heating and telephone systems, as well as shops and other commercial spaces.

Its construction was particularly challenging because of underground water at the site, requiring a deep and heavily reinforced foundation. The recently uncovered underground levels are believed to

be connected to these extensive foundations.

Melik-Azaryants lost the property after the Soviet takeover of Georgia. The building was nationalized in 1921, and the businessman was reportedly forced to live in a small basement room inside the building he had commissioned. He died in poverty in 1923.



The Melik-Azaryants Building with an inset of the work (Georgia Today photo)

levels beneath the landmark on Rustaveli Avenue.

Excavations are continuing at the building at 37 Rustaveli Ave., with previous reports suggesting that the underground space could cover up to 2,000 square meters.

The discovery has also brought renewed attention to the history of the building and

Armenia, India Discuss Ways to Strengthen Ties

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During his visit, Singh was scheduled to hold discussions with Armenian leadership on the future course of India-Armenia defense and strategic cooperation.

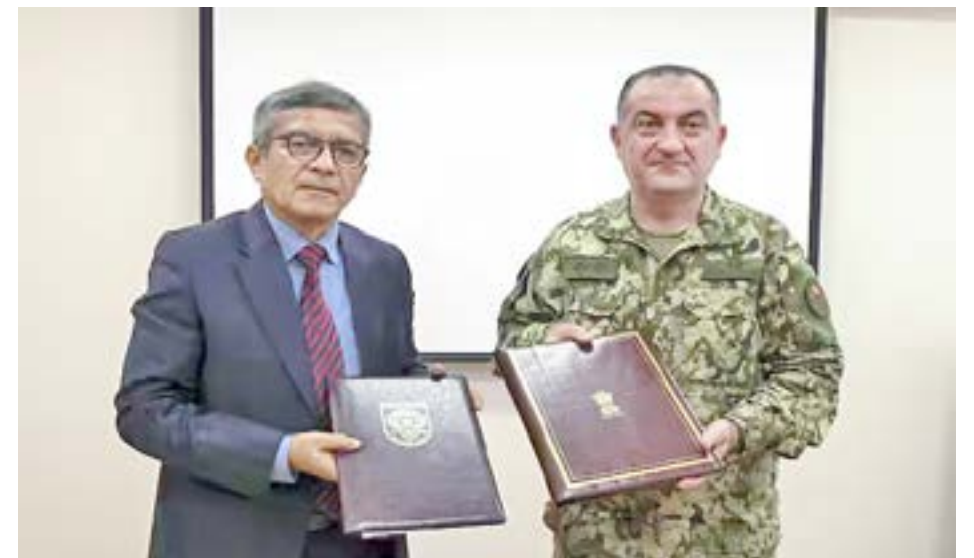
The engagement comes as ties between New Delhi and Yerevan have expanded significantly in recent years, with India emerging as an important supplier of military equipment to Armenia.

India and Armenia have expanded military cooperation through a series of major defense agreements since 2020. Armenian purchases of Indian-made systems, including Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launchers and Akash air defense systems, have become key components of the growing partnership.

The expanding defense relationship has also been accompanied by high-level diplomatic engagement aimed at establishing stronger institutional links between the two countries' armed forces.

For India, this cooperation allows it to expand its defense exports and strengthen its strategic footprint beyond South Asia.

The growing India-Armenia partnership assumes added significance against the backdrop of closer ties between Pakistan, Turkey and Azerbaijan.



Indian Defense Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh meets with Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan in Yerevan

The three countries have developed increasingly close strategic relations, with Azerbaijan and Turkey maintaining strong support for Pakistan on several regional issues.

Pakistan, meanwhile, has consistently backed Azerbaijan in its dispute with Armenia.

Beyond defense sales, the partnership

reflects India's broader effort to build strategic relationships based on military cooperation, technology and diplomacy.

New Delhi's engagement with Yerevan allows India to strengthen its position as a reliable defense partner while demonstrating its ability to pursue strategic interests independently of traditional regional alignments.



INTERNATIONAL

Russian Official Warns Government Could Advise Tourists Not to Visit Armenia

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Economist Gagik Makaryan said the presence of tourists, including those from Russia, has a significant impact on small and micro-businesses in Armenia, such as restaurants, cafés, taxi services, souvenir sellers and individuals renting out apartments all benefit from tourists' spending.



Economist Gagik Makaryan

"If these tourists are no longer here and they follow their leadership's call and stop visiting Armenia, small businesses will suffer," he said.

He noted that the consequences could be reflected not only in sales, but also in employment and income levels.

"It's not that tourists will stop coming altogether; the number of visitors will simply decrease, and that could also lead to a certain decline in business profitability. Naturally, this would mean that businesses would pay less in taxes, employers would start cutting jobs and would stop hiring new employees because there would not be enough money circulating," Makaryan said.

"Tourists rent apartments. Some come not through travel agencies but on their own, and they do not always stay in hotels; they rent people's homes. Therefore, this segment of society would also be affected," Markaryan said.

At the same time, Makaryan said he that replacing the potential loss of the Russian tourism market with tourists from other countries in a short period of time would not be easy.

According to him, economic problems and rising airfares affect the mobility of European tourists, while the number of visits to Armenia by members of the Armenian diaspora is no longer as high as it used to be.

"It's not as though Russian tourism can easily and smoothly be replaced by tourism from other countries," the economist stressed.

Anna Navasardyan, a tourism sector expert, concurred. According to her, Armenia's dependence on the Russian market is significant, as Russian citizens continue to represent one of Armenia's main tourism markets.



Anna Navasardyan, a tourism sector expert

"For Armenia, Russia is one of the most important markets in the tourism sector. Even from a professional perspective, when we assess the level of dependence, it is very high," Navasardyan said.

She said she that if Armenia wants to reduce its dependence on a single market, it needs to actively work on attracting tourists from new markets.

In her assessment, the fact that July is considered a peak month for tourism, while tourist flows have already declined significantly in Armenia, is a warning sign that the government should reconsider its marketing policies in the tourism sector and its strategy for attracting new markets.



At the same time, commenting on Matviyenko's statement, Navasardyan stressed that tourism should not be politicized.

"Tourism is about people interacting more, visiting new countries and discovering different cultures, rather than making political statements," she said.

But are Russian tourists apt to listen to their government and consider not visiting Armenia?

At Yerevan's Vernissage market, Russian tourist Vyacheslav Goren said he would not follow such a recommendation. "No, I would not follow that advice. I don't see any problem."

Goren added that the political tensions between Armenia and Russia would not be a reason for him to stop visiting Armenia.

"I see a political escalation between the two countries," he said, adding that he approves of the policies pursued by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Another Russian tourist also said she would not follow such advice.

"Under no circumstances would we do that. Even if Russia gives such a recommendation, that does not mean that we Russians will stop visiting Armenia. If we want to come, we will come anyway," the young woman said.

She added that she travels to Armenia without any restrictions and feels comfortable there.

Another Russian tourist said that a recommendation from Moscow would not change his decision to visit Armenia.

He explained that he has two passports, has friends in Armenia and has visited the country many times.

"I have friends here and I have been to Armenia many times already. I really like it here, so I will come anyway," he said.

Another young couple suggested an alternative route:

"I would go to another country, for example Kazakhstan, and then travel to Armenia. If I wanted to come, we would find a way."

Vahan Agopyan: The Armenian Secretary in São Paulo's State Government

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Mirror-Spectator Video Correspondent

SÃO PAULO — In the early 1970s, construction began on a metro station in the Ponte Pequena district of São Paulo, Brazil. An Armenian civil engineer was among those involved in the project. The station, originally named Ponte Pequena when it opened in 1975, was renamed Armenia in 1985 to honor São Paulo's Armenian community.

That Armenian engineer was Vahan Agopyan. Over the decades, he advanced from overseeing major infrastructure projects to becoming one of Brazil's most distinguished academics and public officials. Today, he serves as the Secretary for Science, Technology and Innovation of the State of São Paulo. Along the way, he held a number of prestigious positions, including serving as president of the University of São Paulo, one of Latin America's leading universities.

"I was born in Istanbul in 1951," Agopyan said in a recent interview in his office.

His rise to one of the highest positions in the São Paulo state government as an immi-



Vahan Agopyan



The Armenia metro station in São Paulo, Brazil

grant is an extraordinary achievement.

With his maternal family originating from Tekirdağ and his paternal family from Van, Agopyan describes himself as the son of Armenian Genocide survivors. Yet his family also witnessed another tragic chapter in the history of Turkey's Armenian and Greek communities — the anti-Christian pogroms of 1955.

"My parents decided to leave the country," he recalled. "My mother had a sister and cousins in São Paulo, so they decided to come to Brazil. We arrived in 1956."

His parents left behind everything they owned in Turkey. Agopyan notes, however, that Brazil offered his family an opportunity

to build a new life without facing the prejudice that many immigrants encounter.

"Even so, it took a great deal of effort and resilience to rebuild our lives," he added.

After earning his doctoral degree in London in the early 1980s, Agopyan joined the University of São Paulo as an assistant professor. Over the following decades, he steadily rose through the academic ranks from vice dean to dean, then provost and ultimately president of the University of São Paulo from 2018 to 2022.

"It was a very difficult period," Dr. Agopyan recalled, referring to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout his academic career, Agopyan

supervised approximately 30 Ph.D. candidates and dozens of master's students. His former students and faculty colleagues have gone on to work throughout Brazil and abroad, helping establish partnerships with leading educational and research institutions around the world. Among the university's closest international collaborators are institutions in the United States, the United Kingdom, and France.

"And now I am the Secretary for Science, Technology and Innovation," he said. "São Paulo is the richest and most economically important state in Brazil, accounting for about one-third of the country's economy. It also has a long tradition of excellence in higher education and a very strong research support agency."

As secretary, Agopyan coordinates cooperation among São Paulo's three public universities, research institutions, and the state government, helping shape science, technology, and innovation policy.

Armenian studies occupy an important place within the university's academic agenda.

"The Armenian community is very hard-working and very active," Agopyan said. "Armenian families place great value on education. We also have Armenian faculty members who are doing outstanding work."

He highlighted the efforts of Prof. Lusine Yeghiazarian, who leads Armenian Studies at the University of São Paulo.

(The accompanying video at mirror-spectator.com features an interview with Agopyan. The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* will also publish a separate story on the Armenian community of São Paulo and Brazil's recognition of the Armenian Genocide.)

INTERNATIONAL

Armenian Students Win Two Bronze Medals At the International Olympiad in AI

Armenian high school students concluded their participation at the International Olympiad in Artificial Intelligence (IOAI) with two bronze medals and the country's best-ever team result, continuing Armenia's rapid emergence of an AI talent pipeline built within the country's public education system.

Competing against students from 131 countries, Aram Amirkhanyan and Razmik Yepremyan each earned bronze medals in the individual contest at the Olympiad, held August 2-8 in Astana, Kazakhstan.

In the team competition, one of Armenia's two teams placed fifth in the Galbot robotics challenge, up from 16th place in 2025.

The results come just one year after Armenia made its debut at IOAI in Beijing. This year, the country had the maximum delegation permitted under the competition's rules: two four-member teams.

Three other students, Artyom Hovhannisyan, David Ghazaryan and Guren Bayburdyan, were included in Honorable Mentions.



The Armenian team and their coaches

The Olympiad consisted of three stages: a home round, a two-part team competition featuring both simulation and the Galbot robotics challenge, and an individual con-

test with six advanced AI problems.

Armenia's eight-member delegation was chosen through the country's first national selection for IOAI, organized by the Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology (FAST), the Olympiad's officially accredited representative in Armenia. A total of 168 students from across the country competed for a place on the national team.

The country's top-performing team comprised Alen Gevorgyan, Aram Amirkhanyan, Seryozha Nazaryan and Vahe Pluzyan, all students at the Vanadzor Special School with In-Depth Learning of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, one of nearly 40 public high schools participating in

the Generation AI High School Project. The FAST-led initiative, implemented with Armenia's Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, integrates advanced AI into the national public high school curriculum.

For Vahe Pluzyan, Aram Amirkhanyan and Seryozha Nazaryan, this marked a second consecutive appearance at IOAI. The trio also competed in Beijing in 2025, where Amirkhanyan won Armenia's first-ever Olympiad medal with an individual bronze.

