

‘Third Country’ Asked to Visit Armenian Prisoners In Azerbaijan

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia has asked a third country to have its diplomats visit Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan, the Foreign Ministry in Yerevan said on August 21.

The ministry revealed the request in comments to the Sputnik news agency. It did not name that “neutral” country or say whether Armenia has also asked Azerbaijan to allow such visits. It said only that Baku’s permission is necessary.



Attorney Siranush Sahakyan

“It’s not clear whether the third country has given its consent and whether an official application regarding the candidacy of that third country has been submitted to the Azerbaijani authorities,” said Siranush Sahakyan,

a Yerevan-based lawyer representing the prisoners in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

Sahakyan told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service that the Armenian government should answer these questions. She said that see PRISONERS, page 3

Pashinyan Receives Peace Prize in Germany

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WIESBADEN, Germany — On August 20 it was announced that Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan has been chosen as the recipient of the 2026 Hessian Peace Prize. The news was released in the Hessian Landtag (regional parliament) in the state capital Wiesbaden. The prize, awarded by the Albert Osswald Foundation (named after its founder, a former Hessian governor), is given to people in recognition of their contribution to understanding among peoples and peace. Regional and national media carried the news prominently.

Landtag president and member of the foundation’s board of trustees Astrid Wallmann of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), said in her announcement that Pashinyan had been chosen in recognition of the progress in peace efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Such progress sent “clear a signal of understanding and the development of non-violent perspectives for solving the conflict.” He is also being lauded for his efforts towards democratic reform since 2018, reflected as well in Armenia’s rapprochement with the European Union.

see PASHINYAN, page 5



Pashinyan Vows to Step Up EU Membership Efforts

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on August 24 pledged to speed up his pursuit of Armenia’s membership in the European Union in response to growing pressure from Russia.

But Pashinyan indicated that he is still in no rush to hold a referendum on joining the EU or remaining part of a Russian-led trade bloc essential for the Armenian economy.



Parliament session on August 24

Russian President Vladimir Putin first called for such a referendum following two European summits held in Yerevan in early May. The leaders of the three other EEU member states — Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan — backed the demand in a joint statement with Putin adopted during a May 29 summit boycotted by Pashinyan.

see EU, page 4

Kocharyan Arrested After Heated Parliament Exchange

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Robert Kocharyan, a former Armenian president leading one of the country’s main opposition groups, was arrested on Tuesday August 25, the day after his younger son Levon bitterly argued with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in the parliament.



Kocharyan was taken into custody in the morning as law-enforcement officers searched his home, the apartments of Levon and his older son Sedrak as well as the offices of businesses owned by them. Sedrak Kocharyan and four other individuals were also arrested as a result.

see KOCHARYAN, page 6

Moderna and Merck Say Experimental Vaccine Prevents Return And Spread of Cancer in High-Risk Melanoma Patients

By Carolyn Y. Johnson

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (New York Times) — An experimental mRNA vaccine allowed people with high-risk melanoma to live longer, cancer-free, the pharmaceutical companies Moderna and Merck announced Wednesday, August 19.

For decades, cancer vaccines have been one of the most tantalizing ideas

in cancer treatment — offering the hope of harnessing a person’s own immune system to attack tumors.

“It’s a big deal,” said Dr. Elias Sayour, a pediatric oncologist at the University of Florida, who was not involved in the trial. The results, he said, “could help usher a whole new wave of new therapeutic treatments for cancer.”

see MODERNA, page 12



ARMENIA Memories of Artsakh

Page 3



CALIFORNIA Hye Geen Addresses Needs of Menopausal Women at ‘Thrive in Wellness’ Program

Page 10



ITALY Armenians Well Represented in Venice Art Scene This Summer

Page 13





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Armenia's Economic Activity Grows 6.5 percent in July

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenia's economic activity grew 6.5 percent in July 2026 compared with the same month last year. Compared with the previous month, economic activity increased by 4.6 percent.

Construction output grew 26.5 percent in July compared with the same month last year, while the services sector grew 17 percent and industry increased 3.1 percent, according to data released by the Armenian government.

Trade turnover decreased by 0.1 percent during the same period.

In July 2026, compared with the same month last year, Armenia's foreign trade turnover increased by 6.7 percent. Exports decreased by 15.7 percent, while imports increased by 21.5 percent.

At the same time, inflation stood at 4.5 percent.

Armenia, Azerbaijan Discuss Cross-border Electricity Cooperation

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Representatives of Armenia's Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure and the Armenian Electric Power System Operator met with representatives of Azerbaijan's Ministry of Energy and AzerEnergy in Lachin on August 25.

The sides discussed possibilities for electricity imports and exports between the two countries, as well as options for interconnecting their energy infrastructure across the state border.

PM: New Constitution Should Omit Reference To Independence Declaration

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on August 24 that the country's new constitution should not refer to the 1990 Declaration of Independence, arguing that such a reference would signal a return to the logic of the Karabakh conflict.

Presenting his government's program to lawmakers, Pashinyan said the draft of the new constitution would be made public in the coming months.

He said the constitution should not include a reference to the Declaration of Independence because Armenia had already made a political decision to end the Karabakh movement, a decision he said had been endorsed by voters.

"Referencing the Declaration of Independence in the new constitution would mean continuing the Karabakh movement and returning to the logic of the conflict," Pashinyan said.

He added that Armenia could not return to that approach, particularly after the 2026 nationwide elections, which he described as a vote for a peace agenda.

Armenian Government Commits to Ousting Church Head

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The Armenian government has officially thrown its weight behind Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's yearlong campaign to depose Catholicos Karekin II, which opposition leaders and legal experts see as unconstitutional.

In its five-year policy program publicized late on August 20, the government pledged to "ensure the removal of the de facto head of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church" and "carry out the election" of his temporary replacement through an unspecified "established procedure."

Pashinyan has been trying to do that since June 2025. He began pressuring Karekin to resign after the Catholicos accused Azerbaijan of committing ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh and illegally occupying Armenian border areas during an international conference in Switzerland. Three Armenian archbishops and one bishop were arrested in the following months on different charges strongly denied by them. They were all moved to house arrest this year.

Law-enforcement authorities also indicted Karekin himself as well as six other senior clergymen in February. Earlier this month, they went on trial strongly condemned by Armenian opposition and Diaspora groups. The Catholicos has made it clear that he will not step down even if he is imprisoned.

Pashinyan's critics maintain that his campaign constitutes a gross violation of Armenian constitutional provisions guaranteeing the autonomy of the ancient church and its separation from the state. In an August 7 statement, the World Council of Churches (WCC) similarly deplored the "undue interference" in its internal affairs.



Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II

Pashinyan has used different lines of attack on the church during his campaign praised by Azerbaijani officials. He said until December that Karekin and other top clerics at odds with him must go because they had secret sex affairs in breach of their vows of celibacy. He then began accusing them of spying for a foreign country, presumably Russia. He did not offer any proof of the allegation dismissed by Moscow.

The government's action plan, which is due to be debated by the Armenian parliament next week, says that Karekin's removal is necessary for ensuring the country's "spiritual security" and neutralizing "at-

tempts by external forces to turn the Church into a base for hybrid warfare." It does not name those forces.

Pashinyan's Civil Contract party added a pledge to oust Karekin to its campaign manifesto for the parliamentary elections held on June 7. The church's Mother See in Echmiadzin condemned the "unlawful" move.

"The election of the Catholicos and any changes in Church life fall exclusively within the spiritual-canonical sphere and are therefore beyond the competence of political parties and state authorities," it said in an April 9 statement.

Service Armenia Celebrates Successful Summer Program

LOS ANGELES/YEREVAN — From July 4 to July 23, 2026, a group of 11 young people traveled to Armenia for the Service Armenia program, spending three weeks volunteering, touring, and experiencing Armenian culture. The program welcomed participants ages 17 to 22 coming together to serve communities throughout the country.

During their three-week stay, the Service Armenia group completed several service projects supporting children, families,

schools, and community organizations. Participants took children from the Yerevan Children's Home and the Kharper Home for Special Children on outings to amusement parks and playgrounds, providing them with an opportunity to enjoy a day of fun and activities outside of their facilities.

The group also completed renovation work at Knights of Vartan School 106, helping renovate the school's third floor. In addition, participants distributed backpacks and shoes to children at the Debi Arach

Children's Center, packed and delivered groceries to families through the Groceries for Gyumri initiative, and repainted the playground at Meds Masrik Kindergarten.

One participant, Sevana Martin, stated "The service work we did made it hard for me to imagine going back to Armenia and not doing something similar." While another participant, Lori Hovsepian, said "I found the service projects to be extremely impactful because I was able to better understand the livelihoods of Armenian people living under difficult conditions. It sparked empathy within me to continue to serve for my community."

Alongside their service work, participants had the opportunity to travel throughout Armenia and experience the country's historic, religious, and cultural sites. The program combines hands-on service with educational and cultural activities, allowing young people to develop a deeper connection to Armenia while giving back to communities in need.

For more than a decade, the Service Armenia program has brought young people together from the diaspora to Armenia for meaningful service and cultural experiences. The program is open to young people ages 17 to 22, and welcomes both Armenian and non-Armenian participants who are interested in volunteering, exploring Armenia, and making a difference in the communities they visit. If interested in next summer's program, email peter@paros-foundation.org.



Service Armenia 2026 participants distributing backpacks and school supplies to the kids of Debi Arach in Gyumri



ARMENIA

Memories of Artsakh

By Marut Vanyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — This morning, over coffee, I show Rustam from Ashtarak a photo that I found by chance last evening while scrolling through Facebook memories and ask: “Can you tell me what this is, Rustam?”

“Hive frame, beeswax!, he answers after a moment’s look and continues. There are beekeepers in Ashtarak, when the blossoming ends, they move the hive bodies to the mountains of Aparan, and then bring them back in season. “It’s a drone, Rustam. The wing of a drone more precisely”, I explain.



Half ton bombs dropped on Stepanakert during the first Karabakh war. They were kept as a “souvenir” at the HALO Trust office (Marut Vanyan photo)

When it hits the target, thousands of the little balls scatter with the effect of hunting pallet shot. “It’s like a Hive frame,” Rustam says, bringing his head closer to my laptop. “I think they use these in Ukraine and Russia now,” Rustam guesses. What bees are making, what humans...”, Rustam sighs. “Hive frame” was delivered by Azerbaijan in 2020.

As a child I remember how much we played with explosives during the first Karabakh war. We didn’t have a yellow excavator or a sports cars for children, after all. We would simply ask for bullets from soldiers (*fidayis*) we met on the street, some would give them, others would refuse. They carried two bullets on their chest harness belt, for the last shot. “Better the last shot but never Azerbaijani captivity.” We would

stand one bullet vertically on the ground, spilling the gunpowder of the other next to it, light it and rejoice in the explosion. It was hilarious when the fighter jet flew too low above Stepanakert. A 10-year-old child can’t understand that it was about to drop a half-ton bomb. We had invented another “fun” game. I don’t know what kind of gunpowder it was, but it really looked like spaghetti. We would light it, it would crackle and jump across the asphalt. However, our “games” were put to an end by my childhood friend’s father, who was a boxing trainer. Once this my friend had made a homemade grenade that had fascinated all

the children in the yard, and we all went to the half-built garage to exploded it. We did and fortunately, no one was hurt. But we were punished by the boxing trainer. Listening the sound of the explosion, he went out onto the balcony and ordered everyone to step up to his house without exception. He lined us up in the hallway, and began to slap us one by one. No one could avoid the blows of the master of sports. However, we were lucky but unfortunately, there were many accidents among children because of this kind “toys” and “games.”