The teams were coached by Tigran Ishkhanyan and Tigran Gabrielyan, AI teachers bringing their industry expertise into Generation AI classrooms.

Armenia's second team comprised Artyom Hovhannisyan (Photon College, Gyumri), Guren Bayburdyan (Photon College, Gyumri; Generation AI student), David Ghazaryan (Vagharshapat High School N5; Generation AI student), and Razmik Yepremyan (Yerevan PhysMath School).

The Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology (FAST) was founded in 2017 with the aim of creating a favorable ecosystem to promote technological innovation and scientific advancement in Armenia. FAST develops and pilots programs with the potential for a long-term, sustainable impact on Armenia's science, technology, and innovation ecosystem. Since its establishment, the foundation has implemented 32 programs and impacted more than 29,000 direct and indirect beneficiaries.

Georgia Sells Former NATO and EU Information Center

By Aslan Bairamovi

The Georgian government has auctioned off the former NATO and EU Information Centre in central Tbilisi for ₾35 million (\$13 million). Both information centers were reorganized and placed under the Georgian Foreign Ministry.

The building was state-owned and has a protected cultural heritage monument status.

The information center was first established in 2005, with the express purpose of spreading information about the EU and NATO. Its operations were suspended in June 2025, with its functions being placed under the Foreign Ministry.

The initial asking price of the building was 14 million Georgian lari (\$5 million), but was eventually sold for over double its value to businessperson Kakha-Koba Ivanov, the head of Geotech Distribution. Ivanov reportedly enjoys close ties with senior members of the ruling Georgian Dream party. It is not yet clear what Ivanov intends to do with the building.

A member of the opposition group Coalition for Change, Besik Donadze, called that closure of the center and the building's sole a "political move" to pull the coun-

try away from the West. He additionally claimed that Ivanov was close to Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze.

"The government will make more money by selling it, than they have spent on it," Donadze said.

A member of the opposition Lelo party, Nika Cherkezishvili, called the auction a symbolic change of Georgia's EU integration policy, which, he said, was replaced with financial and commercial interests.

Under Georgian law, Ivanov has a maximum of four years to launch a commercial or business operation at the property, whether directly or through a third party. The site can be used as an office space, operated by an international hotel company, or for retail or food services. Retail outlets selling everyday essential goods are excluded.

Ivanov is additionally obligated to invest at least 5 million laris (\$2 million) in the building, excluding VAT. He must also sign a monument maintenance and preservation agreement with the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia or Tbilisi City Hall.

(This article originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on August 17.)

Dr. Hrayr Jebejian Elected to the United Bible Societies Global

NICOSIA — The Board of the Bible Society in the Gulf has announced the election of Dr. Hrayr Jebejian to the Global Fellowship Council of the United Bible Societies (UBS). This appointment represents a milestone, positioning Gulf-based leadership at the helm of an esteemed international body comprising 156 National Bible Societies operating across more than 240 countries and territories.

The Global Fellowship Council provides strategic leadership for the worldwide mission of translating, publishing, distributing, and promoting the Holy Scriptures.



Azerbaijani Authorities Silent after Death of 4-Year-Old at Resort Linked to Aliyev's Family

By Aytan Farhadova

A four-year-old boy has died after getting his leg stuck in a water pump mechanism at the Sea Breeze water park outside Baku. The authorities do not appear to have launched an investigation into the accident. The water park is owned by Emin Aghalarov, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's former son-in-law.

The boy, Akif Abdullayev, died on August 14.

News about the incident was first shared by journalist Zulfyia Gulieva, who posted a video showing people trying to bail water out of a children's pool by hand and buckets. Gulieva deleted the video hours later "for obvious reasons, since there hasn't been an official statement."

"In the current climate, even mentioning the scene of an incident requires courage on the part of a journalist," she said.

She added that "if you have any brains, go after those who suppress freedom of speech," saying that she brought "the incident to light, and informed the public."

Although the video was removed from social media, the news sparked a major public reaction; pro-government media covered the incident, reporting only that the incident took place in Nardaran, where Sea Breeze is located, but not naming the water park.

Later, Aghalarov shared a post on Instagram in Russian in which he shared his and his team's condolences for the death of the child.

"A child has died following a tragic incident at the Sea Breeze water park. There

are no words that can ease the pain of the parents and loved ones at a time like this," Aghalarov said.

He added that an investigation "is currently underway to establish the full circumstances" of the incident, and mentioned that the investigation is trying to clarify "how the child gained access to the pool's technical area, where water pumps operate behind safety barriers."

However, in footage of the incident online, staff members are seen trying to rescue the child in the pool, and not the section housing its pumps.

Aghalarov stated that they are "cooperating fully with the investigation" and that "the safety of children and adults has always been, and remains, an absolute priority and commitment for Sea Breeze."

"All areas and facilities at the resort undergo regular inspections by the Ministry of Emergency Situations and relevant authorities. The water park is now in its third season of operation and has welcomed over 350,000 guests to date," he continued.

Aghalarov said that he will "personally provide the family with all necessary support and assistance."

The Prosecutor General's Office does not appear to have launched an investigation into the incident, and did not include it among the criminal cases it was investigating in mid-August.

OC Media reached out to the Prosecutor General's Office for comment but did not receive a response as of publication.

(This article originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on August 17.)



Community News

San Diego Community Center Launches Campaign

SAN DIEGO — The “Bridge to the Future” fundraising and social media campaign have launched for the new Armenian Community Center in San Diego, which has received its Conditional Use (CUP) and San Diego City Permits and is anticipated to break ground this fall.

As part of the 18-acre Heritage Pointe campus and coastal wildlife preserve that houses St. Sarkis Armenian Church (consecrated 2022), the parish’s spiritual home, the Armenian Community Center will further this mission by serving as a hub for spiritual, cultural and educational activities for the San Diego Armenian community and beyond. A new website, <https://www.bridgetothefuturesd.org/>, is now live with complete information on the project.

Fundraising Committee Chair Jim Sahagian expressed his excitement: “We are thrilled to launch this next campaign phase for the Armenian Community Center, which will strengthen and unite the San Diego Armenian community – especially the youth who are our future.”

The construction of this next phase, per Sahagian, focuses on youth development and cultural gatherings. It will include classroom space for Armenian Language and Sunday School programs, as well as a



Design of the Community Center number of multi-use spaces for community use. The estimated cost to complete this phase is \$4.6 million, more than half of which has already been committed through pledges and financing. When fully completed the cost of the entire Community Center will be \$9 million.

According to Sahagian, after completion of the last phase of construction, the Community Center will accommodate up to 350 guests for indoor events and will include a large stage, dance floor, commercial-grade kitchen, and state-of-the-art audio-visual capabilities. The center will also include a rooftop deck and two outdoor patios.

Future buildings of Heritage Pointe include the Education Center and Library, Youth Center and Gymnasium, an outdoor Memorial Plaza, and an assisted living facility which breaks ground in January 2027. The Bridge to the Future “Gala Esperanza: Gala of Hope” will be held on October 24, 2026 at the Cape Rey Hilton in Carlsbad, to support the building campaign.

For more information or to support this vibrant mission, visit <https://www.bridgetothefuturesd.org/donate-page> or email bridge2futuresd@gmail.com.



Jacqueline Khachadourian

ABMDR’s Summer Internship Program Draws Youth from the US and Canada

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR) has completed its second annual Summer Internship Program, in Yerevan.

Through this initiative, which took place during July and the first week of August, six high-school students from the United States and Canada received training and mentorship at ABMDR’s HLA-Typing Laboratory, in the Armenian capital.

Each student will receive a certificate of completion. Given the fact that the ABMDR Lab is accredited by the European Federation for Immunogenetics, the Certificate of Completion can be a valuable asset in job resumes as well as for college and university applications, said Dr. Frieda Jordan, president of ABMDR.

The interns included Darren Avanesian and his sister, Natalia Avanesian, (both from Providence High School, in Burbank, Calif.), Iren Babajanyan (from Lucille-Teasdale International School, Brossard, Quebec, Canada), Emma Kardzair (from Holy Martyrs Ferrahian High School, Los Angeles), Jacqueline Khachadourian (from Immaculate Heart High School, Los Angeles), and Alexia Minassian (from Chaminade College Preparatory High School, West Hills, Calif.).

see INTERNS, page 9



Darren Avanesian

Der Matossian’s ‘Armenians in the Modern and Early Modern World’ Series Enriches NAASR Library and Armenian Studies

BELMONT, Mass. — The Mardigian Library of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) was enriched in 2025 by the donation of 11 titles from the series “Armenians in the Modern and Early Modern World,” published by Bloomsbury, which were donated by the series editor, Prof. Bedross Der Matossian (University of Nebraska, Lincoln), in memory of his late father, Vartan Der Matossian (1933-2017).

In recognition of the donation, and in keeping with NAASR’s policy, each book has been given a bookplate recognizing the gift and honoring Vartan Der Matossian. Donations to NAASR’s Mardigian Library are vital to its growth to nearly 40,000 volumes. Whether the titles are old



Vartan Der Matossian, father of Prof. Bedross Der Matossian, in whose memory volumes were donated to NAASR’s Mardigian Library

or new, any donation that adds to the depth and breadth of NAASR’s library is greatly appreciated. Parties interested in donating materials to NAASR’s Mardigian Library should contact Library Director Ani Babaian.

The donated titles from “Armenians in the Modern and Early Modern World” include the first 11 titles in the series, which commenced in 2023. The series, which has rapidly become the most active and important Armenian-focused publication series in English, promotes innovative and interdisciplinary approaches to Armenian history, politics, and culture in the period between 1500-2000. Focusing on the geographies of the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Contemporary Russia (Eastern Armenia), it directs specific attention to imperial and post-imperial frameworks: from the Ottoman Empire to Modern Turkey/Arab Middle East; the Safavid/Qajar Empires to Iran; and the Russian Empire to Soviet Union/Post-Soviet territories.

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Der Matossian's 'Armenians in the Modern and Early Modern World' Series Enriches NAASR Library and Armenian Studies

NAASR, from page 7

Der Matossian is Professor of Modern Middle East History and Hymen Rosenberg Professor in Judaic Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he has taught since 2010. Born and raised in the Old City of Jerusalem, he is a graduate of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and he completed his Ph.D. in Middle East History at Columbia University in 2008. From 2008 to 2010, he was a Lecturer of Middle East History in the Faculty of History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He has also served as the Dumanian Visiting Professor at the University of Chicago.

In 2024, he received the University of Nebraska's College Outstanding Research



Bedross Der Matossian. Photo: Jordan Opp, University of Nebraska Communication and Marketing

and Creativity Award (ORCA) in recognition of his significant research accomplishments, and in 2026, he was named a Fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, one of the nation's most prestigious honors for scholars and artists. Most recently, he was appointed as Director of Genocide Research for the Zoryan Institute. Der Matossian is a past President of the Society for Armenian Studies (2018-2022), and he serves on the Boards of various international educational institutions and on the editorial board of multiple journals, including the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES). He is a past member of the NAASR Board of Directors and a long-serving member of NAASR's academic advisory committee.

He is the author of *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford University Press, 2014), which was winner of the 2015 Dr. Sona Aronian Book Prize for Excellence in Armenian Studies given by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) Outstanding Book Award in 2017, and *The Horrors of Adana: Revolution and Violence in the Early 20th Century* (Stanford University Press, 2022).

He is the editor of the volumes *The First Republic of Armenia (1918-1920) on its Centenary: Politics, Gender, and Diplomacy* (The Press at Fresno State, 2020), *The Armenian Social Democrat Hinchakian Party: Politics, Ideology and Transnational History* (2023), *Denial of Genocides in the Twenty-First Century* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2024), and co-editor of several other important books, and a long list of articles and book chapters of note.

A Conversation with Bedross Der Matossian

Der Matossian and NAASR's Director of Academic Affairs, Marc A. Mamigonian, recently discussed the "Armenians in the Modern and Early Modern World" series.

Mamigonian: Bedross, what is the significance of having a series of this kind? What need(s) does it address, what

gap(s) does it seek to fill?

Der Matossian: My vision for this series is not necessarily confined to Armenian Studies as a separate and self-contained field of study. Rather, I envision Armenian Studies as a hybrid and interdisciplinary field, one that is enriched by other forms of "area studies" as well as by a wide range of interdisciplinary approaches.

There are many excellent studies that, unfortunately, do not find a home with prestigious university presses. Scholars can become discouraged when their manuscripts are not accepted by such presses, even when their research makes an important contribution to the field. The Bloomsbury Series "Armenians in the Modern and Early Modern World" has therefore become an important venue for scholars both within and beyond Armenian Studies, representing diverse disciplinary and interdisciplinary backgrounds. The series seeks not to define Armenian Studies narrowly, but to create opportunities for scholarship that places Armenian history, culture, society, and experience in conversation with broader regional, comparative, and global approaches. To date, we have published sixteen titles, and another ten titles are in the pipeline.

Another important aim of the series is to encourage scholars from Armenia to publish their research for an international readership. There are many talented young scholars working on the early modern and modern periods who need encouragement, mentorship, and guidance in order to bring their research to publication in an international academic series. I make a particular effort to reach out to such scholars, encourage them to submit their work, and help create opportunities for their scholarship to become more widely known.

We are also fortunate to have an outstanding and highly engaged editorial board whose members actively provide feedback on proposals and manuscripts. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that the series does not publish manuscripts indiscriminately. Every manuscript is subjected to a rigorous peer-review process. We have rejected manuscripts in the past, while many others have successfully passed through the review process and gone on to publication. Maintaining these scholarly standards is essential to the intellectual mission and long-term reputation of the series.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the anonymous reviewers who have participated in this process. Their time, expertise, careful reading, and constructive criticism have been indispensable to maintaining the scholarly quality of the series and to supporting the authors whose work we publish.

Mamigonian: Why Bloomsbury, and how is the series funded?

Der Matossian: I.B. Tauris, formerly an imprint of Bloomsbury, has a long and distinguished tradition of publishing books in the field of Middle Eastern Studies. When I first established the series, Bloomsbury published its volumes under the I.B. Tauris imprint; more recently, however, the series has appeared under Bloomsbury Press.

Over the years, I have developed a strong working relationship with Bloomsbury Press, particularly with Rory Gormley, Senior Commissioning Editor for Middle East History, Literature and Culture. We have worked closely together for many years in developing the series and bringing important scholarly works to publication.

One of the principal challenges facing the series, however, is the lack of dedicat-

ed funding. Scholars frequently encounter financial difficulties in meeting the costs associated with editing, preparation of manuscripts, and other publication-related expenses. I work closely with authors to help them identify possible sources of financial support so that they can overcome these obstacles and bring their manuscripts to publication. Nevertheless, it has become increasingly clear that the series would benefit greatly from a dedicated fund specifically established to support its authors and publications.

It is important to acknowledge that the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies have generously provided research and publication support for numerous works in the field of Armenian Studies, including some publications associated with the series. This assistance has been extremely valuable. Despite such support, however, significant financial challenges remain. Establishing a dedicated fund for the series would provide a more stable and sustainable means of assisting scholars, particularly with editorial and publication-related expenses, and would help ensure the continued development and scholarly impact of the series.

Mamigonian: Why "Modern and Early Modern World"?

Der Matossian: Over the past two decades, I have observed an increasing tendency within the field of Armenian Studies in the United States and Europe to focus on the medieval and ancient periods. To some extent, this shift has come at the expense of the early modern and modern periods, which have experienced a noticeable decline in scholarly attention. Today, relatively few endowed chairs and academic programs in the United States are positioned to train scholars specializing in modern or early modern Armenian history. I therefore initiated this series, in part, to encourage the publication of scholarship on the early modern and modern periods and to provide a strong scholarly venue for work in these areas.

That said, the series continues to have certain weaknesses, particularly with regard to the early modern period. To the best of my knowledge, Professor Sebouh Aslanian, holder of the Richard Hovannisian Endowed Chair in Modern Armenian History at UCLA, is currently the only scholar in the United States who regularly trains graduate students in early modern Armenian history. Recognizing the need to strengthen the series in this area, I have recently begun collaborating with several scholars from the Matenadaran in an effort to expand its coverage of and engagement with the early modern period.

Mamigonian: The authors in the series include scholars from the U.S., Europe, the Middle East and Armenia — is there a conscious effort to enlist authors from around the world or is this just the way things have worked out?

Der Matossian: You are right that there is a conscious effort to enlist scholars from around the globe. I put a great deal of effort into reaching out to scholars in different parts of the world and encouraging them to think of the series as a potential home for their projects. I am always looking for interesting and exciting projects that do not necessarily adhere to traditional ways of thinking about the field. I am doing my best to think outside the box and to create space for fresh perspectives and innovative approaches.

Mamigonian: Are there any other se-

ries of this kind in English?

Der Matossian: Yes, there are several comparable series in the United States. However, in terms of diversity, scholarly quality, and publication pace, this stands out as one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing series. The series maintains a strong commitment to publishing rigorous, high-quality scholarship while bringing together diverse perspectives, topics, and authors. Its careful editorial and peer-review process further strengthens the quality and credibility of the published volumes.

The average publication timeline is approximately two years, although this can vary depending on the author's progress and the time required to complete and respond to the review process. Overall, the series combines a relatively efficient publication schedule with high scholarly and editorial standards, making it an attractive venue for authors seeking both quality and timely publication.

Mamigonian: To conclude, Bedross, after several years editing this series, do you have suggestions for other scholars who might be seeking to start different Armenian-related publication series?

Der Matossian: One key lesson I have learned is that a successful publication series requires a clear intellectual vision, a strong scholarly community, and stable financial support. Before launching a new series, scholars should carefully consider existing gaps in the field and determine how their series can address them while avoiding unnecessary redundancy.

Building a broad and diverse network of contributors, reviewers, editors, and institutional partners is equally vital. Given that Armenian Studies is naturally interdisciplinary and international, a publication series benefits greatly from involving scholars across different fields, generations, institutions, and countries around the world. I particularly recommend that editors create opportunities for emerging scholars while maintaining high academic standards. I also make a particular effort to encourage the publication of edited volumes on a range of topics that fall within the themes and chronological scope of the series. Such volumes can foster scholarship by bringing different scholars into conversation with one another around a common subject and encouraging new perspectives and approaches.

Another important lesson is to be realistic about the practical side of publishing. Serving as the editor of a series is not an easy task. I receive neither a stipend nor a salary for this work; I do it because I believe in enriching and expanding the field. A series editor must also be very patient when working with authors. Not all authors are alike, and editors inevitably encounter obstacles that require patience, flexibility, and diplomacy in order to bring a project to completion. Much of the work takes place behind the scenes, and successfully guiding a manuscript from its initial stages to publication can require considerable time and persistence.

Finally, I advise scholars to view a publication series as more than simply a platform for producing books or articles. Ideally, a series should foster intellectual conversations, connect scholars who might otherwise remain disconnected, and introduce Armenian Studies to new questions, methods, and audiences. Keeping this broader purpose in mind can help sustain a publication series—and those responsible for it—through the unavoidable challenges of editing and publishing.



COMMUNITY NEWS

ABMDR’s Internship Program Draws Youth from the US and Canada

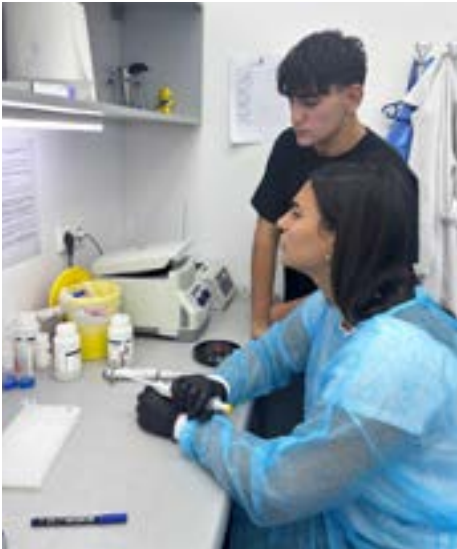
INTERNS, from page 7

“Ever since we launched our Summer Internship Program last year, the response by students and their families has been extremely positive,” Jordan said. “It’s wonderful to see the enthusiasm of our young interns, and also their sense of camaraderie, as they’re trained and mentored at our lab. These are our future scientists, researchers, and inventors, and we’re all so very proud of them!”

During their internship at the ABMDR Lab, the students gained basic theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience in methodologies used in immunogenetics and bone marrow/stem cell donor matching.

Topics of the training encompassed DNA extraction, HLA-typing methodologies, gel electrophoresis, and interpretation of results, instructed by lab supervisor Armine Hyusyan and lab technician Ani Azaryan.

The interns were also provided with an overview of local and international donor databases (such as those of ABMDR and



Sibling interns Natalia and Darren Avanesian

recruitment, medical research, stem-cell harvesting, and cord-blood banking. This component of the instruction was provided by ABMDR Medical Director Dr. Mihran Nazaretyan.

Dr. Jordan said, “We hope that every student who has seen our work up close will go on to become an ABMDR youth ambassador, by going back to their communities and helping us with outreach and recruitment, and joining our NextGen team.”

Last year, four high-school students from California completed ABMDR’s inaugural Summer Internship Program. The interns included Emily Davoodian, Vahan Gadimyan, and Zara Ovanessian, all from Providence High School; as well as Alexander Galstyan, from Holy Martyrs Ferrarian High School.

ABMDR’s HLA-Typing Laboratory is a state-of-the-art facility, recognized internationally by all major transplant centers. It is the only one of its kind in the whole of the Caucasus, and the only lab in the region to be accredited by the European Federation for Immunogenetics.

The ABMDR Summer Internship Program is open to college students (graduate and undergraduate), as well as high-school seniors, with a proper course background. Students interested in participating in the 2027 Summer Internship Program should submit a one-page request to info@abmdr.am. The request should include a short biography and a list of courses taken in the fields of biology and chemistry.



Iren Babajanyan

other national registries), and were given a demonstration of two major global donor-search platforms, namely those of the European Marrow Donor Information System and the World Marrow Donor Association. This component of the instruction was provided by ABMDR database manager Alina Sirunyan.

As importantly, the interns were familiarized with ABMDR’s core operations, including community outreach and donor



The Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada congratulates Sam Simonian, founder of the Tumo Center for Creative Technologies and president of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, on the honor of his receiving the First-Class Order “For Services to the Homeland” from President Vahagn Khachaturyan of the Republic of Armenia in recognition of his long-standing contributions to education, science, culture, economic development, and the preservation of Armenian identity.



Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.

Dr. Nubar Berberian 2026 Annual Awards



Dr. Nubar Berberian, intellectual, journalist, activist and editor of many ADL daily newspapers for more than 50 years passed away at the age of 94 in November 23, 2016. In his Will, Dr. Berberian directed his Trust Fund managers to appropriate awards every year to college students

of Armenian descent worldwide who major in either International Law or Political Science.

ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Eligible recipients are college students of Armenian descent who major in either International Law or Political Science.
- 2) Applicant must be enrolled in a full-time graduate program in a fully accredited college or university in the world.
- 3) Applicant must provide all of the information requested on the application form.
- 4) Applicant must submit a copy of his or her most recent college transcript.
- 5) Applicant is to include a small head and shoulders self-portrait.
- 6) Application could be received by requesting from Tcadirector@Aol.com.
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: Tcadirector@Aol.com,
- 8) The deadline of receiving the applications is September 26, 2026.
- 9) The administrators and managers of the fund will vote the qualified winners in October, 2026 based on the merits of each applicant.
- 10) The winners will receive their awards in November, 2026
- 11) Winning applicants are not eligible to apply again.
- 12) This announcement is published in Armenian, English, French and Spanish.

Watertown, MA, July 20, 2026

ADVERTISE IN THE MIRROR

COMMUNITY NEWS

OHFAR Hopes to Bring Focus on Pediatric Dentistry in Armenia

DENTISTRY, from page 1

which since 1995 has been working to help children in rural parts of Armenia, and later Karabakh (Artsakh). AIDA was created as an umbrella organization, under which came regional Armenian medical associations from Ontario and Quebec in Canada, as well as those from the US, France, Brazil and Armenia.

A study AIDA had done in Armenia showed that in 2014, showed that 95 percent of children suffered from cavities in their primary and permanent teeth. A second study in 2022 showed the figures remained steady, while the most recent survey showed about 91.7 percent of young children have decayed baby teeth, and 87 percent of 12-year-olds have damaged permanent teeth. In addition, about half of all children show signs of early gum disease.