During the same years, the boxing trainer’s apartment, on the fifth floor of the soviet apartment block was destroyed by “Grad” multiple rocket launcher projectiles of which was stored in Ghazanchetsots Cathedral’s undercroft in Shushi, but he couldn’t

punish them. Thus ended the first Karabakh war.

After the first Karabakh war, thanks to the diaspora, all the buildings destroyed by the shelling were renovated in Stepanakert. When foreigners visited, they could not believe that this city had been bombed and shelled for two years. However, buildings without external plaster and exposed bricks reminded about those years.

“Even a rake hits you in the forehead”

This is what a man in Karabakh said, hinting that if Azerbaijan buys so much weapons, eventually it will hit someday. Many people kept repeating that Karabakh is a “powder keg” and it will explode sooner or later anyway. However, until you hear the sound of the explosion, you can’t believe it (sometimes it’s hard to believe even after hearing the explosion).

The man was right, the “rake hit” on September 27, 2020. Right in the yard of the boxing trainer’s yard, where our apartment was, as well. It was early in the morning, around 7 o’clock. My neighbor ran out and said in the air or to himself “the war has begun!”. The whole yard was full of lightbulb holder-like explosives, from which yellow and purple ribbons are tied. Only later did I read on Wikipedia that it was “Smerch”



Cars queue at the Upper Lars checkpoint. Photos via Telegram channel Ostorozhno, Novosti. (Marut Vanyan photo)

“smerch” rockets, whether it was forests, villages, or towns. The region had turned into a minefield.

It is meaningless to remind readers of the end of Armenian Karabakh, since much has been written about it. Simply, any Karabakh



Khrmort kids, 2020 (Marut Vanyan photo)

long-range rockets. The rocket explodes in the air, scattering “lightbulb holders” over an area the size of two football fields, and the rocket itself, like a pipe, falls on a building or simply sticks into the ground. Its sound is more terrifying than the damage it causes. The glasses of all the windows in our apartment block were cracked and shattered, half inside the room, half outside. The entire territory of Karabakh was full of

Armenian today, while watching the traffic jams in Upper Lars, cannot help but remember the Berdzor road, when seeing Russian and Ukrainian apartment blokes being destroyed by drones, cannot help but remember how hundreds of young people died in Karabakh from a single drone strike, seeing the black mushroom of smoke from Russian fuel depots, cannot help but remember the explosion of Haykazov’s fuel depot.



Secondary School N10 in Stepanakert after shelling. 2020 (Marut Vanyan photo)

‘Third Country’ Asked to Visit Armenian Prisoners

PRISONERS, from page 1

organizing third-party visits is “extremely important” now because the 19 captives, among them eight former leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh, have been essentially held incommunicado for more than a year.

Up until last year, the Azerbaijani authorities allowed representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to periodically visit them to inspect their detention conditions, inquire about their health and arrange phone calls between them and their families. The Red Cross lost that exclusive access after being forced to close its mission in Azerbaijan in September 2025. The ECHR later ordered Baku to submit such information to the Strasbourg court.

In an audio statement communicated to his family by phone and publicized on Wednesday, one of the former Karabakh leaders, Davit Babayan, said he and some of the other prisoners are suffering from “serious health problems.” He did not elaborate.

Last month, the wife of Lyudvig Mkrtchian, who was taken prisoner by Azerbaijanis during the 2020 war in Karabakh, expressed serious concern about what she described as a sharp deterioration of his health. She is able to periodically talk to him by phone.

Prospects for the prisoners’ release remain uncertain one year after the initialization of an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty in Washington. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and other Armenian officials insist that Yerevan has been doing its best to try to repatriate them. Their critics dismiss these assurances.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Zelenskyy Says Ukraine Ready to Help Armenia, EU Ties

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy this week thanked Armenian leaders for their greetings.

In a post on X, he highlighted that dialogue between the two countries has been reinvigorated.

“My sincere gratitude to [Armenian] President Vahagn Khachaturyan and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for their warm congratulations on Ukraine’s Independence Day! The high-level dialogue between our two countries has now been reinvigorated. We hope it will be followed by closer cooperation at other levels and in many areas. The Armenian people have set a steady course toward closer ties with Europe, and Ukraine commends this choice and is ready to help wherever we can,” he wrote.

Armenia, Iran Discuss Expanding Trade

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenia’s Minister of Economy Gevorg Papoyan received Iran’s Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Armenia Khalil Shirgholami on August 25. Deputy Minister of Economy Anushik Avetian also attended the meeting.

The two sides discussed ways to develop Armenian-Iranian economic cooperation, expand trade and investment, and strengthen infrastructure and business ties.

Papoyan said political dialogue between Armenia and Iran should be translated into more tangible economic results by exporting Armenian products to Iran and using the opportunities provided by the Eurasian Economic Union-Iran free trade agreement.

Russia Says CSTO Cooperation Suspended

YEREVAN (Pan.am) — Military and military-technical cooperation with Armenia within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is not being conducted, but sectoral cooperation with Yerevan has been maintained on a bilateral basis, said Mikael Agasandyan, director of the Russian Foreign Ministry’s First Department for CIS Countries.

“At present, there is no cooperation with Armenia through the CSTO in the military, military-technical or other areas,” Agasandyan said when asked whether preferential terms for military-technical supplies within the CSTO apply to Yerevan, RIA Novosti reported.

The department director said cooperation with Yerevan in the relevant area has continued on a bilateral basis.

“There is the necessary legal framework, which, among other things, provides for supplies of military-purpose products on preferential terms,” he emphasized.

Pashinyan Says TRIPP Could Integrate Armenia Into International Railway Network

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has described the implementation of the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) as a key priority for Armenia, saying the project could fundamentally transform the country’s regional connectivity and integrate it into international transport networks.

Speaking during a discussion of the government’s program, Pashinyan said TRIPP would be implemented on Armenian territory based on the principles of Armenia’s territorial integrity, sovereignty and jurisdiction.

According to the Prime Minister, the project will include not only railway infrastructure but also pipelines, roads, cables and power transmission lines.

Pashinyan said the railway component would run along the Nrnadzor-Agarak route in southern Armenia, linking the country with Azerbaijan’s Nakhichevan and, through existing and planned connections,

with Russia and Central Asia.

He also highlighted the potential reopening of a railway connection between the Persian Gulf and the Black Sea through Iran, Nakhichevan, Armenia and Georgia. Pashinyan stressed that the Persian Gulf–Black Sea railway is not part of TRIPP itself, but could be one of the important regional benefits resulting from broader unblocking.

The prime minister said Armenia faces a risk of losing part of the potential economic benefits of the project because the Yeraskh-Akhurik railway section, although owned by Armenia, is currently operated under Russian management.

“Russia’s and the West’s complicated relations, and the sanctions imposed on Russia, are forcing international investors and freight operators to avoid this infrastructure and consider it a risk,” Pashinyan said.

He called on Russia to show flexibility and agree to transfer the concession rights to a third country acceptable to both Armenia and Russia, arguing that the move would

help make the Armenian railway competitive with the planned Kars-Nakhichevan railway in Türkiye.

Pashinyan said the government would seek to revise the railway management system so that it does not hinder Armenia’s integration into the international transport system.

He added that the strategic framework agreement between Armenia and the United States on TRIPP is currently in the ratification process, while preparations for establishing the TRIPP Development Company are nearing completion. Armenia is expected to hold a 26% stake and the United States 74%, with the arrangement envisaged for at least 49 years.

Pashinyan emphasized that TRIPP would involve no foreign military or armed presence in Armenia.

He described the project as a “historic opportunity” that could make peace in the region economically beneficial and create new incentives for long-term stability and

Map 1. Rail and Road Connections in the South Caucasus



Pashinyan Vows to Step Up EU Membership Efforts

EU, from page 1

Pashinyan initially scoffed at the move. But he later softened his rhetoric, saying that Yerevan needs to make a formal EU membership bid before holding the referendum. He made the same point when presenting his government’s five-year policy program to the Armenian parliament.

“This process [of applying for EU membership] also requires a great deal of work and we will probably soon start this process especially to hear the appeals of our EEU partners,” he said.

“My understanding is that we will hold the referendum after we have officially applied to the EU for membership, received an appropriate response and have a roadmap for the process,” added Pashinyan.

A senior Russian diplomat warned earlier this month that Pashinyan’s government should call the referendum by December or risk losing Armenia’s membership in

the EEU. Putin and the other EEU leaders effectively set that deadline in their joint statement.

Pashinyan implied earlier that his country cannot be kicked out of the Russian-led bloc without its consent. But that did not prevent Moscow from banning in late May and early June imports of Armenian agricultural products and mineral water. Russian officials have threatened to take other punitive measures such as a sharp rise in the price of Russian natural gas supplied to Armenia and curbs on Russian tourists visiting the South Caucasus country.

Pashinyan again criticized the Russian bans on Monday, saying that they run against the EEU statutes. He also insisted that they have created a “crisis for the EEU.”

The sanctions are hitting hard Armenian farmers and agribusiness firms heavily reliant on the Russian market. The EU has

responded to Moscow’s “economic coercion” by providing 52 million euros (\$60 million) in urgent financial aid to Yerevan and promising to open its market to Armenian products.

Pashinyan told lawmakers that his government needs time to see the practical impact of that assistance. He presented that as another reason why it will not hold the referendum soon.

Armenian opposition leaders see Pashinyan’s European integration drive as reckless, saying that the EU will not admit Armenia in the foreseeable future. No EU member state or institution has voiced explicit support for such a prospect so far.

Russia is Armenia’s number one trading partner. According to Armenian government data, it accounted for 28 percent of Armenian foreign trade in the first five months of this year, compared with the EU’s 16.7 percent share.



INTERNATIONAL

Armenia Downgrades Relations with Russia in New Government Program

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

The Armenian government’s proposed 2026–2031 program appears to downgrade its description of relations with Russia, shifting away from the previous language describing their ties as a ‘strategic alliance’ to calling their it a ‘transforming and deepening’ partnership.

The program, put forward for the newly formed Armenian government following the June elections, was greenlit during Thursday’s government session and has yet to be approved by parliament.

The parliament debate on the program kicked off on August 24. (See story on this page.)

It outlines the future of Armenia–Russia relations in a brief paragraph. The program states that the government intends to continue dialogue with Russia “aimed at mutually beneficial multi-sector cooperation,” “toward transforming, developing and deepening relations under the new conditions of established peace in the region and within the framework of a balanced and balancing foreign policy.”

This marks a notable departure from the Armenian governments’ previous programs, including those adopted under Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan since he came to power in 2018, which traditionally described Russia as a “strategic” partner and envisioned the development of “strategic-allied relations” across various fields.

For instance, the previous 2021–2026 program highlighted the goal of “strengthening and expanding allied relations and strategic partnership with Russia,” including “mutually beneficial cooperation” within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and other blocs.