Dr. Aram Sirakian spoke about OHFAR and its goals at the May event. Sirakian and Dr. Zareh Ouzounian of Toronto founded AIDA during the Armenian Medical International Foundation in Boston in 1995.

“Our organization has been active in Armenia and Artsakh with the mission of educating, treating and improving oral health in our homeland,” Sirakian said.

He went on to explain, “The purpose of this evening is to introduce to you the newest chapter of our mission: OHFAR,” he said. “We hope to gain your support as we continue to strive toward our ultimate goal: healthy smiles for every child and every Armenian in our nation.”

Sirakian said oral diseases worldwide affect 3.5 billion people worldwide, but most cases are entirely preventable.

OHFAR was officially registered in Armenian in 2024, a continuation the work carried out in Artsakh the last 20 years, under the aegis of the NGO Hand in Hand.

Rounding out the OHFAR Executive Board members are Dr. Berdj Kiladjian, Dr. Raffi Chalian, Dr. Harmik Minassian, Dr. Arnie Weiss and Dr. Vicken Ohannessian.

The organization, Sirakian said, has held many events around the world, but never one in Boston, where the majority of its board members are based.

Pediatric Dental Care in Rural Armenia

The World Dental Federation (FDI) has designated March 20 and OHFAR members wanted to take advantage of the occasion this year. “Our goal was to bring this campaign to Armenia,” Sirakian said, calling it Jpitor (Smiling Day) and as such, on that day, visiting oral surgeons and dentists went to the school in the village of Akner in Syunik. There they held a dental clinic and also showed the children, their parents and teachers, how to brush and floss and urged the parents to enforce a strict brushing regimen at home.

At the event, the Akner school principal thanked the organization, noting that on that day OHFAR specialists had treated 127 children and treated them with more



Dr. Arnold Weiss

than 450 fillings.

The prevalence of cavities among children needs to be a top priority, all the speakers noted.

Sirakian explained that it is not just the scarcity of dentists that is the problem; few adults are concerned with children brushing their teeth. While parents know basic hygiene, the speakers said, fewer understand the full preventative benefits of daily flossing or fluoride rinses.

Another reason for pediatric cavities is diet.

“One of the reasons is that our Armenian children love sweets,” he said, emphasizing that “oral disease has far-reaching consequences that go far beyond the mouth, affecting nutrition, education, self-esteem, overall health and even national productivity.”

“This is compounded by outdated equipment and uneven distribution of dental practices, most of which are concentrated in the capital city of Yerevan,” he said.

Currently there are no dental health policy campaigns by the government or any gathering of data.

“We formed the OHFAR with the goal of helping implement all of the above,” Sirakian said.

On the Ground in Rural Armenia

OHFAR President Dr. Berdj Kiladjian, one of the founding members of AIDA, spoke next.

Harkening back to AIDA’s formation, he said, “We all started to work together to see how we could help.”

AIDA members for the past couple of years made mission trips to Armenia for brief periods, visiting rural dental offices

where they would see patients.

However, Kiladjian said, upon their return, the members realized that the need was far greater than what they could provide in such short visits.

“We realized it’s helping but it’s not even a drop in the bucket. I thought if we are going to make a difference, we have to have a bigger presence and a clinic that is staffed

Next to speak was Dr. Arnold Weiss, with both Kiladjian and Sirakian offering profuse praise. Weiss, Kiladjian said, frequently accompanied him there.

Weiss has “become an invaluable part of our mission, teaching our dentists not only clinical skills but behavior management techniques, all without speaking a word of Armenian. His dedication is truly un-



Dr. Myron Allukyan

by local dentists so we can provide continuous care,” he said.

Previously, the group had focused much of their attention on Artsakh, where speakers said residents had the lowest level of dental care. The group had opened free dental clinics in Shushi, Hadrut, Martakert and Martuni. “Then we decided to have a mobile clinic that would take us to the villages,” Kiladjian said.

Of course with the war and eventual loss of Artsakh, the efforts there stopped.

Kiladjian noted, “The best way to make an impact is to start treating children. If we really build a solid foundation, that’s how we can build the country.”

In 2014 they decided to concentrate on children, so that they could build a lifetime of good dental hygiene.

“We focused on children and it started to pay off,” Kiladjian said. “We saw incredible amounts of results.”

The group in Artsakh offered more than 160,000 free dental visits, serving more than 10,000 children. Of course, all operations there ceased in 2023, after the takeover by Azerbaijan.

They had to leave everything, including their mobile dental clinic.

matched,” Sirakian said.

In his comments, Weiss noted that in the past year alone, he had visited Armenia four times to make sure dentists there have acquired the highest skillsets.

Weiss, added, “I feel like it’s my second home.”

He showed a slide presentation about the group’s work in rural Armenia, explaining the group’s approach to pediatric dentistry

Adamnabus Mobile Clinic

OHFAR has five objectives: teaching, advocacy, care for children, research, advocacy and prevention. All these goals require reaching the rural clients, hence their mobile clinic, Weiss said.

In 2025, OHFAR launched its mobile clinic, called Adamnabus, a bus outfitted with state-of-the-art treatment and data collection. Individuals and municipalities interested in receiving the services of Adamnabus in the provinces can contact the organization on its website and leave a request for a visit.

“Our objective is to have zero children with untreated tooth decay by age 15,” Weiss said. “We want to make oral health a top national priority. It is not a priority

continued on next page



Dr. George Vosgerichian



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

at all now among the organizations of the garment and even among physicians.”

The bulk of the money for the retrofitted bus was mostly raised in 2023, at a gala in Lyon, France, with the participation of the municipality, the local Armenian dental association, AIDA, Rotary International, Alan K. and Isabelle DerKazarian, the Armenian Canadian Medical Association of Ontario and Dr. Harmik Minassian.

The research component of OHFAR is gathering dental information and statistics, to “go to the government and the ministries” “so that we can take that data ... and put it all together so we can go to the government and say this is a problem for thousands of children,” Weiss said.

To that end, the organization is working toward creating a software called Adamna-soft to collect data on the state of pediatric dental care in the country for submission to the government with an eye toward the creation and implementation a national dental policy.

Weiss said he has given five lectures to medical specialists, spreading awareness about the importance of dental care, especially among children, and how it pertains to general health.



Dr. Berdj Kiladjian and Nicole Babikian Hajjar

“By the time they [children] go to school, there is a lot of decay already,” Weiss said. “Prevention is very important to teach the children but also the parents and teachers. Dental disease is 100-percent preventable.”

The organization, Weiss noted, is also offering free dental care in other villages in Syunik with Adamanabus, as well as Goris.

He stressed that dental health should be a component of the school day. “We want a comprehensive school-based oral health program to get teachers and everyone involved so that when we leave, they have tools so they can go ahead and repeat it,” Weiss said.

One other OHFAR board member, Dr. Vicken Ohannessian, a medical doctor specializing in public health, offered his comments remotely. Originally, from Lyon, he was speaking from Yerevan, where he has lived since 2022. “After the war, I decided to build our country, to improve our nation and to contribute to the health system improvement in Armenia, directly on the ground,” he said.

Weiss praised Ohannessian’s efforts for amplifying the importance of pediatric dental care in overall health of children.

Currently the organization has a brick-and-mortar clinic at the Pyunik Center for Disabled Children and employs a staff of three there.

Sirakian noted after the event that many from the Boston area are helping with the efforts in Armenia, including George Vosgerichian and orthodontist Alex Bejian, who loaded his suitcase with the tools of his trade for a recent visit.

Going forward, Sirakian said that OHFAR plans on adding more mobile bus clinics. Further events are planned for Yerevan and Lyon in September and December.

Along with the dental program at the Armenian Cultural Foundation, guests were treated to a musical performance by violinist Sofya Vardanyan and pianist Lilit



Dr. Aram Sirakian



Guests at the May event



Dr. Arnold Weiss and a guest

Karapetian-Shougarian performing works by J.S. Bach, W.A. Mozart, and Komitas.

To learn more about or donate to OHFAR, visit <https://ohfar.am/> or https://www.instagram.com/ohfar_kids/

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Four Athletes from Artsakh to Represent Armenia at 2026 IMMAF Youth World Championships

GLENDAL — Four young athletes from families forcibly displaced from Artsakh represented Armenia at the 2026 IMMAF Youth World Championships in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, which took place August 16–23. (Their events took place after the *Mirror-Spectator* went to press.)

The athletes — Karen Arzumanyan, Tigran Gasparyan, Samvel Avetisyan and Erik Hayrapetyan — earned the opportunity to compete for Armenia after achieving top results in their respective age and weight divisions.

Lorik Humanitarian Fund raised \$3,600 to fully fund the four athletes at \$900 each, helping cover accommodations, participation fees and other costs associated with competing at the international championship.

The four athletes are:
Karen Arzumanyan, 17, representing Armenia in the 61.2 kg division.

Tigran Gasparyan, the current Armenian champion among 16–17-year-olds at 52.2 kg.

Samvel Avetisyan, the current Armenian champion at 48 kg.

Erik Hayrapetyan, 13, who placed second in Armenia in the 40 kg division.

All four come from families forcibly displaced from Artsakh and have continued their training in Armenia while rebuilding their lives following the September 2023 forced displacement.

The athletes train under Stepan Shah-



The athletes from Artsakh and their coach

muradyan, Vice President of the Armenian MMA Federation and a trainer at Shahmuradyan Fight Club. The Armenian MMA Federation, led by President Garegin Aghabalyan, will field Armenia’s youth national team at the championships.

For Lorik Humanitarian Fund, supporting the athletes represents an expansion of its work beyond immediate humanitarian assistance and toward creating long-term

opportunities for forcibly displaced Artsakh youth.

“Humanitarian aid cannot only be about responding to immediate needs,” said Shunt Jarchafjian, President of Lorik Humanitarian Fund. “These young athletes have worked hard enough to earn the right to represent Armenia on the world stage. Our role was simply to make sure that the financial cost did not prevent them from

getting there.”

With the athletes’ participation now fully funded, Lorik Humanitarian Fund has begun raising funds for its next phase of support: approximately \$2,500 in new training equipment for the gym where the athletes train.

The gym also provides free training to children of fallen Armenian servicemen and children affected by the September 2023 Artsakh fuel depot explosion.

Approximately \$600 has already been raised toward the equipment, leaving roughly \$1,900 needed to complete the project.

“Sending four athletes to Abu Dhabi is something we are proud of, but we also want this support to leave something behind,” Jarchafjian said. “Equipment that stays in the gym can continue creating opportunities for children long after this championship is over.”

The 2026 IMMAF Youth World Championships bring together youth national teams from around the world for international amateur mixed martial arts competition. The Armenian delegation will compete in Abu Dhabi during the August 16–23 championship period.

Lorik Humanitarian Fund has published profiles and videos introducing the four athletes, Armenian MMA Federation leadership and the effort to equip their training gym at LorikHF.org.

About Lorik Humanitarian Fund

St. Mark in Springfield to Hold Annual Armenian Fest Sunday, September 6

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — St. Mark Armenian Church’s Annual Armenian Fest will be held on the church grounds on Sunday, September 6, from 12 noon to 6pm, 2427 Wilbraham Road in Springfield. The Fest, which has become a favorite in the Greater Springfield area, is the parish’s biggest event for nearly 30 years and will feature hot meals, music, dancing, authentic Armenian baked goods and pastries, artwork and handmade items from Armenia, a raffle, and more.

The festival draws more than 1,000 people from Springfield, surrounding suburbs and throughout New England that enjoy great food, entertainment and a wonderful social atmosphere. Everyone is welcome to be a part of the culture and enjoy all that is offered.

The Fest involves dozens of parishioners lending their time and talents to put on this annual one-day event, which is the parish’s

largest annual fundraiser. Attendees can enjoy an array of ethnic baked goods, sweets and Armenian coffee. Baking workshops take place at the Church over the summer, including the preparation of Choreg (Armenian sweet rolls), Cheese Boreg (phyllo dough triangles filled with cheese); Spinach Pie (phyllo dough squares filled with spinach and cheese); Paklava; and much more. Workshops will continue up to the time of the Festival.

Armenian and International music by DJ Gena will fill the Church grounds. There will also be an Ancestry booth where attendees can learn about the family histories of St. Mark parishioners through old photos and short stories. There will also be a cultural booth with handmade Armenian jewelry and other items made in Armenia, artwork, Armenian wine for sale, and a raffle.