The previous program also envisaged Armenia’s involvement in the work of Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), with the aim of “strengthening the organization’s mechanisms to ensure the security of member states and regional security.”

However, in February 2024, Pashinyan declared that Armenia’s participation in the security bloc was ‘basically frozen’ because it failed to come to Armenia’s defense in the face of Azerbaijani attacks in Armenia in 2021 and 2022.

In contrast to Russia, the new document uses stronger language to describe relations with several other countries and blocs, including Iran, the US, the EU, France, China, and Georgia — several of which Armenia has signed strategic partnership agreements with in recent years.

Regarding the Russian-led EAEU, the program envisages ‘expanding effective cooperation’ within the bloc.

“Work will continue to ensure the full and uninterrupted implementation of the EAEU’s fundamental freedoms — the free movement of labor, services, goods and finance — as well as to develop relations with member and observer countries,” the program read.

tional efforts to diversify our markets, so that we can insure ourselves against these situations once and for all,” Pashinyan said.

He further invited relevant Russian authorities to visit Armenia and carry out inspections on the ground to address their concerns, underscoring Armenia’s transparency.

Pashinyan’s remarks came after Russia’s Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Supervision (Rosselkhoz nadzor) said on Wednesday that it was awaiting a report from Armenia on the results of sanitary inspections.

A day later, Armenia’s Food Safety Inspection Agency responded, saying it remained in “constant operational contact” with its Russian counterparts.

“Given that negotiations are still ongoing, as well as the continuous nature of the process, we consider it premature to disclose preliminary or ongoing details at this stage. We will provide additional information on the final, clarified results and the measures implemented in a further statement,” the inspectorate told Armenpress.

(This story originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on August 21.)

Istanbul Armenian Community Discusses School Restriction Measure

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Union of Armenian Vakifs (Foundations) in Türkiye held a consultation on August 24 regarding a recent decision by the country’s Ministry of Education to prohibit children from Armenia from studying at Armenian minority schools in Istanbul. The measure concerns foreign nationals more broadly and is not limited to Armenian schools, with other minority schools also affected.

Istanbul’s Armenian daily Jamanak reported that the meeting was attended by Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople Archbishop Sahak II, ethnic Armenian MP Sevan Sivacıoğlu from Türkiye’s ruling Justice and Development Party, Petros Şirinoğlu, chairman of the Union of Foundations and the Surp Pırgıç Armenian Hospital, as well as principals and representatives of Armenian schools.

For around a decade, Turkish authorities had allowed children from Armenia whose parents have work or residence permits in Türkiye to study at Armenian schools in Istanbul under “guest student” status. The children attended all classes alongside Armenian children from Türkiye and took exams, but did not receive official graduation certificates. Instead, they were given documents containing their final grades.

However, inspectors from Türkiye’s Ministry of Education recently informed Armenian schools that children from Armenia would no longer be allowed to continue their education there. Under the new decision, the children must instead attend Turkish public schools.

At the August 24 meeting, Sivacıoğlu and Şirinoğlu said the current situation had arisen as a result of a number of misunderstandings. In particular, it was noted that

different community officials had provided different and conflicting figures at various times regarding the number of “guest students.” Jamanak reported that the meeting expressed the view that this was not a particularly problematic or complicated process and that there was optimism about resolving the issue.

Sivacıoğlu also said that representatives of Armenian schools in Türkiye will meet with Istanbul Governor Davut Gül on September 28. The agenda will include the seismic reinforcement and resilience of community school buildings.

“Community circles have long been concerned about the structural safety of Armenian school buildings in Türkiye. Professional reports show that their condition is not particularly good. Therefore, state support is expected for reinforcing these buildings,” the daily writes.

Pashinyan Receives Peace Prize in Germany

PASHINYAN, from page 1

A former Landtag president, who is current chairman of the peace prize board, Karl Starzacher stressed Pashinyan’s qualifications for the award in that he had focused on diplomacy and political negotiations as opposed to further military escalation. This approach required, Starzacher added, “political courage and farsightedness.” A foundation colleague, Nicole Deitelhoff, who is also on the board of the Frankfurt Peace Research Institute, said the award recognized Pashinyan’s commitment to non-violence “in one of the most hardened conflicts in the post-Soviet arena.”

The criteria for this year’s award winner, as cited above, epitomize the attitude championed by Germany and other European Union members towards the Armenian leader. The actual parameters of the agreements reached between Pashinyan and the Azerbaijani leadership, and the political controversy they have generated inside Armenia regarding sovereign territory — including the fate of Artsakh and the political prisoners unlawfully held in Azerbaijan prisons, the future of the expelled Artsakh population, the integrity of the Armenian Constitution, to mention a few — seem to have been ignored or deleted from the agenda.

The previous winners of the prize, which was established in 1994, are diverse; they range from the Dalai Lama in 2012 to the legendary pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim in 2006 and American politician Sam Nunn in 2008.

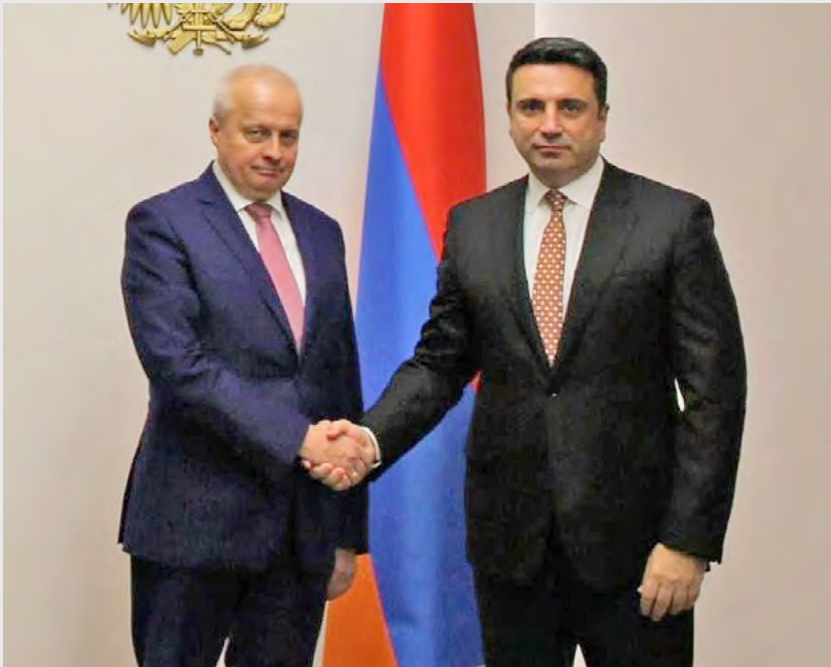
Pashinyan will be presented with his award at a ceremony on September 18 at the State Parliament of Hesse.

Secretary of Armenia’s Security Council, Russian Ambassador Discuss Bilateral Agenda

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Secretary of Armenia’s Security Council Alen Simonyan received Russia’s Ambassador to Armenia Sergey Kopyrkin on August 25.

Kopyrkin congratulated Simonyan on his appointment as secretary of the Security Council.

The sides discussed a broad range of issues related to the Armenia-Russia bilateral agenda.



Russia’s Ambassador to Armenia Sergey Kopyrkin, left with Secretary of Armenia’s Security Council Alen Simonyan



INTERNATIONAL

Nagorno-Karabakh Refugees Face a Legal Limbo in France

By Lilit Shahverdyan

For the 120,000 Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians who were forcibly displaced by Azerbaijan's military offensive in 2023, creating a new sense of home abroad has been difficult, not least because of official documents many countries fail to recognize.

Narine Arushanyan's family of four has spent more than two years trying to rebuild their lives in a commune near the northern city of Rouen, France. Since arriving in France in November that year, the country having the third-largest Armenian population outside of Armenia itself, they have struggled to qualify for legal protection, finding themselves caught between two systems.

Despite having applied for asylum shortly after her arrival in France, the court decision took two years, and in April 2026, the courts rejected her application on a crucial legal ground: that Armenia had already granted the family protection. Indeed, just days before Narine's arrival in France, Armenia had granted collective temporary protection to Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians. Even though Narine left without receiving her refugee certificate, in the eyes of French authorities, that policy alone reduced the need for asylum elsewhere.

The decision cut off the family's financial support and left them facing an uncertain future. Only Narine's 17-year-old son is still awaiting a ruling on his case, allowing the family to remain in France while they appeal.

"All we want now is a work permit," Narine tells OC Media. "That's how we're used to living. We're not used to depending on the state."

Without legal status, only off-the-books employment is an option. Narine has taken on informal work, commuting to Paris three times a week for a babysitting job — a journey that takes three hours each way.

Narine's situation is not unique. For many displaced Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians, the main challenge is convincing asylum authorities that Armenia's protection is not a durable solution. Although they are ethnically Armenian, they argue that Armenia is not their country of origin, but a country they were forced to flee.

"It became a trap," Narine says. "We had nothing in Armenia — no home, no stability. Starting from zero wasn't possible."

At the time, Armenia was struggling to accommodate tens of thousands of people in the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Another influx of 120,000 Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians made finding housing impossible for many.

Narine also describes feeling stigmatized as a refugee in Armenia, including an incident that took place shortly after arriving in Yerevan in September 2023.

"I was in a taxi with my family, and we asked the driver if he knew of any free apartments to rent. He called a friend who had an empty apartment and put him on speakerphone. We heard his friend say, 'I'm not renting it to Karabakhtsis.'"

This discrimination is something that has not appeared to have lessened since her arrival in France. In recent months, many Armenian high-ranking officials have shown an increasingly aggressive attitude towards Nagorno-Karabakh, referring to them as "runaways." Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan once erupted at a refugee during his pre-election campaign, saying, "Why are you alive? Why didn't you die, you scum?"

While most Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians re-settled in Armenia, some 24,000 sought refuge abroad, according to the former Nagorno-Karabakh authorities. For Narine, whose generation had already lived through the First Nagorno-Karabakh War

in the 1990s, the 2016 Nagorno-Karabakh clashes, and the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020, Azerbaijan's 2023 offensive became the final rupture.

As Armenia and Azerbaijan continue difficult peace negotiations, Narine says she chose to move far from the region's recurring cycles of conflict and hatred to "give her children a life more peaceful than hers."

How Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians Slip between the Cracks

As Mihail Kats, a researcher and advisor on former Soviet countries within the French asylum court, tells OC Media, asylum requests from people fleeing Na-

nian citizens.

"Asylum applications of people from Nagorno-Karabakh have slipped through the cracks because the system is dealing with a massive influx of refugees from Ukraine and the Middle East," Kats says.

He adds that Armenia is designated by France as a 'safe country of origin,' meaning applicants must demonstrate specific risks if returned there in order to qualify for protection.

In 2025, the French asylum court issued 986 decisions related to Armenia. Only 49, or around 5%, were approved. As the data is uncategorized, it is unclear how many of



Narine Arushanyan and her husband Mher Gevorgyan (Lilit Shahverdyan photo)

gorno-Karabakh are not treated as a distinct category.

"Because the territory has never been internationally recognized as a state, most individuals from Nagorno-Karabakh are considered to be linked to Armenia due to their Armenian-issued documents," he explains.

Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians hold Armenian passports issued as travel documents, but these do not automatically grant voting rights or land ownership. They must apply separately to obtain Armenian citizenship.

However, foreign asylum authorities make little distinction between displaced Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians and Arme-

the cases were related to Nagorno-Karabakh refugees.

According to the head of Armenia's Migration and Citizenship Service, Nelly Davtyan, it is not reasonable to expect the Armenian government to "examine separately the cases of people displaced in the same conditions. Our capacity for individual claims is 200–250 per year."

"In conditions of mass displacement, everyone becomes a beneficiary of the same status with one decision," she says, adding that the only way to reject this protection is to apply for Armenian citizenship.

This policy has had unintended consequences across Europe. Germany has

also rejected asylum claims from former Nagorno-Karabakh residents on similar grounds, arguing they can rely on protection from Armenia.

In a rare exception, a German administrative court in Kassel recognized a Nagorno-Karabakh Armenian family as stateless in November 2024. But the ruling has not set broader precedent.

"Even if authorities acknowledge that someone is not truly an Armenian citizen but has a refugee status in Armenia, the outcome will likely be the same," Davtyan notes.

For Hovhannes Gevorgyan, representative of Nagorno-Karabakh in France since 2003, the rights of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians are "universal human rights."

"They should not depend on whether one state or another chooses to protect them," he says.

"Whether they are Armenians, Ukrainians, Kurds, or Palestinians, people must have the same rights," he emphasizes. "If authorities decide not to defend them, does it mean that these people no longer have rights? That they can be driven from their ancestral homes overnight, and this is acceptable?"

Narine says she feels trapped between systems, with no path back to Nagorno-Karabakh, few opportunities to rebuild her life in Armenia, and no access to protection in Europe.

After more than two years in exile, she still thinks about the moment they left.

"It was never the decision of ordinary people," she says. "We stayed [in Nagorno-Karabakh] for as long as we could, the rest didn't depend on us," Narine adds.

Like many others, the family took only documents and a few items carrying memories of a life abruptly interrupted, leaving the keys near the door.

Narine still hopes to return to her profession one day, perhaps teaching at an Armenian school in France.

What she wants most, she says, is not assistance, but a more predictable future.

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

Kocharyan Arrested After Heated Parliament Exchange

KOCHARYAN, from page 1

Armenia's Anti-Corruption Committee (ACC) claimed that Robert Kocharyan, who had ruled the country from 1998-2008, had abused his powers to acquire state-owned property at cutdown prices. It also accused him of money laundering and bribery.

Kocharyan, who will turn 72 on August 31, was rushed to hospital from the ACC headquarters in Yerevan following a reported deterioration of his health. This did not stop investigators from petitioning a Yerevan court to sanction his pretrial detention.

For his part, Sedrak Kocharyan was charged with assisting in the alleged crimes attributed to his father. The four other detainees are current and former chief executives of companies linked to Kocharyan's family. Another law-enforcement agency, the Investigative Committee, charged them with tax evasion.

Kocharyan's Hayastan alliance condemned the arrests as politically motivated and pledged to continue to challenge the Armenian government.

"This is not a legal process," it said in a statement. "This is a blatant subordination of the state apparatus to the political fears and vengefulness of one person ... Neither President Kocharyan nor his family nor our political team can be suppressed or forced to come to terms with the cur-

rent situation."

The crackdown followed Monday's tense verbal exchange between Pashinyan and Levon Kocharyan, who is a parliament deputy from Hayastan, during a parliament debate on the Armenian government's five-year policy program. A question asked by Kocharyan Jr. left Pashinyan fuming.

"Why is your family a millionaire?" said the premier. "Where did you get that wealth from? You mean to say that your millions will be inherited by your children and your children [will then bequeath them to] their children ... I'm telling you straight up that it won't happen."

"The court should decide what should be returned to whom, not the country's top official," Levon Kocharyan hit back, accusing Pashinyan of violating his family's presumption of innocence and exerting pressure on the court.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged: for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged," Pashinyan replied, quoting the Bible. "Now what I've told you [means] yes, I am judging you and I will judge you, and I am ready to be judged with the same judgment."

Hayastan was one of the three main opposition groups that challenged Pashinyan in the June 7 parliamentary elections and accused him of rigging them. Pashinyan has repeatedly pledged to jail their top leaders,

including Kocharyan, before and after the elections. His critics say these statements prove that law-enforcement authorities cracking down on the Armenian opposition act on his illegal orders. Dozens of opposition leaders, members and supporters have been arrested in recent months.

They include Gagik Tsarukyan, a wealthy businessman leading the Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) that was controversially denied seats in the new parliament. Tsarukyan was arrested and indicted in early July on what he sees as politically motivated charges. The authorities also shut down dozens of businesses belonging to him.

Sargsyan Prosecution

In a separate story, on August 31, a story on the Public Radio of Armenia reported that a criminal prosecution has been initiated against President Serzh Sargsyan as part of the criminal case involving Kocharyan, the Anti-Corruption Committee told reporters.

Sargsyan had earlier told journalists outside the Anti-Corruption Committee that he was not yet aware of the case in connection with which he had been summoned.

The developments come as the Anti-Corruption Committee investigates alleged corruption schemes involving Kocharyan, his son Sedrak Kocharyan and other individuals.

Community News

Bone Marrow Registry’s 15th Walk of Life to Take Place on September 19

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR) will hold its 15th Annual Walk of Life on Saturday, September 19, beginning at St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mount Auburn St.

Walk-in registration will open at 10:30 a.m., and the walk will begin at 11 a.m.

The annual Walk of Life brings families, friends and community members together in support of patients with leukemia and other life-threatening blood-related diseases who are searching for matched stem-cell donors.

“The Walk of Life is a joyful community event, but it has a very serious purpose,” said Melanne Ghahraman, Sports Sponsor Outreach Director for ABMDR. “Every person who walks with us helps spread awareness — and every new person who joins the Registry could potentially become the lifesaving match a patient is waiting for.”



The day will also include a variety of door prizes, including tickets to professional and collegiate sporting events in the Boston area, gift certificates and other surprises.

While the prizes add excitement to the day, the greatest reward is helping bring hope to patients and their families. A patient’s matching donor may be found in Armenia, the United States or another part of the world. For someone facing a life-threatening diagnosis, one person’s decision to register as a potential donor can become the gift of life.

Founded in 1999, the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry educates and recruits potential bone marrow stem-cell donors and helps patients of Armenian and non-Armenian heritage find genetically matched unrelated donors. ABMDR operates internationally, with outreach activities in Armenia, the United States, Europe, the Middle East and other regions with Armenian communities, supported by its specialized tissue-typing laboratory in Yerevan.

The Walk of Life combines a welcoming community gathering with that worldwide lifesaving mission. Participants of all ages are invited to walk, celebrate and help spread a message of hope.



30 Years of Peace of Art

In 1996, when Daniel Varoujan Hejinian installed the first large-scale billboard dedicated to the memory of the Armenian Genocide in Cambridge, Mass., it triggered a powerful and deeply polarized wave of responses. At a time when the United States government had not yet officially recognized the 1915 tragedy, placing such a striking, unmissable message along an American highway thrust a geopolitical, highly sensitive issue directly into the public spotlight.

This initiative immediately met with fierce resistance and denial from the Turkish community and aligned special interest groups. Driven by Turkey’s official policy, organizations supporting the local and international Turkish lobby exerted extensive pressure on the outdoor advertising company, Ackerley Communications. They demanded the billboard’s removal, claiming it was defamatory and politically biased. Anti-Armenian groups launched letter-writing campaigns and protests, asserting that the display incited hatred.

This intense lobbying by supporters of a foreign state placed the advertising company in a complex position, forcing it to navigate the balance between First Amendment free speech rights and political pressure. Nevertheless, this initial 1996 billboard marked the beginning of a decades-long movement. Year after year, whenever Hejinian or Peace of Art — the organization he founded — erected new billboards, Turkish organizations responded with sharp public pushback, demanding their removal and occasionally putting up counter-billboards that denied historical truth.

For the American public driving along that highway, however, the billboard was a profound shock and revelation. In 1996, the average American knew very little about the Armenian Genocide, as the topic was virtually absent from public school curricula. Consequently, this massive message served as a powerful educational tool for public awareness, compelling passersby to explore the history out of curiosity.

At the same time, it sparked fiery local debates surrounding corporate responsibility and the First Amendment of the US Constitution. Media outlets and citizens closely monitored how the advertising company would respond to censorship attempts pushed by the Turkish side. When the company ultimately chose not to remove the billboard, civil liberties advocates hailed it as a major victory for free speech in America. The initiative resonated on a broad human rights level, serving as an early blueprint for human rights advocacy art.

For the Armenian Diaspora — the children and grandchildren of Genocide survivors — the 1996 billboard was a historical and deeply emotional triumph. For more than 81 years, their history and pain had been largely met with silence on the world stage; thus, seeing such a bold acknowledgment of their suffering on an American highway provided the community with a profound sense of justice and moral restitution.



Daniel Varoujan Hejinian

see PEACE, page 11



Yerevan Students Learn STEAM Skills In Princeton, NJ

By Dr. Dinesh J. Sharma

PRINCETON, N.J. — How much can high school students from Armenia benefit from an immersive, high-tech educational experience in the United States? That was the question behind an innovative international STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) education initiative that brought four female students from Yerevan to Princeton, August 10–15.

After months of preparation, Yerevan Municipality worked with a team of educators and organizers in New York City and Princeton to developed a program to provide scholarships for four high school students to participate in a five-day STEAM camp at Steam Works Studio in Princeton.

This inaugural program was designed by Prof. Dinesh Sharma, Director and Chief Research Officer at Steam Works Studio (<https://steam-worksstudio.com/>) and a faculty member at Fordham University. It was coordinated by a team that included Gevorg Gharibyan, Head of the Children and Social Protection Department at Yerevan Municipality (<https://www.yerevan.am/en/>) ; Emma Arakelyan, CEO and Founder of Orion Worldwide Innovations (<https://www.orionwi.com/>) ; and Prof. Harold Takooshian of Fordham University.

The four participating students — Ani Babajanyan, Mariam Harutyunyan, Lilit Udumyan, and Nare Harutyunyan — took part in an intensive, hands-on program focused on emerging technologies and creative problem-solving.

Over five days, they explored Python programming and coding; Robotics; 3D printing; Artificial intelligence and Virtual reality (VR).

The students received instruction and mentorship from Annabelle Hovnanian, great-granddaughter of the late Jirair Hovnanian; Jessey Schoenfeld, a media student at the University of Hartford Art School; and Aranis Das, a technology researcher at Princeton University.

Rather than simply learning about technology, the students had opportunities to experiment with it directly. The program emphasized project-based learning and encouraged students to develop creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

At Steam Works Studio, this hands-on approach is central to the educational philosophy: students learn by making, experimenting, asking questions, and solving real problems.