The same weekend as the Armenian Fest, St. Mark will be holding an Armenian



Wine Tasting under the tent on Friday, September 4, 7-9 p.m. in partnership with Storica Wines. Armenian wine comes from one of the oldest wine producing regions of the world, and winemaking is part of the fabric of the country. For details about that event and to purchase tickets, visit www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/armenian-wine-tasting-at-st-mark.

All proceeds from the Fest benefit the ministries of St. Mark Armenian Church. Sponsorship opportunities are also available, and donations can be made through the Church Donation Form link on the

church website, stmarkarmenianchurch.org (select “Festival Sponsorship” from the dropdown). More information about the Fest can be found on the Facebook event page, on the church website, stmarkarmenianchurch.org, or by calling (413) 783-5793.

Admission to the festival and parking are free. The event will be held rain or shine (All booths and seating are under tents). St. Mark is located at 2427 Wilbraham Road, Springfield.

For more information: www.stmarkarmenianchurch.org.

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Arts & Culture

A Perennial Void: Siran Seza's *Letters*

By Arpi Sarafian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Volumes One and Two (Hayastan Publishing House, Yerevan, Armenia, 2023, 2026) of the projected four or five, of Siran Seza's *Letters* uncover a tormented soul, which perhaps should have remained inviolate. "There's an inexplicable sorrow in my heart," "I feel hopeless," "I can't take this life of endless despair anymore," writes the distraught woman, again and again. Not publishing the letters, on the other hand, would mean losing, among much else, the exquisitely written missives addressed to *Sireli Siran*, *pari aghchig*, by the talented young writer Vazken Shoushanian of the post-Armenian Genocide generation. Shoushanian hopes Azniv Siran will "reconcile herself to the disorder and the chaos of life." His letters also mourn the "collective pain of our people," destined to assimilate in exile away from their homeland.

The first two volumes of the *Letters* comprise Seza's vast correspondence with her two husbands and various lovers. Volume One is devoted to the exchanges between Seza and writers Vahe-Vahian and Antranig Dzarougian, Anoush Siran had intimate relationships with. Volume Two assembles the remaining letters, including the correspondence between Seza and her husband Dr. Nerses Kupelian, both before and after their marriage. What these letters unearth is a woman who loved all too freely and openly. Seza writes about her experiences with no attempt to conceal what she knew would be met with condemnation by a society that, in her words, "was all about profit and money . . . totally removed from moral or spiritual concerns." Seza is outspoken about "the deceptions, the vulgarities and the jealousies" of the Armenian communities, especially the Lebanese Armenian community she knew so well. If the free-spirited woman is "bold and unafraid," it is because she is guided by "the just and the good." Digin Seza may have been impulsive and moody, prone to frequent outbursts, but her intent was never to hurt, to manipulate or to deceive.

What the publication of the *Letters* has bolstered, however, is the image of Seza as a "flirt." "My capricious girl" did indeed have multiple lovers, yet introducing the correspondence with stark numbers — two husbands and about ten lovers — encourages the perception of a woman lacking in moral and spiritual purity, when, in truth, the letters reveal a woman who is perhaps a trifle too exigent in her moral expectations. Seza's letters are full of expressions of indignation at vulgar and irresponsible behavior. "Living is more heroic than dying, especially dying with a bottle of arak," *Tchar aghchig* tells her lover, the prominent writer/editor Antranig Dzarougian. "His vulgarity will see LETTERS, page 17



The Sér Ensemble at Healing Force of the Universe in Pasadena on July 25 (photo Karine Armen)

Sér Ensemble Brings the Oud Across Borders

By Karine Armen

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GLENDAL — Raffi Joe Wartanian and the Sér Ensemble performed selections from their upcoming album, "Makam Delta," on Friday, August 7, at Brand Park.

The performance was only the ensemble's second public appearance, following its July 25 debut at Healing Force of the Universe in Pasadena. Still, the group displayed the cohesion of musicians who have spent considerable time playing together.

Wartanian's oud anchors the ensemble, joined by violin, guitar, bass, and percussion. The resulting sound is difficult to place neatly within a single genre. Armenian folk traditions intermingle with modal jazz, flamenco, rebetiko and other influences, creating music that seems less interested in drawing borders than in crossing them.

"Through his fresh approach to the ancient oud, Raffi Joe Wartanian exudes dexterity, nuance and compositional finesse," said oud master Ara Dinkjian. "His music organically traverses genres with a subtle ease and fluency, often intertwining multiple traditions and influences in a way that feels cohesive, authentic, and innovative. In doing so, he not only honors the oud's rich history, but also expands its possibilities. With 'Makam Delta,' his new album of oud compositions, he has moved the music and instrument forward to new frontiers."

Wartanian describes the music as exploring a landscape where "the Appalachian Mountains slope into the Mediterranean Sea." It is an apt image. There is something simultaneously earthy and global in the ensemble's sound: music rooted in particular traditions but unwilling to remain confined by them.

The oud is an ancestor of the guitar; it is traditionally associated with musical cultures of the Middle East and Mediterranean. Wartanian is a virtuoso musician and an expert in improvisation, rhythmic exploration and conversation with instruments that come from very different musical lineages.

That sense of conversation is fundamental to the Sér Ensemble. The name "Sér" means "love" in Armenian, while the Spanish verb "ser" means "to be." Wartanian uses the word to suggest both presence and relationship: music as something created between people rather than simply delivered to an audience.

The concept is reflected in the ensemble's members, whose histories stretch across countries and musical traditions. Guitarist Alexy Yeghikian and Wartanian see *SÉR*, page 14



From left: Guitarist Alexy Yeghikian, violinist Shant Tanielian, bassist Felix Kochendorfer, composer/oud player Raffi Joe Wartanian, and percussionist T.J. Troy (photo Karine Armen)

Latest Album by Trumpeter Micheal Sarian to Be Released On September 25

NEW YORK — Trumpeter Michael Sarian will release "In This Desert," the sixth album by his quartet, on Burning Ambulance Music September 25, 2026.

Sarian, born in Canada and raised in Argentina, has been leading his quartet with keyboardist Santiago Liebson, bassist Marty Kenney, and drummer Nathan Ellman-Bell for close to a decade. They have released five previous albums together — "New Aurora" (ears&eyes, 2020, with Dayeon Seok on drums); "Living At The End Of The World" (ears&eyes, 2022); "Live At Cliff Bells" (Shifting Paradigm, 2024); "Esquina" (Greenleaf Music, 2025); and "Live At Cliff Bells Vol. II" (Shifting Paradigm, 2025) — but "In This Desert" is their most expansive work yet, an 82-minute double CD inspired by the trumpeter's Armenian heritage.

The opening three-part title suite is "inspired by the feeling of desertedness one can feel in NYC even though it's full of people." The first disc ends with *Lost Mountains*, which is "inspired by the many mountains the Armenian people have had to travel across in the wake of genocide, and



Michael Sarian by Alex SK Brown

the many physical mountains we have lost."

The second disc offers *Tapestries*, which incorporates Armenian musical elements; *The Eyes of Parajanov*, a tribute to Soviet Armenian filmmaker Sergei Parajanov (whose images and color palette in turn inspired Burning Ambulance co-founder I.A. Freeman's cover art and design); and *Village of Sons Of*, which Sarian says is "in reference to the Armenian surnames ending in 'ian' or 'yan' (meaning 'son of') and how even within the diaspora across the globe, we're just a village."

"In This Desert" will be released on September 25, digitally and as a limited edition of 500 double CDs in heavy-duty gatefold mini-LP sleeves printed on textured paper, with artwork by Burning Ambulance Music co-founder I.A. Freeman.

Sarian and the band are touring in the following cities:

September 6 and 7 — The Rex, Toronto; September 10 — Rhizome, Washington DC; October 8 — PizzaExpress Live, London; October 10 — Librería Byron, Barcelona.

For more information, contact burningambulance@gmail.com.



ARTS & CULTURE

Sér Ensemble Brings the Oud Across Borders

SÉR, from page 13
first met in Armenia in 2012. Violinist Shant Tanielian, originally from Aleppo, Syria, met Wartanian there the following year. Bassist Jake Leckie was Wartanian’s college roommate in Baltimore in 2007–08. He was part of the recording process, but he moved to Boston. Percussionist T.J. Troy brings an expansive background spanning North Indian and Middle Eastern percussion, as well as contemporary classical music. Felix Kochendorfer, a Los Angeles-based bassist and audio engineer, is also part of the ensemble.
Those individual histories give the group’s intercultural ambitions some substance. This is not simply a collection of musicians performing music labeled “world” or “fusion.” The musicians themselves embody multiple migrations, musical educations, friendships, and encounters.
Wartanian had already released two albums of original music, but the COVID lockdown made it difficult to tour. While living in the New York area, he began spending more time with the oud—experimenting with the instrument, recording, jamming, and listening. He was partic-

ularly inspired by the oud playing of Ara Dinkjian, Simon Shaheen, Hamza El Din, Ahmed Alshaiba and Aly Eissa.
“Once I figured out all the pieces and wrote them down in tablature, which is a numerical system, I started looking for people to play with,” he said.
What began as an exploration of the instrument gradually became a much more ambitious compositional project. Wartanian had to figure out how to translate music conceived on the oud into parts that other musicians could interpret. He began writing arrangements for guitar and violin and developing sheet music for the ensemble. The musical notation has even found its way onto T-shirts, postcards, and book-marks associated with the project.
After months of one-on-one rehearsals, the Sér Ensemble united in November 2025 and recorded the forthcoming album, “Makam Delta” in December at Lucy’s Meat Market recording studio in Los Angeles. The album, produced by Gaby Moreno, is scheduled for release through Levantine Music in October and will be available on both vinyl and CD..
The album title points toward Warta-



Raffi and the Sér Ensemble performing at Brand Park in Glendale (photo Karine Armen)

nian’s larger musical project: “makam” evokes the modal systems central to many Middle Eastern musical traditions, while “delta” suggests convergence, branching,

and movement. That combination captures much of what makes the Sér Ensemble intriguing. The music does not attempt to recreate an imagined Armenian past. Instead, it asks what Armenian musical inheritance might sound like when carried into a contemporary, diasporic, and metropolitan context.
Wartanian is also an educator, writer and poet. He holds an MFA in writing from Columbia University, teaches at UCLA and has served since 2023 as the inaugural Poet Laureate of Glendale. He is also an advisory board member of the International Armenian Literary Alliance and has been involved in public advocacy around genocide, injustice, and human rights.
The Sér Ensemble’s most compelling quality is its willingness to let different traditions coexist without forcing them into a single definition. Armenian music is present, but so are jazz, Mediterranean forms, Western classical training, flamenco, and American musical sensibilities.
Additional performances are planned for September (Beyond Baroque) and October (UCLA), along with a forthcoming music video to announce the album’s release.
For more information about the record, visit <https://www.raffiJoewartanian.com/about>. To see Wartanian in performance, visit <https://www.youtube.com/@RaffiJo-eWartanian/videos>

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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



For the Love of Apricots' Lisa Prince Newman's Apricot Jam

SARATOGA, Calif. — Lisa Prince Newman grew up in a Garden of Eden, surrounded by vineyards, pastures and orchards, on a two-plus-acre property with just about every kind of tree imaginable, from walnut to kumquat to apple to apricots. It was magical. A different kind of magic happens in her once-pastoral home now called Silicon Valley. She watched despondently as the bucolic area was slowly bulldozed to make room for housing and offices and malls, she says. But the taste of her family's fruits, especially apricots — in her mind, a pretty much perfect fruit — never left her.

Lisa's *For the Love of Apricots* (178 pages, Prince of the Orchards Publications), is a beautiful cookbook that includes treasured recipes and memories of growing up in the Santa Clara Valley, once known as Valley of Heart's Delight. "Their appeal is so unique. They fit in your hand, and they're just the most luscious fruit. They're my favorite fruit," she says. "It's like looking at the California sun." The cookbook is a feast for the eyes as well as the soul. Photography blends with images of California's apricot orchards; from today as well as not so long ago, when fruit orchards covered much of the Santa Clara Valley landscape. Reflections on what the celebrated Valley of Heart's Delight was like, how it changed, and what remains, add Lisa's personal memories and perspective to the cookbook.

"There are as many ways to make apricot jam as there are mothers, aunts and grandmothers who make it. My mother preferred to make freezer jam, which doesn't involve boiling jars and lids. She stored the jam in Tupperware containers that lasted our family through the year. I loved her jam growing up, but as an adult decided it was overly sweet for my taste. I wanted to make a jam that tasted more like the actual fruit. When I make apricot jam, I use a reduced sugar pectin such as Sure-Jell, which is easy to find in the grocery store. Reduced or no sugar recipes that are provided in the box allow the apricot flavor to shine through better than traditional recipes with a higher sugar ratio. Be sure to follow the instructions



Blenheim apricots ready for picking

provided to achieve a proper jam consistency, and the best flavor."

"The Blenheim apricot and its heirloom cousins, the Moorpark and Alameda-Hemskirke, shared international fame with the French Prune for nearly 100 years, when the Santa Clara Valley was known as the Valley of Heart's Delight. Back then, orchards spread across the Valley in every direction. In springtime, visitors from around the Bay Area, across California, and even distant parts of the world, came to see the blossom spectacle celebrated at the Saratoga Blossom Festival, which ran from 1900 to 1942," says Lisa.

"There are a few utensils that make the jam-making job easier, including three different sized pots: large — in which to boil the jars, medium — for making the jam, and small — for boiling the lids; pot holders and tongs to lift the hot jars out of their water bath onto a clean cloth; a wide-mouth funnel to insert into the hot jars; and a ladle to pour the hot jam into the hot jars before sealing them tightly with the screw band lids. I deviate from the recipe at this point and don't process the jam further because I think the jam has a fresher fruit flavor. I've been making jam this way for years with great results."

"Apricots," she adds, shouldn't be relegated to being considered just a summer fruit. "Apricots can be preserved, they can be frozen, you can make jams, and dried apricots can be used throughout the year. This recipe is the one I use to make many batches of jam each year. I keep a case of 16 oz. jars for our family's enjoyment, and make a few more cases in varying sizes for gifts. Friends and family always enjoy receiving these jars of apricot sunshine."

Yield: 4 jars

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

3 1/2 lbs. Blenheim apricots, finely chopped (or enough to make 6 cups)

4 1/2 cups sugar

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (Meyer lemon is preferred)

1 box Sure-Jell Reduced Sugar Pectin

4 jam jars with lids and screw bands

PREPARATION:

Place three 16-oz. jars and one 8-oz. jar in a large pot, cover with water and bring to a boil. Simmer for 10 minutes and turn off heat and keep jars in the hot water until time to use. Place jar lids and screw top bands in a small pot, cover with water and bring to a boil then turn off the heat. Keep lids in the hot water until time to use. Split apricots in half and then dice finely until you have 6 cups of chopped fruit.

Measure the sugar into a large bowl and mix 1/4 cup of the sugar with the pectin in a smaller bowl.

Add the chopped fruit, sugar/pectin mixture and the lemon juice to a medium saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring, over medium-high heat. Follow the jam making instructions to bring the fruit mixture to a full, rolling boil, then add the remaining sugar. Stir in the sugar and continue stirring constantly until it reaches a full rolling boil again for 1 minute. Turn off the heat, skim off any foam, and ladle the hot jam into the hot jars, wipe the rims and seal tightly.

For this recipe, go to: <https://fortheLoveofApricots.com/2016/06/now-what-do-i-do-with-all-these-apricots/>

For the Love of Apricots is a feast for the eyes as well as the soul. Beautiful food photography blends with images of California's apricot orchards; from today as well as not so long ago, when fruit orchards covered much of the Santa Clara Valley landscape. Reflections on what the famed Valley of Heart's Delight was like, how it changed, and what remains, add Lisa's personal memories and perspective to the cookbook. The recipes use apricots in every form: fresh, dried, preserves, and liqueurs so you can enjoy the wonderful taste, brilliant color, and health benefits of apricots all year long.

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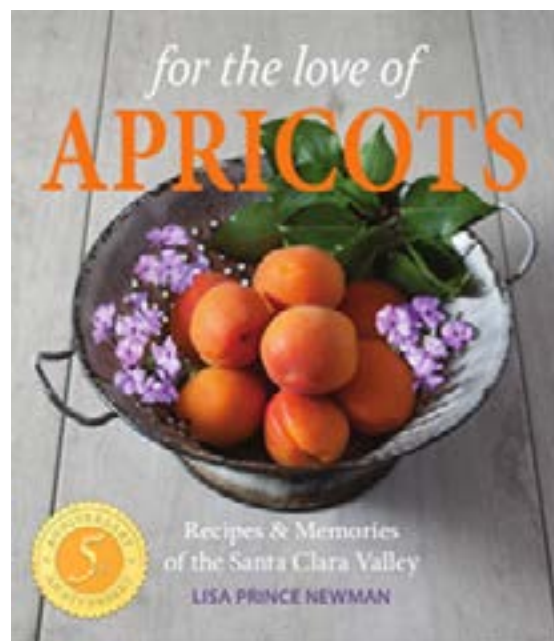
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Check Lisa's YouTube video about For The Love of Apricots, Valley of Heart's Delight & Silicon Valley at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyTZ7dNtJ38>



Books

Author Rebecca Gopoian Releases New Book, *First Rule of Fire*

NEW YORK — In May, Nauset Press released the debut novel *First Rule of Fire* by author Rebecca Gopoian.

The book is an intergenerational story told in three narratives, spanning from the Ottoman Empire 1914 at the start of the Armenian Genocide to suburban New Jersey 1982. Based in part on real diaries, the book explores how one family builds hope and resilience from the roots of trauma.

“This book has been a very long time coming. I began working on it over ten years ago while teaching full time and caring for my two kids. I snuck in my research and writing when I could find time here and there. I actually wrote a good bit of this book while commuting from my home in Queens to my job in the Bronx. When time was



Rebecca Gopoian

really tight, I maintained a goal of writing one sentence per day. Eventually, I finished the book and found a publisher who wanted to help me put it into the world. So, I’m very excited to share *First Rule of Fire* with interested readers,” Gopoian said. Gopoian said an impetus in her writing was her family history. Her mother was raised Orthodox Jewish and married her Armenian father, causing a major upheaval in the family. “My mother’s parents didn’t attend the wedding and didn’t speak to her for years afterward. As a kid, I was fascinated by this dramatic turn of events, and I wondered what it meant about me that I was the product of this union that was also a painful rupture,” she said.

Gopoian added, “I was aware that my grandparents on both sides had been through horrible things, but they didn’t talk about it, and it never occurred to me to ask. Occasionally, a little piece of information would seep out, one horrific detail that I couldn’t stop thinking about or make sense of. My grandparents’ experiences were so far away from my reality. After all, I was living a relatively safe and privileged life as a middle class white kid in suburban New Jersey. *First Rule of Fire* was born out of this dissonant experience: trying to make sense of my family’s painful history from a vantage point of relative comfort.”

The structure of the book helps to convey that dissonance. There are three interwoven narratives:

The first part begins in Eastern Turkey, 1914. We follow Jivan, a 14-year-old kid whose life starts to fall apart as the Genocide gets going.

The second part jumps forward to 1928, and we follow Araxie, Jivan’s future wife, a Genocide survivor who has made it to America and is adjusting to her new life with her husband and child, while remembering what happened in Turkey.

The third part jumps much further ahead to 1981, when we follow the 13-year-old Miriam, granddaughter of Jivan and Araxie, half-Armenian and half-Jewish, as she fumbles through her awkward adolescence.

She added, “For me, including Miriam’s story among the others was essential. The chapters alternate between these three characters, so you’re with Jivan barely avoiding a massacre, and then you’re with Araxie giving her child a bath, and then you’re with Miriam figuring out how to talk to a boy after school. It’s sometimes awkward moving between these stories, but I hope that the way the



book is written draws out connections between the characters’ experiences in an interesting way.”

Aida Zilelian, author of *All the Ways We Lied*, offered the following description of the book: “Sweeping across timelines, *First Rule of Fire* sends us on a voyage of memory, loss and innocence. The short chapters seem to burst from one moment to the next with tenderness, pain and warmth. *First Rule of Fire* tells us that no matter our past, the love of family can mend what has been lost.”

Rebecca Gopoian received her MFA in Writing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is the author of a poetry chapbook, *Terrible Person*, and a book-length poem, *Two*, about becoming a mother for the second time. Rebecca lives in Queens and teaches English at Hostos Community College in the Bronx.

10

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BAIKAR WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

SAVE *the* DATE

10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2026

ST LEON CHURCH HALL
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Details to follow!

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Tekeyan Cultural Association
Metro Los Angeles Chapter



FAMILY FUN DAY

Saturday, August 29, 2026, 6:30 PM
Angel Stadium of Anaheim
Fireworks after the game
\$33 per ticket
Purchasing deadline: Sunday, August 23, 2026
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Zelle: info@tekeyanla.org
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ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

AUGUST 23 — CELEBRATING WHAT UNITES US! Highlights Barbados. Sunday at 4pm Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Sunday at 4pm .in collaboration with the City of Boston Office of Immigrant Advancement RSVP appreciated, hello@armenianheritagepark.org

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 12 — The Massachusetts Chamber Music Artists will present "Crossroad," a concert, at Follen Church, 755 Massachusetts Ave., Lexington, at 7 p.m. Performers will be Haig Hovspeian on violin, Ismael Guererro on cello and Matias Cuevas on piano. The program will feature Armenian composer Gayane Chebotaryan's Piano Trio, followed by Astor Piazzolla's The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires and conclude with Brahms' Piano Trio No. 1. Tickets are \$15 through \$30, depending on age. For more info, visit mcmartists.org.

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 17 — Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter presents "Arshile Gorky: Between the Figural and Abstract," an illustrated talk by Kim Servart Theriault. Thurs., 7 p.m., Baikar Building, 755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more info, email tcadirector@aol.com.

SEPTEMBER 19 — Daughters of Vartan Merrimack Valley Chapter fundraiser, jewelry classes with Karine Abgaryan. Two sessions: Gold collection 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., and Silver Armenian Coin Collection, 2 to 4 p.m. Each session \$50. St. Gregory's Church Hall, 158 Main St., North Andover. RSVP Naro Khandjian at 339-927-8603. All ages welcome.

SEPTEMBER 19 — Join the 15th Annual New England Walk for Life sponsored by the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry New England Chapter. Saturday. Registration 10.30 a.m., start 11.30 a.m. from St. James Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center, 564 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, to Faire on the Square, Saltonstall Park, Watertown. Registration Fee, \$30; \$15 for students and children. Proceeds benefit ABMDR. For info and to register, visit www.abmdr.am/ne.walk or call 617-331-0426.

SEPTEMBER 19 — CELEBRATE ARMENIA! Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Saturday, 1pm-8pm. Joyful celebration of culture, tradition and heritage through music, dance, cuisine. Storytelling and community in honor of Armenian Independence Day. 1pm-8pm.rain date: September 27

SEPTEMBER 24 — Celebrating Contributions! Gala to benefit the Armenian Heritage Park's Endowed Fund for Care and Maintenance. Honoring Raffi and Nina Festekjian, Distinguished Leaders in Philanthropy, Business, and the Arts. InterContinental Boston, 6 p.m. Reception. 7 p.m. Dinner and Program. For reservations:ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Support or email: hello@armenianheritagepark.org

OCTOBER 24 — The New England Couples Ministry, Saturday, at 5 p.m., will hold a special program, titled "Willing the Good of the Other: Marriage

Through Every Season," which will offer encouragement, practical wisdom, and Christ-centered teaching for building stronger, healthier relationships. Beautiful evening of dinner, music, fellowship, and inspiring teaching with Rev. Nareg Terterian. Whether you are married, engaged, dating, or single, all are welcome. Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, 200 Lexington St., Belmont. \$50 per person. To RSVP or more info, call 617-229-9294.

OCTOBER 25 — "Voices Across Time: Armenian Piano Music: A Homage to Robert Mirak," Piano Recital and CD Launch by Alessandra Pompili. Works by Stephen Minas, Alan Hovhaness, Emanuel Melik-Aslanian, Loris Tjeknavorian, Komitas, George Gurdjieff, Diane Goolkasian Rahbee, Aram Khachaturian, and Koharik Gazarossian. Armenian Cultural Foundation, Arlington, Sunday at 5 p.m. Free and Open to the Public - Reception to follow.