Beyond the Classroom

The exchange was also designed as a cultural and educational experience. In addition to their work at Steam Works Studio, the students visited Princeton University, Philadelphia and New York City, giving them an opportunity to experience American higher education, culture, and technology communities firsthand.

see PRINCETON, page 8



COMMUNITY NEWS

Yerevan Students Learn STEAM Skills in Princeton, NJ

PRINCETON, from page 7

For the students, the week offered more than an introduction to new technologies. It provided a window into American universities and innovation ecosystems—and an opportunity to meet educators, researchers, and other young people interested in technology.

The August 2026 visit is intended to be the beginning of the partnership between Yerevan and Steam Works Studio.

“This is the first of many visits we hope to host from Yerevan, Armenia,” said Sharma. “Our goal is to create opportunities for students from different countries to learn together, experience emerging technologies, and develop the skills and confidence to become the innovators of tomorrow.”

The initiative also comes as Armenia places increasing emphasis on STEAM and technology education. The country’s growing

investment in STEAM education creates opportunities for international partnerships that can connect Armenian students with educational institutions, researchers, and technology communities abroad.

For Steam Works Studio, the Yerevan exchange represents a broader vision: STEAM education as an international bridge connecting young people across cultures through science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. Looking Ahead to 2027

What began as a five-day experiment in Princeton may therefore become the foundation for a continuing educational bridge between Yerevan - New York - Princeton, one that gives young students the opportunity to cross not only geographical boundaries, but also the boundaries of technology, culture, and imagination.



The four students from Yerevan with educators visiting Princeton University

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

ROMANTIC SOUL: MASTERPIECES FOR PIANO TRIO

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

**TANYA
GABRIELIAN**
piano

**ANI
KALAYJIAN**
cello

**ERIC
SILBERGER**
violin

Sunday, September 27, 2026

4PM

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

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



COMMUNITY NEWS

AMAA 107th Annual Meeting & Banquet to Honor Two Leaders

By Louisa Janbazian

PARAMUS, N.J. — The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) will host its 107th Annual Meeting Banquet on Saturday, October 17, at the Teaneck Marriott at Glenpointe, Teaneck, NJ.

The evening’s theme, “Celebrating Our Lasting Impact on Generations,” reflects the AMAA’s enduring commitment to serving the Armenian community through Evangelism, Education, and Humanitarianism.

“Our theme, Celebrating Our Lasting Impact on Generations, reflects the mission of the AMAA and the lives of this year’s honorees,” said Serge D. Buchakjian, AMAA CEO/executive director. “Their dedication has touched countless lives and will continue to inspire future generations.”

The banquet will be co-chaired by Lucienne Aynilian and Anita Buchakjian, whose dedication and leadership have helped to make this evening a meaningful celebration of faithful service and lasting impact.

The banquet will honor two individuals whose decades of service have significantly strengthened the Armenian community: Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian, former executive



Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian

director of the Armenian Evangelical World Council and Nurhan Helvacian PhD, former treasurer of the Armenian Missionary Association of America.

“As we gather for our 107th Annual Meeting Banquet in October, we are honored to recognize two exceptional individuals whose faithful leadership and unwavering commitment have strengthened the Armenian Evangelical community for decades,” said Gary R. Phillips, Esq., President of the AMAA. “The honorees, Rev. Dr. Tootikian and Dr. Helvacian have each left an enduring legacy through their service, and we are privileged to celebrate their remarkable contributions.”

Tootikian, of Royal Oak, MI, served as executive director of the Armenian Evangelical World Council for more than 25 years. A respected Armenian-American scholar, theologian, author and church leader, he has devoted his life to ministry, theological education, and Armenian Christian literature.

He is a graduate of the Near East School of Theology and the American University of Beirut. He pursued advanced graduate studies at Hartford Seminary, Harvard Divinity School, and Andover Newton Theological Seminary, earning two master’s degrees and a Doctor of Ministry degree cum laude.

He served as pastor of Armenian Evangelical churches in Syria and Egypt before continuing his pastoral ministry in several Armenian Evangelical churches throughout the United States. He is the author of

more than 50 books and currently is the minister emeritus of the Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit.

He is married to Rosette Tootikian and has three married children, six grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Helvacian, Ph.D. of Englewood Cliffs, NJ, has served as treasurer of the AMAA for the past 10 years. Throughout his professional career, he has combined expertise in economics, research, and financial management with dedicated service to the Armenian Evangelical community.

Helvacian earned a Bachelor of Business Administration, cum laude, from Bernard M. Baruch College of the City University of New York and a PhD in Economics from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

His professional experience includes serving as adjunct professor of economics at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Principal of MNH Consulting, Director of Research and Chief Economist for the National Council on Compensation Insurance, Manager of Economics at IBM Corporation, and leadership positions involving economic consulting and statistical analysis. He has authored numerous publications in economics and related professional fields.

Helvacian has served the AMAA as chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee and as a member of the Investment, Personnel, and Scholarship Committees. He also served on the AMAA Board of Directors from 2006 to 2025. His broader church service includes serving as treasurer of the Armenian Evangelical World Council and Treasurer of the Telfeyan Evangelical Fund. He is a member of the Armenian Presbyterian Church of Paramus, NJ.

Helvacian is married to Dr. Celeste Telfeyan Helvacian, and together they have two daughters and three grandchildren.

Adding to the evening’s celebration, guests will also enjoy a special performance by Zulal, the New York-based Armenian-American a cappella trio featuring Teni Apelian, Yeraz Markarian and Anaïs Tekerian.



Dr. Nurhan Helvacian

“Planning this year’s banquet has been both a privilege and a joy,” said Banquet Co-Chairs Lucienne Aynilian and Anita Buchakjian. “We look forward to welcoming members, friends, and supporters for an evening of fellowship as we honor two outstanding leaders whose faith, vision, and service have made a lasting difference in our community.”

The AMAA warmly invites members, friends, and supporters to join this memorable evening of fellowship, recognition, and inspiration as it celebrates the faithful service and enduring legacy of these two distinguished leaders.

For additional information about the 107th Annual Meeting Banquet, visit amaa.org/events.



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

Hye Geen Addresses Needs of Menopausal Women at ‘Thrive in Wellness’ Program

By Karine Armen
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PASADENA — The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Hye Geen women’s organization hosted a program titled “Thrive in Wellness” on Saturday, August 22, at the Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Cultural Center.

The event’s lectures were focused on wellness after menopause, addressing hormones, metabolism, weight and muscle health.

nutrition, exercise, metabolism, weight management, and muscle and bone health — issues that become increasingly important as women age.

Nurse practitioner Dr. Zarmine Naccashian gave an interactive presentation on nutrition and a balanced diet. She explained how to determine the calories of each food, such as one apple or one cup of yogurt. Naccashian is a nurse practitioner with more than 30 years of experience in diabetes care, patient care, and community health. She holds a PhD in nursing and is



From left: Dr. Hanriet Minasian, Ara Keshishian, and Dr. Zarmine Naccashian (photo by Karine Armen)

Lora Kuyumjian, the chairperson of AGBU Hye Geen, welcomed everyone and opened the program. She said, “The proceeds will fund the nine AGBU Hye Geen’s Pregnant Women’s Centers in Armenia.” Kuyumjian noted that attitudes towards pregnancy in Armenia have evolved, with husbands increasingly involved in the process. “The pregnancy centers have educated the families to have a healthy pregnancy process.”

Liza Boubari, clinical hypnotherapist and a founding member of AGBU Hye Geen, served as mistress of ceremonies. “Hye Geen’s mission has been rooted in empowering women and advancing women’s wellness,” she said. “Today, we are honored to bring together three distinguished speakers, each addressing an important aspect of women’s health and wellness.”

The program featured presentations on

an associate professor at California State University, Northridge.

An unexpected power outage due to the extreme heat in Pasadena occurred during the program, but organizers used a battery-operated microphone and the program continued, but the speakers could not show their slides.

Ara Keshishian, MS, PhD Candidate, an adjunct professor of kinesiology, exercise scientist and health and fitness professional, said, “Menopause can involve a wide range of symptoms, including significant changes in body composition and metabolic health.” He stressed, “I encourage my clients to begin with objective baseline measurements, ideally including a DEXA scan when appropriate. This allows us to assess key markers such as body fat, lean mass, visceral fat, and bone mineral den-



From left: Panelists during Q&A, nurse practitioner Dr. Zarmine Naccashian, Dr. Hanriet Minasian, and Ara Keshishian (photo by Karine Armen)

sity.” He stressed that with correct assessment, they can move beyond guesswork and develop an individualized strategy to improve strength, body composition, bone health and overall well-being.

“Movement is more important than eating less for weight loss and health,” said Dr. Hanriet Minasian, a board-certified internal medicine specialist and founder of Healthy Silhouette, where she combines physician-guided weight management, generative medicine and non-invasive aesthetic treatments. Minasian added, “As a physician, I am a specialist in longevity, but it is not enough to have a long life, but a quality life.”

The second part of the program included a healthy lunch with a variety of Mediterranean dishes catered by the Lebanese-Ar-

menian couple Garen and Alice, known as Mr. & Mrs. Chef.

AGBU Hye Geen was founded in 1994 by Sona Yacoubian to preserve and honor the achievements of Armenian women and promote their role in family and society through research, education, and advocacy. One empowering program is the Pregnant Women’s Center in Armenia, where many women outside the capital, Yerevan, lack adequate care. Currently, there are nine centers in different regions of Armenia.

The organization has a magazine to preserve and archive all its events and programs for future generations. Also, it provides a forum for writers to share their work. Additionally, they have a YouTube channel to educate the community about different issues.



The committee members of AGBU Hye Geen (photo by Karine Armen)

2026-2027

ADMISSION

OPEN

FIRST DAY

REGISTER ONLINE

St. Thomas Armenian Church's

Kirikian

ARMENIAN SATURDAY SCHOOL

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH, 9:00 AM

School Hours 9:00 AM - 1:15 PM

Toddlers, Nursery to 7th Grade, Ages 2 ½ - 12

Բարի Գալուց

ENROLL NOW

NEW: SPECIAL ½ HOUR ARMENIAN CONVERSATION CLASS WITH SPECIALIZED TEACHER

ONLINE REGISTRATION

https://form.jotform.com/212505583429154

ONLINE PAYMENT

venmo@kirikianarmenianschool

(last 4 of cell - 3203)

CONTACTS

Ani@lacapan.com or

Talar@sarafian1.com

SOCIAL MEDIA

https://www.facebook/kirikianarmenianschool

www.armenianschoolstthomas.com

CURRICULUM

Armenian Reading, Writing, Conversation, Literature, History, Geography for Upper Grades, Religion, Dance, Badarak Hymns, Folk Songs, Arts & Crafts, Parties & Talent Shows

PROGRAMS

Special Toddler Program, Armenian Conversation ½ Hour Each Saturday, Chess

SPECIAL EVENTS

Armenia's Independence, Armenian Genocide, Easter Communion & Breakfast, Armenian Christmas, Pargentahn Party & Fair, Hantes & Graduation

FACILITIES

Classrooms, Computer Lab, Library, Church Sanctuary, Playground, Stage/Halls

174 Essex Drive | Corner of 9W & E. Clinton Avenue | Tenafly, NJ 07670 | (201) 567-5446



COMMUNITY NEWS

30 Years of Peace of Art

PEACE, from page 7

Within the broader human rights community, Hejirian’s 1996 project became a textbook example of “artivism.” He demonstrated that ethnic minorities and human rights defenders do not need to wait for government permission or official legislative acts to educate the public. Instead, they can bypass political inertia and gridlock, delivering their message directly to public spaces through impactful visual art.