NOVEMBER 13 —Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) Boston's Child Care Committee presents an evening in support of the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School in Yerevan. The event will feature Manet-Miriam, star of "La Voix" (The Voice) Canada, with special guest Melanya Geghamyan, founding principal of the Avedisian School. 6 p.m. Dinner and live auction. Wellesley Country Club, Wellesley Hills. For more info and reservations visit: <https://amaa.org/hyeminds2026/>

NOVEMBER 15 — GIVING THANKS! TOGETHER IN CELEBRATION. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Sunday at 2pm./Meet & Greet. Share the Warmth: Bring a Winter Hat, Scarf or Gloves for the ABCD Winter Drive, Seasonal Refreshments. RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

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.

DECEMBER 6 — CANDLELIT LABYRINTH WALK: IN PEACE & HARMONY Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Sunday at 4:45pm. Meet & Greet. Walk the Candlelit Labyrinth Walk. Enjoy Hot Chocolate & Sweet Treats. RSVP appreciated. hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

RHODE ISLAND

OCTOBER 24 — The Cultural committee presents Dinner Dance Honoring the 1st Anniversary of Rev. Fr. Sahak Gabrielyan, Priest of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church. Featuring the music of; Ken Kalajian (guitar), Charles Kalajian (percussion), Leon Janikian (clarinet), Harry Bedrossian (oud & vocal). Cocktail Hour 6-7 p.m., Dinner 7 p.m., Dance 8-11 p.m. Saturday, Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson St., Providence. For tickets please call: Zara Vartanian (401) 439 -5971, Elvira Hovagimian (860) 462- 3610. Tickets \$ 60 (\$ 75 after October 18).

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.

A Perennial Void: Siran Seza's *Letters*

LETTERS, from page 13

always be a stain on my soul," she confides to Nerses. Later on, the wife and mother chides her husband for "always being absent," and pleads with him to come back. (At the time, Nerses was working in Kirkuk, Iraq, while Seza was in Beirut with their son Vahakn). "I think only of Vahakn . . . that child grew up isolated . . . without the presence of a father . . . It breaks my heart," she writes to Nerses.

The anguished Seza probes "the depths of her soul . . . which are as splendid and divine as are lofty heights." In a letter to Vahe-Vahian, she writes: "Whoever said that virtue resides in the highest places?" What the feeble girl, "so totally weary of life," to borrow Shoushanian's words, uncovers in those "deep caverns" is a world of pain and unhappiness—"There is always torture in my djagadakeer . . . Today I'm very nervous and sad," she writes to Nerses. It may well have been this immense capacity to suffer that endeared the *pari*

aghchig to some of the foremost literary figures of her time. It should not be difficult to empathize with a woman willing to "isolate herself to search her soul" so she can find meaning in life.

Siran Seza's *Letters* leave the reader wondering why the naturally talented writer did not devote herself to literature to write the song of her suffering. "You talk too much about yourself . . . life is difficult . . . complaining is not enough to alleviate our moral misery . . . if you must talk, express your sorrow through literature," advises Shoushanian. Indeed, Astine, the fearless protagonist of *The Book of Genesis*, the posthumously published novel Seza wrote late in life — the novel is based on her life experiences and memories of the events and the people of Constantinople, the city she lived in until her early 20s — is the perfect embodiment of the adolescent Seza. Devoting herself to the creation of imaginary characters might have helped steer the unhappy girl away from her per-

sonal pain.

It is interesting to note that the iconic advocate of a woman's rights and her independence — Seza is best known for publishing the pioneering journal *The Young Armenian Woman* in Beirut, Lebanon, in the years 1932-1968, at times with long interruptions — emerges in the letters as a staunch supporter of traditional Armenian family values. (The two are certainly not contradictory). Having the approval of Nerses's mother for their union is very important to her. Her own mother's well-being is always a priority. The *azniv* and *pari mayrig* is, in fact, ever present in her letters.

If one were to read the *Letters* with no biases, one could perhaps sympathize with the oversensitive girl trapped in what she perceives as "a difficult life." Rather than a threat to our values, Seza's many refreshing comments invite reflection on our own life choices and priorities. "The roads are often similar. It is only at their end that we realize we took the wrong road," writes the

ever-dissatisfied Siran. It may well be that it was life itself the unhappy girl was "flirting" with to find the peace she yearned for but never found.

"Unchecked freedom is ultimately always costly . . . yet sooner or later every mistake gets atoned for," writes Shoushanian in his January 28, 1938 letter to *Sireli* Siran. One can only hope that time will help shift the focus from the "gossip" Seza ironically cautions Nerses not to expose himself to — "It would be a stain on your reputation" — to the literary merit of the *Letters* — notwithstanding idiosyncrasies their editor Kevork Yazedjian highlights in his Introductory Note and their value as documentation of the concerns of the post-Genocide generation of intellectuals living in exile, as well as the social and cultural life of the Armenian communities in the diaspora.

Seza's personal archives are housed in the Yeghishe Charentz Museum of Literature and Art in Yerevan, Armenia.



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**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
— SINCE 1932 —



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COMMENTARY

Russia No Longer Attracts Armenian Migrant Workers as They Turn to Europe

By Gayane Mkrtychyan

The geography of labor migration from Armenia is changing. Russia, which until recently remained the main destination, has become less attractive. The main reasons are Russia's economic downturn, driven by the war in Ukraine, and the depreciation of the ruble.

Many migrants are now returning from Russia to Armenia. Some are trying to find work in their home villages or in the capital, while others are looking for new opportunities, particularly in Europe. The direction of labor migration is changing, with European countries becoming increasingly popular.

After two years working at a meat-processing plant in Poland, 40-year-old Serob (name changed) returned to Armenia for a month. He came to prepare all the necessary documents and take his wife and children with him to Warsaw.

"I received a three-year residence permit and the right to work. Living away from my family is difficult. I decided that we should be together. I should also say that Poland has become one of the first steps towards the European labor market for many people. Many of my friends work in the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and other countries on legal work visas. I was also offered a job in the Netherlands, but I decided to stay in Poland," he says.

Serob is a butcher. He was also in demand in Armenia. However, he says his salary there was not enough to support his family:

"I had friends who worked as butchers in Europe. They told me that the profession was in demand there and well paid. Gradually, I started thinking: why not try going to Europe and working there? I also had a lot of debts and loans. I went to Poland on a work visa. The process moved slowly. The Polish embassy invited me for an interview a year after I submitted my application."

A recruitment agency then sent his details to a meat-processing company. Representatives of the company interviewed Serob online. During the video call, he demonstrated his professional skills to the employer, including how he deboned meat.

"The employer liked my work and sent me a contract and the necessary documents. The embassy then approved my work visa. At first, I lived in a house in Poland with people of different nationalities. They all worked for the same company and lived in separate rooms. Later, when my financial situation improved, I moved into a separate flat with a friend from Armenia. I sent most of my earnings to my family to help resolve our financial problems. I did not work in a shop or at a market. I worked at a specialised meat-processing plant with refrigerated storage facilities. It is physically demanding work," the butcher says.

He notes a shortage of butchers in the European labor market, which creates demand for migrants with the necessary skills. Meat-processing plants employ workers from Ukraine, Argentina, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

"Many Armenians are now going to European countries for work. And not only to meat-processing plants. When I flew to Poland, I met some women who worked as pastry chefs on the plane. They were also travelling to Poland under legal employment contracts. Many Armenians also work in shops. These are people who speak foreign languages. In any case, I am happy. I will return to work in a month, this time with my family," Serob says.

Working at a German Medical Clinic with an Armenian Degree

Doctors, teachers and highly skilled professionals in various fields are also in demand on the European labor market. Dentist Edgar Mirzoyan has been living and working in Germany for nine months.

"One day, my nurse told me that her friend worked in Germany and that they might need a dentist. I simply gave her my contact details and forgot about it. Some time later, they contacted me. At the same time, I started learning German. The whole process took two years: learning the language, preparing documents and taking exams. Finally, I moved to Germany. By the way, getting my Armenian degree recognised in Germany seemed more realistic and achievable than in other European countries," Edgar says.

At the same time, the 30-year-old dentist studied not only the professional requirements but also the overall situation in the country, including its economy, level of safety and even happiness index.

"Geography also influenced my final decision. It was important for me to stay connected to Armenia. You can get from Germany to Armenia in just a few hours. In this sense, Europe was a much more convenient destination for me than, for example, Canada. Before moving to Germany, I had a completely different idea of what it would be like. Of course, everyone's experience is different. Some doctors who arrived at the same time as me had a much harder journey. A lot depends on which city you move to, who your employer is and who you interact with. Everyone has

their own experience," he says.

Edgar started working two days after arriving in Germany. Sometime later, his wife also joined him.

"Before moving to Germany, I registered in advance to take a language exam. They tested my knowledge of medical German. I passed the exam successfully. After that, I received a temporary license valid for two years. I can work during this period, but I must work under the supervision of an experienced doctor.

However, the process of having my degree fully recognized is still under way. The authorities compare my entire university curriculum, the number of hours I completed and the subjects I studied with the German curriculum. I applied for this process while I was still in Armenia. They only started reviewing my documents after two years of waiting. If they find differences between the curricula, I will have to make up the gaps. It is not yet clear how significant those differences will be," the doctor says.

According to Edgar, working in Germany has its own particularities. Berlin is a multicultural city, and his patients include not only Germans. About 30 per cent are Armenians and Yazidis, while another 30 per cent are Russians and Ukrainians.

Edgar continues to practice in Armenia as well: "I can take leave twice a year. I come to Armenia, mainly perform implant procedures and surgeries, and then return to Germany. I have many patients who wait for me to come back. They book appointments in advance, I come and perform the surgery, and the next stage of treatment takes place three to six months later, when I can return again."

When Labor Migration Is a Family Choice

For many people who move to Europe, leaving is a decision about their family's future, improving their living conditions and trying to build a new life in a different environment.

Vergine (name changed) chose this path. She has lived in the Czech Republic with her husband for seven years and now has two children.

"First, my husband moved to Prague on a work visa. He started working in the security department of a shopping center. Two years later, I joined him. We made the decision consciously, after carefully considering everything. We wanted to settle down and continue our lives in a European country. In this sense, the Czech Republic seemed like a suitable option, and we are very happy with our choice," Vergine says.

Before moving to the Czech Republic, the couple worked at Zvartnots Airport.

"At first, I worked at a language center as an English teacher. Then my second child was born here. Of course, there were many difficulties. We lived in a foreign country without support from relatives and with a small child, but we managed. I now work as an English teacher at a school," she says.

The young family does not plan to return to Armenia for now, but they regularly visit their relatives.

"We have the right to live and work here, but I am sure that one day we will definitely return," Vergine says.

Changing Migration Patterns

According to Tatevik Bezhanian, an expert with the migration program of the charitable organization Armenian Caritas, Armenia currently has no statistics showing how many people leave for European countries to work.

One reason is that Armenia has no intergovernmental labor migration agreements with EU countries. Bulgaria is the only exception. In addition, most people who leave for Europe find jobs through private recruitment agencies, and the state does not register this process.

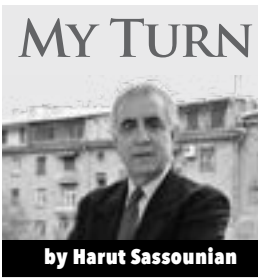
"You will not find this data in official statistics. On the other hand, we also do not have a migration card system under which people have to state when entering or leaving the country that they are going abroad to work. They may not indicate the purpose of their departure at all," Bezhanian says.

She says this problem is not unique to Armenia. Internationally, governments mainly register migrant workers arriving in their countries because they can manage these migration flows. Countries that pursue targeted labor migration policies, sign bilateral agreements and organize the recruitment of their citizens abroad usually have comprehensive data on those who leave. The Philippines and Uzbekistan are among them, for example.

Tatevik Bezhanian notes that even when Armenian authorities want information about labor migrants leaving for Russia, they have to rely on official Russian statistics:

"If the geography of labor migration expands, we will have to approach the relevant authorities in countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands. We will need to obtain data and determine how many Armenian citizens work there."

(This analysis originally appeared on the webstie Jam-news.net on August 14.)



Erdogan’s Denial of Genocide Attracts More Attention to Turkish Mass Crimes

(Second and final part)

Last week, I exposed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s totally false statement: “Our history contains no genocide, no massacres, no oppression, and no colonialism. Throughout our thousands of years of glorious history, there has been only justice and compassion.”

To counter Erdogan’s lies, I presented the first part of the list of crimes committed by the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey, prepared by The Hellenic Canadian Research Institute.

Here is the second and final list of the Turkish crimes:

Refuting the ‘No Colonialism’ Claim: Modern Settlement and Occupations

Erdogan’s claim that Turkey’s history contains “no colonialism” is flatly contradicted by the fact that both the Seljuk and Ottoman Empires were founded on territorial conquest, subjugation, and long term colonial occupation. Furthermore, the modern Turkish Republic continues to orchestrate ongoing policies of military occupation, resource expropriation, demographic engineering, and state directed settlement projects beyond its borders:

• Illegal Occupation and Settler Colonialism in Northern Cyprus (1974–Present)

Following its military invasion of Cyprus in 1974, Ankara established a de facto partition of the island that has now entered its sixth decade. The Turkish government implemented an aggressive campaign of demographic engineering, forcing 170,000-200,000 indigenous Greek Cypriots from their ancestral homes in the north. To permanently alter the territory, Turkey initiated a state-sponsored population transfer, importing tens of thousands of mainland Turkish settlers in violation of the Geneva Convention.

• Neo-Colonialism in Northern Syria (2016–Present)

During the Syrian civil war, the Turkish military launched successive operations to occupy a 30-kilometer-deep buffer zone in northern Syria -- a textbook case of transformative military occupation with distinct neo-colonial patterns. Central to this strategy is a systematic process of administrative and cultural erasure, in which Turkey brought local Syrian health, education, and judicial sectors directly under the bureaucratic control of the Hatay governorate inside Turkey. Under this centralized authority, school curricula were forcefully changed to Turkish, the Turkish Lira was introduced as the primary currency, and indigenous Kurdish street names and cultural holidays were strictly banned.

• Military Intervention in Artsakh (2020-2023)

Turkey’s contemporary regional ambitions have heavily shaped the map of the South Caucasus, utilizing modern military force to directly alter local demographics. During the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, Turkey provided decisive, direct military, intelligence, and logistical support to Azerbaijan. Turkish senior military personnel directed operational planning while advanced drones were deployed to obliterate Armenian defenses. The resulting military

victory by Baku successfully broke a three decade stalemate, directly paving the way for the total exodus and ethnic cleansing of around 120,000 indigenous Armenians from Artsakh in 2023.

• Bombing of Kurdish Infrastructure in Syria and Iraq (2023)

October 2023: Ankara launched an intense, devastating campaign of air and drone strikes against Kurdish regions in Syria and Iraq, damaging vital humanitarian infrastructure, including water pumping stations, electricity plants, oil refineries, and domestic gas facilities. Highlighting the sheer scale of the offensive, human rights organizations reported over 1,000 individual airstrikes carried out in Iraq by mid-2024.

• Legalized Silence: Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code

The acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide is prohibited by the Turkey’s judicial apparatus. The primary legal mechanism used to punish dissidents, journalists, and academics who attempt to discuss these historical atrocities is Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code.

Article 301 criminalizes the act of publicly “insulting the Turkish Nation, the State of the Republic of Turkey or the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.” Anyone convicted under this law faces a prison sentence ranging from six months to two years. The law has been used aggressively to target individuals who publicly use the word “genocide” or publish works detailing the massacres of minorities. Prominent intellectuals, including Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuk, were prosecuted under this statute for mentioning the mass killings of Armenians and Kurds. Similarly, peace activist Yannis Vasilis Yaylali was imprisoned for two years for commemorating the victims of the Armenian and Greek genocides.

The danger of this state-sponsored legal targeting was fully realized in the landmark case of Hrant Dink, a prominent Turkish-Armenian journalist. Dink was repeatedly prosecuted and convicted under Article 301 for his writings on the Armenian Genocide. The state’s public legal campaign painted him as a traitor, creating a hostile domestic environment that ultimately culminated in his assassination by an ultranationalist in 2007. Though the law was amended in 2008 to require explicit permission from the Ministry of Justice before filing a case, it remains a powerful tool of state censorship, effectively enforcing a state-approved history through fear.

• The Danger of Erdogan’s Moral Superiority and Selective Moralism

Erdogan, by asserting that Turkey’s past contains “only justice and compassion” effectively, erases the generational trauma and lived experiences of the millions of indigenous minorities who were systematically uprooted from Eastern Thrace, Anatolia, the Armenian Highlands, Cyprus, and the Levant.

Conclusion

Sweeping claims of historical perfection are the tools of political convenience, not historical reality. The transition of power across the late Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey is an undeniably complex, deeply scarred legacy that requires transparency, open archival access, and the courage to face dark chapters honestly. To truly heal these systemic wounds, Turkey should implement a Truth and Reconciliation process. Such a framework would allow the state to confront past state-sponsored injustices through public testimony, rigorous education, and official accountability, demonstrating that true justice and international credibility cannot be built on state-enforced silence. For Turkey, achieving genuine moral leadership on the world stage requires abandoning defensive political rhetoric and extending the same compassion it demands for victims abroad to the memory of the victims within its own historical ledger.

Armenian Assembly Concerned by Catholicos Trial

In a statement this week, the Armenian Assembly of America issued a statement expressing concern over the trial of the Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and six of his senior staff in Yerevan. The statement appears in full below:

The Armenian Assembly of America is deeply concerned by the criminal indictment of His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, together with senior members of the Supreme Spiritual Council, now pending before the Court of General Jurisdiction of Armavir Region.

The indictment arises from a dispute over the leadership of the Masyatsoth Diocese. The appointment and removal of bishops is not an ordinary administrative matter. It is an act of ecclesiastical governance, and it belongs to the canonical institutions of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

This is not a uniquely Armenian principle. Armenia is a member of the Council of Europe, and it is well established that the ability of religious communities to govern their own internal affairs is essential to a free society. Where a religious community is divided over matters of ecclesiastical governance, resolution should come from within the community rather than through criminal law.

The Assembly takes no position on the underlying dispute concerning the Masyatsoth Diocese, and no position on any question of canon law. Those questions belong to the institutions of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

We respect the Republic of Armenia as a sovereign democratic state, and we respect its Constitution, its laws, and the authority of its elected government. It is because those commitments matter that this prosecution warrants concern.

For centuries the Armenian Apostolic Church has carried our people through persecution, displacement, and genocide, serving as refuge and as the thread of continuity when little else survived. Its independence remains a matter of deep concern to Armenians everywhere, and it is in that spirit that the Assembly speaks.

The Armenian Assembly of America respectfully urges that the indictment be withdrawn, that this matter be resolved through the canonical processes of the Armenian Apostolic Church, and that the Church’s right to govern its own affairs be respected.

Saroyan, Shakespeare, and Lenin

By Raphael Hakopdjian

In the fall of 1978, I, then 29 and the artistic director of the Armenian National Theater, was visiting Moscow when my Armenian colleagues called me from Yerevan. They let me know that William Saroyan had just flown in from the U.S. The great novelist and playwright was interested in exploring the Moscow theater scene.

Back then, I had both personal and professional connections at all the Moscow theaters, so I was well aware of the latest theatrical innovations. I suggested we go see “Richard III,” directed by the Armenian Hrachya Ghaplanyan.

“Where are we going?” asked Saroyan. On that cold autumn day, he looked much younger than his 70 years.

“We’re going to the Vakhtangovites,” I replied. “The Vakhtangov Theater is one of the most famous theaters in Moscow. It was founded by Konstantin Stanislavsky’s favorite student, the Armenian Evgeny Vakhtangov.”

“But why akhtangov? Vakhtangov is not an Armenian last name!” Saroyan sounded vaguely irritated.

“Vakhtangov’s father, a tobacco magnate, changed it to sound more Russian,” I explained, “The director wasn’t even born then.”

“Well, then.” Saroyan made a hmm sound as we entered the theater lobby. The Vakhtangov’s director, Evgeny Simonov, was waiting to show us to our orchestra seats.

I had just enough time to say, “After Vakhtangov, another Armenian was the director of this theater: Ruben Simonov. This is his son and successor, Evgeniy.”

“So they were Simonyans originally,” Saroyan muttered grumpily. “Thank God that Kaplanyan did not change his name to Kaplanov, and you did not become Akopdzhanov. I once scolded a great artist for taking a non-Armenian pseudonym. Tell me, how is Arshile Gorky better than Vostanik Adoyan?”

Luckily, the play was starting, which saved us from further discussion. However, it did not save us from further conversation, as Saroyan immediately became very engrossed in the show. At the outset, he had a very strong reaction to Richard III’s opening monologue, telling me, “It’s so strange for me to hear “The Winter of Our Discontent” in Russian!” His response to subsequent scenes was so ebullient, that nearby audience members started to shush him. A nearby patron-most likely a KGB officer-told the shushers, “He can say whatever he wants.

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Turkish, Iranian Foreign Minister Speak As Erdogan Reaches out to Trump

TEHRAN (Armenpress) — Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan spoke by phone with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi this week, the Anadolu news agency reported citing foreign ministry sources.

The two discussed the latest developments in negotiations over reopening the Strait of Hormuz and maintaining the ceasefire, the sources said, according to Anadolu.

The call focused on the current status of the talks on both issues, according to the sources.

Fidan also held separate telephone calls with Iraqi Kurdistan President Nechirvan Barzani and Prime Minister Masrour Barzani to discuss the latest regional developments.

In addition, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan held a phone call with President Donald Trump, discussing bilateral relations as well as regional and global developments, Anadolu news agency reported citing the

Turkish government’s readout.

Erdogan told Trump that making maximum use of diplomacy amid tensions between Iran and the U.S. is “important,” expressing hope that negotiations will continue and saying that Türkiye will keep supporting peace efforts.

Erdogan said the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement signed earlier this month between Türkiye, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia “demonstrates a strong stance in ensuring regional stability and security.”

On Gaza, Erdogan said that at a time when the goal is to move to the second phase of the peace process, there has been an increase in actions by the Israeli government targeting Palestinians.

He added that “Türkiye will continue to support lasting peace in the region and steps to be taken for the reconstruction of Gaza,” according to the report.

Saroyan, Shakespeare, and Lenin

SAROYAN, from page 19

This is William Saroyan. Yes, the William Saroyan!”

Hearing his last name, Saroyan smiled broadly. “And here Steinbeck insisted that of all the writers in my generation, only Hemingway is well-known in the USSR. Ha! Funny, Steinbeck called his last true novel “The Winter of Our Discontent.” Soon, soon, my own winter will come.”

After the performance, the entire cast, largely comprised of actors famous throughout the Soviet Union, waited excitedly backstage for Saroyan. Saroyan spoke in Armenian, which I translated into Russian. The first person he spoke to was Mikhail Ulyanov, who played the title role.

“Are you related to Lenin?” he asked. (Lenin’s real last name was Ulyanov - R.A.)

“No, we’re just namesakes,” Mikhail Ulyanov answered in some confusion, obviously not expecting such a question.

“That can’t be right,” Saroyan shook his head. “You are a very talented actor!”

What did he mean by this paradoxical phrase? Was it barely hidden irony (Richard III-Lenin-Ulyanov), was it meant as sarcasm (a play about tyrants in a country

ruled by Communist dictatorship) or some sort of nod or acknowledgment of government status? Mikhail Ulyanov was a “People’s Artist of the USSR” and one of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev’s favorites.

I think it was an amalgam of causticity and wit, rapture and delight, absurd word association and volcanic temperament... in other words, everything that distinguishes Saroyan’s prose in American literature and in world literature. A great example of Saroyan’s minimalism!

(Raphael Hakopdjanian is a playwright, novelist and essayist. He was born in Yerevan in 1949. His plays have been staged in Armenia, Poland, and Russia. His novel Polish Islands was published in Polish (Warsaw). His dramatic works have appeared in Russian in the Moscow-based journal Sovremennaya Dramaturgiya (Contemporary Drama) and in Polish in the distinguished theatre journal Dialog. He is also the author of the book Armenian Journeys, and Russians in San Francisco as well as numerous articles and essays published in Russian, English, and Polish. This piece was translated into English by Irina Dianova.)

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