The success and momentum of this first campaign inspired Hejirian to officially incorporate Peace of Art, Inc. in 2003. He expanded the project’s geographic footprint across the United States and Canada with hundreds of billboards, raising awareness not only for the Armenian Genocide, but against all global genocides and crimes against humanity.

Strategic Design and Iconography

Hejirian’s graphic design choices were strategic: he utilized universal symbols to distill a complex political tragedy into imagery that was both accessible and compelling to the general public. Over the decades, Peace of Art consistently evolved its visual approach to respond to key historical moments. The billboards displayed across Boston, Cambridge, and Watertown stood out through bold, clear elements specifically engineered to capture the immediate attention of highway drivers. The central focal point of the primary design was the impactful message: “Recognize the Armenian Genocide.”

In this concept, Hejirian introduced a unique typographic element where the letter “O” in the word genocide was replaced with a visual symbol. In 1996, he placed a target reticle over the word, symbolizing the systematic targeting and extermination of an entire ethnic group. Additionally,

the design employed a high-contrast color scheme set against a dark background, ensuring clear readability at highway speeds even from hundreds of meters away.

In 2015, marking the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, Hejirian expanded the project into a wide-reaching North American campaign titled “100 Billboards for the 100th Anniversary of the Genocide.” During this period, digital and static billboards appeared in numerous cities across the United States and Canada, featuring new symbolic and narrative visual solutions. In this series, the letter “O” in genocide was filled with the national flags of all countries that had officially recognized the Armenian Genocide, encircling a white dove at the center.

Another composition depicted a bleeding red heart representing the Armenian nation, with a missing piece visually representing the loss of 1.5 million innocent victims. Hejirian also incorporated the purple forget-me-not — the official symbol of the Centennial — emphasizing the permanence of historical memory.

Political Pressure and Historical Recognition

Hejirian frequently utilized his billboard space in Massachusetts to address sitting US presidents directly, holding them publicly accountable to their campaign promises. A prominent example was his message to President Barack Obama between 2012 and 2015: “Mr. President, Don’t Turn Your Back. Recognize the Armenian Genocide.” As a candidate in 2008, Obama had explicitly promised to recognize the Genocide; however, upon taking office, his administration avoided using the word genocide to preserve diplomatic relations with Turkey. Placed ahead of April 24, Hejirian’s billboards exerted strong public pressure on the administra-



tion, serving as a constant reminder of those unfulfilled pledges.

In 2021, Hejirian directed a similar message to President Joe Biden: “Mr. President, Recognize the Armenian Genocide with Honor, Dignity, and Courage.” On April 24, 2021, Joe Biden became the first sitting US president to officially use the term “genocide” in his annual White House statement, permanently shifting the trajectory of US foreign policy.

Personal Dedication and Earned Legacy

Born in Aleppo, Syria, to a family of 1915 massacre survivors, Hejirian grew up on eyewitness accounts of forced marches and famine. For him, breaking the silence surrounding his parents’ tragedy was a sacred duty. By creating public monuments and billboards, he ensured that the suffering of his parents and 1.5 million innocent victims was pulled from the shadows of obscurity into global recognition, achieving a measure of moral justice.

Hejirian did not limit his advocacy to the Armenian cause alone. Through Peace of Art, Inc., he used international flags and imagery to highlight universal issues such as homelessness, domestic violence and global genocides. His ultimate goal was prevention: “Our fight is against the distortion of human nature and mission; it is aimed at protecting human dignity and es-

sence.” He believed that confronting drivers with historical tragedies would awaken civic conscience and protect vulnerable populations.

As an artist and corporate art director, Hejirian recognized that traditional galleries reach only a small segment of society. He sought democratic impact: by bringing art to highways, he transformed thousands of miles of asphalt into a free, open-air gallery. Through colors and symbols, he bypassed language barriers and state censorship, proving that a single dedicated citizen can counter a foreign state’s multi-million-dollar lobbying machine.

For decades, Hejirian faced severe threats and corporate pressures from denialist circles demanding the removal of his displays. Unwavering, he continued his mission, self-funding his campaigns. Ultimately, he lived to witness the highest validation of his life’s work. When the White House officially uttered the word “genocide,” it marked the collapse of state-sponsored denialism that he had fought his entire life. His years of independent advocacy played a direct role in shifting the historical stance of the world’s most powerful nation. In the end, he fulfilled a sacred promise to past generations, secured global recognition for historical truth, and built an enduring legacy as a tireless defender of universal human rights.

AGBU 120 YEARS

AGBU 120TH ANNIVERSARY

Join Us for Our
General Assembly and
Weekend Celebrations

OCT 15 - 17, 2026

agbu.org/general-assembly

AGBU | ANI LANGUAGE COACHING PROGRAM

English Coaches Needed!

ANI Language Coaching Program is an English language proficiency program that virtually connects Armenian mentees with volunteer coaches from the Diaspora.

Behind every ANI Language Mentee is a story of resilience and ambition - from women stepping back into the workforce to individuals from Artsakh creating new beginnings.

Apply today
agbu.org/ani-language

AGBU 120 YEARS



COMMUNITY NEWS

Moderna and Merck Say Experimental Vaccine Prevents Return And Spread of Cancer in Melanoma Patients

MODERNA, from page 1

The mRNA technology that was instrumental in the rapid vaccine development in the Covid-19 pandemic added a new element of speed and flexibility to the quest for therapeutic cancer vaccines. Scientists can use the mRNA platform to create bespoke, individualized vaccines matched to the genetics of patients' tumors.

The companies announced only the broad outline of the results of the large, closely watched trial and plan to present the details at an international medical meeting and to regulators.

In the late-stage trial of 1,137 people with high-risk melanoma who underwent surgery to have their cancer removed, those who received the personalized cancer vaccine, called intismeran, along with an immunotherapy drug called Keytruda

were less likely to see their cancer recur or spread compared with those who received just Keytruda.

Scientists create intismeran by sequencing the patient's tumor and selecting what are called "neoantigens," which teach the immune system how to attack the cancer. They use the fast, flexible mRNA technology to create a vaccine with neoantigens selected for each patient — a process that takes about six weeks.

"It is certainly gratifying to see these exciting results — to come full circle, from our early proof-of-concept results to now," Dr. Catherine Wu, a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and a leader in the field, wrote in an email. In 2017, Dr. Wu's lab demonstrated the promise of customized vaccines

that train a fighting force of immune cells to target the specific neoantigens on an individual patient's tumor.

"That was the starting point of the field. These were small studies, less than 20 patients," Dr. Wu said. She added that the next challenge would be to find a way to extend the approach to other types of cancer that may be harder to treat than melanoma, a deadly skin cancer with an estimated 112,000 new cases per year in the United States.

The study is the most advanced of a number of trials testing the approach against a variety of cancers, including lung, bladder, kidney and pancreatic cancer. While small trials have shown the promise of the approach, the Moderna and Merck trial was seen as a bellwether in demonstrating the technology — and a

first step toward transforming cancer care with treatments that are individualized to a person's tumor and that may ultimately be able to stay ahead of it as it changes.

"Folks like myself in the community have been waiting for this," Dr. Sayour said, adding, "We believed in this, we expected this, but I think there's tremendous capacity for enhancing these approaches."

Moderna is part of Flagship Pioneering, led by founder and CEO Nour Afeyan.



Nour Afeyan

OBITUARY

Jeannette Etheredge (1940 – 2026) Owner of San Francisco's Popular Tosca Café

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Jeannette Etheredge, the legendary proprietor of San Francisco's Tosca Cafe and beloved North Beach icon, passed away peacefully in Knoxville, Tennessee on June 12, attended by her family.



Born in Tsingtao (Qingdao), China, to Armenian parents Aram and Armen Baliantz, Jeannette's early life was shaped by extraordinary resilience. Her mother's parents fled the Armenian Genocide in 1915, settling in Manchuria before moving to Qingdao, a treaty-port on the northern China coast. During World War II, the family endured internment in a Japanese prison camp for four years, then sheltered briefly in a refugee camp in the Philippines after

the communist revolution swept through China. They eventually immigrated to San Francisco in 1950, when Jeannette was nine years old.

Her mother, Armen, renowned in San Francisco for her grace and old-world charm, opened the acclaimed Bali's Restaurant, which became a gathering spot for performers, artists, writers, and filmmakers. Armen's deep love of ballet led to close friendships with legends like Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Baryshnikov, connections that Jeannette carried forward.

Jeannette became a US citizen on January 10, 1956. She attended Mercy High School and then briefly served in the US State Department as a Russian language interpreter at the United Nations in New York. She returned to San Francisco and studied at the San Francisco Art Institute, where she met her former husband, William Etheredge, a fellow student at the Institute. They married in 1965 and had a son, Devin, in 1968.

In 1980, Jeannette purchased Tosca Cafe, one of San Francisco's oldest bars

(est. 1919), transforming it into a legendary North Beach institution. Under her stewardship of more than three decades, Tosca Cafe became renowned not just for its Prohibition-era "house cappuccino," an espresso-steamed hot chocolate cocktail braced with a shot of brandy, but as a sanctuary of warmth, stories, and unpretentious glamour.

In her famous back room at Tosca's, she hosted an eclectic mix of regulars, artists, writers, and celebrities — including Sean Penn, Francis Ford Coppola, Mayor Willie Brown, Hunter S. Thompson, Philip Kaufman, Sam Shepard, Lauren Hutton and many others — while honoring the Tosca Cafe motto: "Whatever you are, be a good one." She was known for her charisma, wit, storytelling, and ability to make everyone feel at home.

A true San Francisco original and personality, Jeannette presided over Tosca with innate style and dedication until handing over the keys to new owners in 2013. She remained a cherished part of the community, celebrated in oral histories, podcasts and tributes for her role in preserving North Beach's vibrant spirit. She served on the boards of the North Beach Citizens, the San Francisco Film Society and the San Francisco International Film Festival in addition to being a major fund raiser for the St. Mary's Medical Center Foundation.

She is survived by her nephew, Peter Ridet, famous in his own right as the manager-front man of Tosca Cafe, her nephew and niece Eric and Zoey Baliantz, and her son and daughter-in-law Devin and Deborah Etheredge.

Jeannette Etheredge's life was one of resilience, hospitality and indelible presence. She elevated a neighborhood historic bar into a living piece of San Francisco history, where countless memories were made over cappuccinos and conversations. She will be deeply missed, but her legacy endures in the stories shared at Tosca and across the city she loved.

For 33 years, starting in 1980, she was host, confidante and fixer to a heady mix of



Jeannette was the first child born to Aram and Armen Baliantz after their marriage in 1939 in Qingdao (Tsingtao), China

San Francisco society — actors, directors, writers, dancers and politicians — who gathered at Tosca for the pleasures of each other's company, and to kibitz with Etheredge. "When you were in her presence," Willie Brown, the city's charismatic former mayor, said in an interview, "you didn't want it to end. Period."

"Farewell to Jeannette Etheredge, the longtime impresario and manager of Tosca Cafe, who died last week at age 85, according to her son. She held court with celebrity friends and politicians at Tosca's bar, and in its formerly VIP-only back poolroom, for decades, and was friends with Sean Penn, Francis Ford Coppola, Tom Waits, and Sam Shepard, among others. She ultimately sold the bar in 2011 before its transformation into a restaurant in 2013 under chef April Bloomfield."

"This legendary San Franciscan owned the city's oldest bar, Tosca Cafe, from 1980 until 2013. She loved the regulars as much as the stars and though some describe Etheredge as 'curmudgeonly,' this 'grand dame' truly ran her bar with great grace and style. Her only rule was 'don't bother anyone' and as a result everyone from Sean Penn to Christopher Hitchens to Hunter S. Thompson flocked there."

—Christine Vartanian Datian

DENNIS M. DEVENY & SONS Cemetery Monuments

Specializing in
Armenian Designs and Lettering

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

James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC

Mark J. Giragosian

Giragosian
FUNERAL HOME

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

Telephone (617) 924-7400

Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.

Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945

558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472

MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN



Arts & Culture

Kamurjner Presents Rising Soprano Lucia Papikian in a Successful Boston-Area Recital

ARLINGTON, Mass. — Kamurjner Cultural Connections, Inc., hosted a recital featuring rising Armenian-American soprano Lucia Papikian, joined by pianist Michele Wong, on August 9 at the Armenian Cultural Foundation.

The concert, titled “Beyond Reach,” marked Papikian’s solo recital debut in her home state of Massachusetts, drawing more than 140 people and filling the hall to capacity. From the opening selections through the final notes, the audience remained fully engaged.

“Supporting and celebrating talented young musicians is at the heart of KAMURJNER’s mission,” said Izabella Djevalikian, founding director of the organization. “It was wonderful to see a full hall and such a warm response to Lucia and Michele. It was especially rewarding to see our community come together to encourage a remarkable young artist at the beginning of what promises to be an exciting musical career.”

Papikian presented a thoughtfully selected program that reflected the expressive range and emotional depth of the classical vocal repertoire. Spanning languages, styles and musical



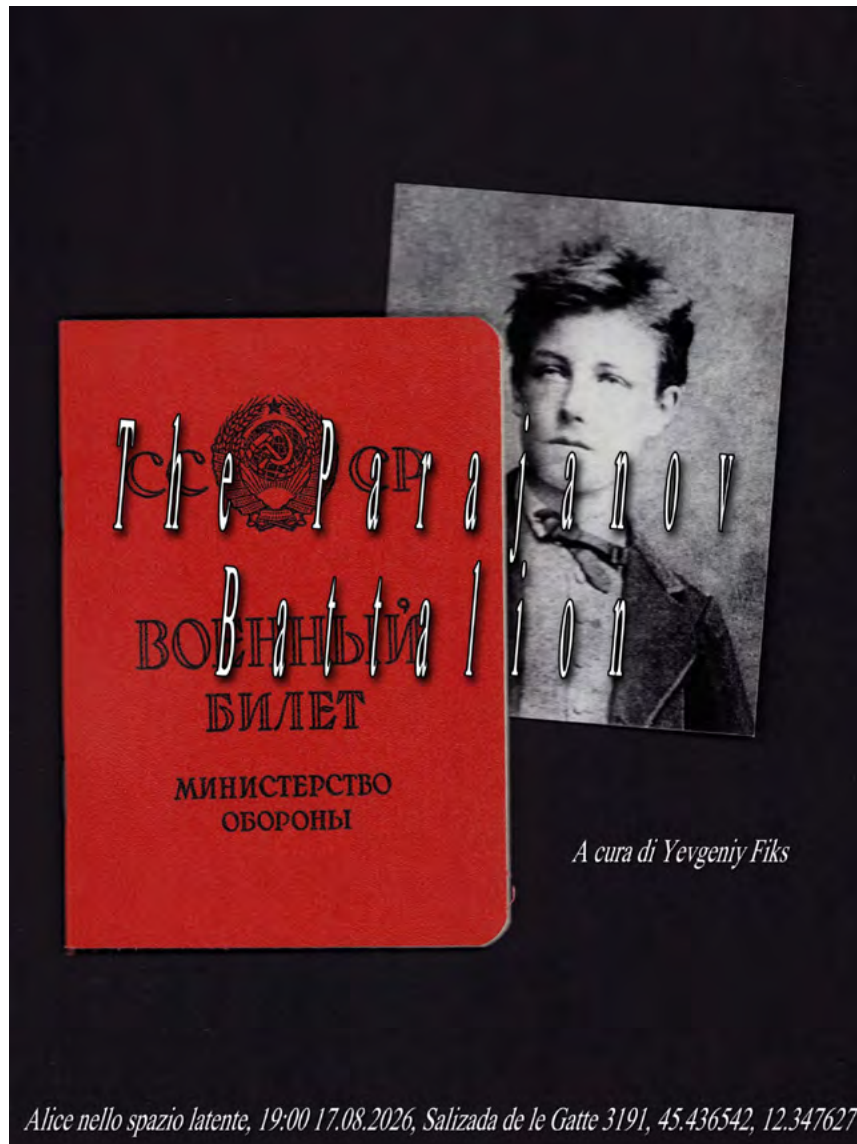
Lucia Papikian

traditions, the evening featured works by Sibelius, Liszt, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, Tigranian, Abrahamian, Puccini, Schumann, Chopin and Scarlatti. From the intimacy and tenderness of Anoush’s aria by Tigranian to the dramatic intensity of Puccini’s *Vissi d’arte* from *Tosca*, the varied repertoire highlighted the young soprano’s vocal beauty and dramatic expression.

The Armenian selections held particular significance for Papikian.

Papikian is completing her Bachelor of Music degree at the Juilliard School, where she studies with Prof. Darrell Babidge. She has performed at numerous cultural and commemorative events, as well as at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall. Her growing list of honors includes awards at the American Protégé International Voice Competition, American Fine Arts Festival and Classical Singer Competition, as well as First Prize at the 2025 Voice of the World International Competition in Yerevan, Armenia.

see PAPIKIAN, page 17



The Parajanov Battalion

Armenians Well Represented in Venice Art Scene This Summer

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

VENICE/YEREVAN — This year, at the 61st International Art Exhibition of Venice — the Biennale — the National Pavilion of the Republic of Armenia presents Zadik Zadikian’s solo exhibition, “The Studio.” The project is curated by the renowned art dealer Tony Shafrazi, whose half-century-long relationship and close collaboration with Zadikian have shaped the concept of the pavilion, together with curator and cultural strategist Tina Chakarian.

The pavilion opened on May 9 and will remain open until November 22. It reimagines the exhibition space as a living studio — an active site of creation, transformation, and restoration. Here, the plaster sculpture is not simply displayed but is continuously being made, reconstructed, and reinterpreted in real time, turning the entire project into a meditation on memory, resilience, and collective form.



Armenian Biennale

tion after donating two of his large-scale paintings to the Glendale Police Department in 2003.

The Egyptian Pavilion at this year’s Biennale presents Armenian-Egyptian artist Armen Agop, who is now based in Italy. His project, “Silence Pavilion: Between the Tangible and the Intangible,” is considered one of the best of this year’s Biennale.

see VENICE, page 20

Domingo Hindoyan Starts as Los Angeles Opera’s Music Director

By Kevork Keushkerian

LOS ANGELES — As of July 1, the Los Angeles Opera has a new music director, Domingo Hindoyan. He is succeeding James Conlon with a five-year contract.

Hindoyan was born in Caracas, in 1980. His father, Domingo Garcia, is a noted violinist and his mother, Viki Hindoyan, is a well-known lawyer who had immigrated from Aleppo, Syria.

Domingo Hindoyan started his career as a violinist, then he continued his education at Haute Ecole de Musique de Geneva and got a master’s degree in conducting, with highest distinction.



In 2019, he was named principal guest conductor of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and in 2020, was named chief conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

In 2014, he married Sonya Yoncheva.

Upon his appointment as the music director of the Los Angeles Opera, he said: “I am proudly honored to step into the role of music director of Los Angeles Opera. From my first rehearsal, I sensed a remarkable bond with the company’s exceptional musicians, staff, and vibrant energy.”

In the 2026/27 season, he will conduct “Carmen” and “Nabucco.”

Nora Armani to Offer Screenwriting Masterclass in Yerevan

NEW YORK — Internationally award-winning actress, producer, director, screenwriter, and mentor Nora Armani is currently in Armenia with a busy creative program that brings together new film projects and work with emerging screenwriters.

On September 3, the premiere of acclaimed Armenian director Hrach Keshishyan’s new film, “A Spoonful of Love” (Mi Gdal Ser), will take place. Nora Armani plays Daisy, the aunt, and will personally attend the film’s red-carpet premiere.

Meanwhile, “My Big Falafel Egyptian Wedding,” a new comedy directed by Peter Takla and filmed in California, has recently been completed. Armani plays one of the film’s leads. The colorful and humorous story brings together different cultures, family relationships and a series of comic situations.

During her stay in Armenia, Armani will also lead a three-day screenwriting masterclass, September 5–7 at the House of Cinema, which will focus on story structure, character development, conflict and the creation of a logline and synopsis.

This will be followed by a four-day screenwriting retreat, September 9–12 at TUMO Dilijan’s 11+1 creative environment.

Armani is a member of the European Film Academy and founder and Artistic Director of the Socially Relevant Film Festival New York. She has received numerous professional awards.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian



Jon Koobation’s Cheese Beoreg, A Family Tradition

FRESNO, Calif. — This Armenian recipe is featured in chef, restaurateur and author Jon Koobation’s *Cooking With JON*, the cookbook he published in 2017. For decades he owned the celebrated Jon’s Bear Club, in Reedley, California, that is often featured in his cookbook.

Under his professional direction, Jon’s Bear Club became a cherished part of the local community that welcomed generations of Central Valley residents. Founded in 1935 as a small bar for farmers and farm laborers, the eatery became a beloved home for countless family meals and celebrations throughout the generations, according to a California Restaurant Association (CRA) news release. In 2017, Jon received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the CRA Fresno Chapter “Best of the Valley” Restaurant Awards.

“We had infants and children brought into the restaurant by their parents, who



Game night at the Koobation house in Fresno. Cheese beoreg, puff pastry bread sticks, phyllo stuffed with mushrooms, smoked salmon rillet, goat cheese and fig jam, asparagus wraps with herb cheese and sun-dried tomatoes and meatballs in a sweet chili orange sauce. Photo courtesy Jon Koobation

grew up and came back and worked for us, year after year,” he said. “After being in business for 40 plus years, you see generations come and go.”

Jon eventually sold the restaurant in 2013, and then released *Cooking With JON*, a legacy to his rich culinary background and traditions. The cookbook features many of Jon’s signature recipes along with family photos and warm memories, and anecdotes. It is a walk down memory lane about Jon’s life growing up in the Central Valley -- interspersed among the recipes are his stories. Stories of how he trained to become a chef, of his deep love for his family, cars and auto racing, and what it was like going from being a chef to owning his own popular restaurant, and his lifetime appreciation of really outstanding food.

“Cooking has been my passion throughout my life. It has filled my life with joy,” says Jon. “I learned a great deal from my parents and grandparents. At every family gathering, my father, Edward Koobation, always said, ‘Well, here we are.’”

The selections of Jon’s authentic recipes and full-color photography will provide daily inspiration for many memorable meals throughout the year. Recipes include: Grandma Bazarian’s Shish Kebab, Tomato Vermicelli Soup, Herb-Seared Lamb Tenderloins with Eggplant Caviar and Basil Oil, Chicken George, Lebanese Judra (Lentils and Rice), JBC Crab Cakes, Braised Lamb Shanks with Bulgur Pilaf (made with Swanson’s Chicken Broth), Cabbage Dolma with Beef and Lamb, Meyer Lemon Homemade Ice Cream, Heirloom Tomato Jam, and Cracked Wheat and Kale Salad.

“Cheese beoreg is another mainstay of Armenian culture and tradition,” says Jon. “It is served in our family as part of the appetizer course or a Middle Eastern mezze with platters of pickled vegetables (tourshee), cured olives, string cheese, nuts, grape leaves (yalanchi sarma), lavash, and basterma. Take the time to make this recipe, and you’ll have them on hand in your freezer for your next special occasion. Once you learn the technique, you can fold-in almost anything you want. These beoreg were always a staple at family meals and celebrations...and in our home today. They are easy to make and assemble, and they’re the perfect appetizer for buffets, dinners, or to serve to guests at the holidays.”

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound Monterey Jack Cheese, shredded
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 2 medium eggs, beaten
- 1 bunch flat leaf parsley (leaves only), minced
- Kosher salt and cracked black pepper
- Athens® Phyllo Dough, fully thawed
- 1/2-pound melted butter

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Combine ingredients in a medium bowl, cover and set aside.

Lay out a sheet of phyllo dough on a floured work surface, and brush with butter, top with another sheet and brush with butter, and repeat with a third sheet.

Cut the stack of sheets into thirds, lengthwise.

Spoon a walnut-size of cheese mixture (about 2 tablespoons) on the bottom strip closest to you. Fold over to form a triangle. Fold again to form another triangle. Continue to the end of the phyllo sheet. Brush the end of the final triangle with butter. Rewarm the butter as needed to keep it melted so it’s easy to brush onto phyllo. Repeat with the remaining phyllo sheets and cheese filling. (Keep in mind that minor tears or cracks won’t be noticeable once the beoreg is folded and assembled, especially if they end up on the inside, so don’t worry too much as you work with it.)

Arrange the sealed beoregs on parchment-lined baking sheets and brush the tops with egg wash. Bake for 10-12 minutes or until golden brown. Do not burn. Serve immediately as an appetizer or a special complement to your salad or appetizer course.

Note: The cheese and parsley mixture should be cold when making this recipe.

Options: Jon has used a combination of sauteed mushrooms, green onions, and thyme added to the cheese and parsley mixture. Cooked and drained spinach with Feta cheese is another option. Store leftovers at room temperature. For more information on working with phyllo dough, see: <https://www.seriousseats.com/borek-5185229>

ORDER TODAY: Enjoy professional recipes you can make at home from award-winning chef Jon Koobation. Jon is the recipient of the 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award in the California Restaurant Association’s “Best of the Valley” Restaurant Awards. Contact Jon at: chefjonkoobation@gmail.com to order his book and for a personally signed copy.

OR you can order his cookbook directly at Amazon Books at: <https://www.amazon.com/Cooking-JON-Jon-Koobation/dp/0692769315>

For Jon’s recipes that have been featured in The Armenian Mirror-Spectator Newspaper, go to: <https://mirrorspectator.com/?s=jon+koobation>

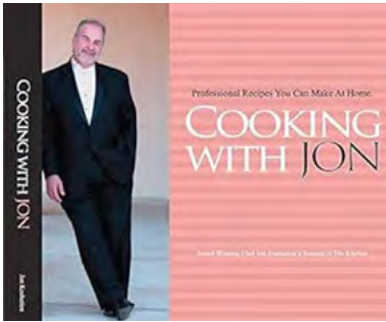
For the 2017 Kings River Life interview with Jon, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ET4Rj4H0FLc>

See: <https://thebusinessjournal.com/best-valley-restaurant-award-winners-announced-2/>

See Building a Dining Legacy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_yWS_PnzKI

Connect at: https://www.facebook.com/p/Cooking-With-JON-100057156711820/?_rd=1

Copyright 2026 Jon Koobation





ARTS & CULTURE

Books

Chris Bohjalian's *The Amateur* Reveals Secrets Beneath the Fairway

By Christopher Atamian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

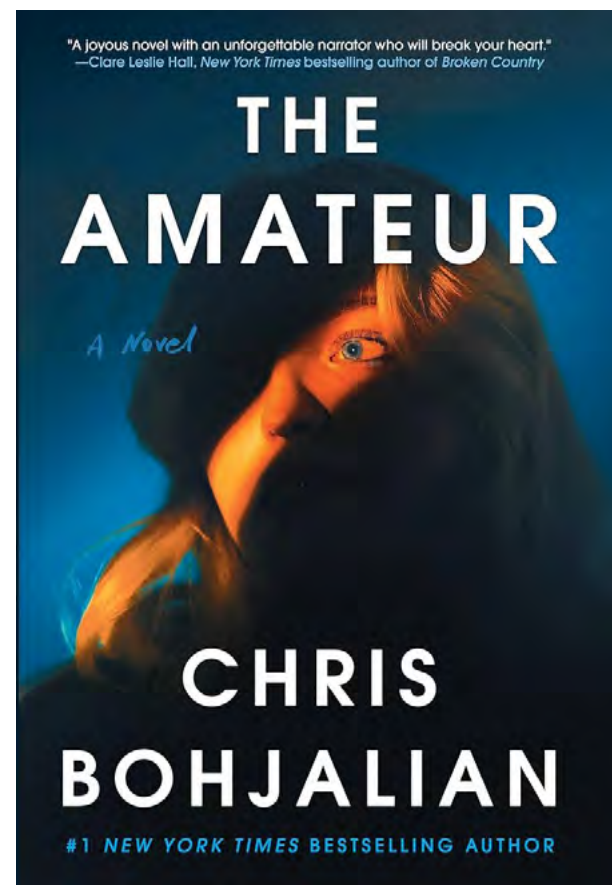
Chris Bohjalian's latest novel, *The Amateur*, takes place during the late 1980s in the upscale suburb of Tallmadge — a fictional town based, one assumes, on places like Rye or Scarsdale. It is territory that Bohjalian knows well, having grown up during that same period in Bronxville, another bucolic Westchester suburb. Tallmadge is a privileged, isolated community where everything always appears to function according to plan — at least on the surface.

Mira Winston, the novel's protagonist, is an 18-year-old high school senior and golf prodigy, set to play varsity golf at Yale in the fall. However, one day, she hits a shot at the country club that incongruously travels through a hole in the practice netting and strikes her young classmate Kenny Foster in the temple. Foster, a promising student whose middle-class family has recently moved to Tallmadge from Florida, is an outsider to the recondite social world around him. He instantly falls to the ground, dead.

The novel's protagonist is known for being impetuous and doing things like taking a golf club to a classmate's windshield or crashing her car in rather remarkable ways. The problem with Mira Winston however, may be more than just be hormonal or a case of occasional mean girl at-

titude — as with Tallmadge itself, underneath the surface of Mira's psyche far darker secrets may lurk. We soon find out that someone had cut out a target that originally hung from the practice net, in the process weakening the netting. Unfortunately for Mira, removing the target from the net was something she herself had vociferously advocated the day before. She therefore appears guilty not only to Kenny's parents but also to state prosecutors, who have the netting manufacturer and the golf club in their crosshairs as well.

Part of Bohjalian's talent in *The Amateur* lies in his use of a surprising first-person narrator, who recounts the tale from some 30 years in the future: commenting both on the characters and on the very different attitudes toward social issues that prevailed at the time. The result is almost cinematic at times, as when a film roll stops and one of the movie's characters steps out of the frame to speak directly to the audience, breaking the fourth wall. To make things worse for Mira, she is soon spotted by Mr. Foster in a hotel lobby with one of her classmates' fathers, with whom she has been having an affair since the age of 15 (or one could say she has been groomed). In the mixed-up teen psychological world that she inhabits — one she has dubbed "Mira Land" — she sees a causal relationship between sleeping with her friend's father and Kenny's death, a kind of retribution or punishment. She consid-



ers herself a murderer, even though the death was purely accidental. Why else, she reasons, would something so terrible occur?

For those who have not yet read his work, Bohjalian is a remarkable novelist who produces a new volume every 12 or 18 months, a pace comparable to that of Stephen King in the United States or Amélie Nothomb in France. Golf and Westchester County are not two subjects that usually interest me much, but Bohjalian's insightful exploration of his characters' psychology, his takedown of suburban 1980s culture, and his fluid prose made one race through the pages of *The Amateur*. And when the narrator addresses the reader like a co-conspirator, it creates a sense of intimacy and suspense. The mark of a Bohjalian novel is that often an ingenious and wholly surprising plot twist that upends the reader's expectations. This is the case, for example, in his brilliant riff of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* in his 2007 novel *The Double Bind* (2007) where every expectation the reader has is ingeniously foiled. Other notable Bohjalian novels include *The Sandcastle Girls* (2012), a sweeping work that retells the story of the Armenian Genocide through the intertwined stories of an American living in Syria in 1915 and an Armenian family trapped in the mass killings. Also noteworthy is his 2007 novel *Midwives*, which was adapted into a television movie starring Sissy Spacek. This last novel which deals with the terrible aftermath of an emergency childbirth, became a No. 1 national bestseller. At the relatively young age of 64, Bohjalian only seems only to be gaining momentum. A popular figure on the book-signing circuit, he often presents his work at Armenian venues as well, and supports diverse Armenian institutions and causes.

The Amateur moves at a leisurely pace at first but gathers steam with each new revelation about Tallmadge and the behavior of its supposedly model citizens. While it feels like less of a thriller than some of previous novels, in the end it doesn't disappoint. The author also cleverly uses the plot to look back at a time not so long ago when society was characterized by a different set of power dynamics. At one point, the narrator addresses the reader with a coy reminder: "Remember this was before Me-Too."

Bohjalian examines how certain behaviors that are now recognized as harmful, and even illegal, were overlooked or dismissed by society at the time — particularly when it came to the treatment of women. In his fluid almost extemporaneous style, for example, the author broaches the subject of alcoholism, a scourge which ran rampant in '80s American suburbia (and perhaps still does): "Both my parents had brought their drinks to my bedroom. My father was holding his scotch, while my mother was using a Seventeen magazine on my nightstand as a coaster for hers. Of course, they were always drinking. Booze was

continued on next page

TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION BOSTON CHAPTER PRESENTS

Between the Figural and Abstract

an illustrated talk by
Kim Servart Theriault,
author of *Rethinking Arshile Gorky*

**Thursday
September 17**

7 p.m. sharp

Baika Building, 755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. Use Norseman Ave. door. Free admission. For more info, email tcadirector@aol.com.



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR
OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

- 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

NEW JERSEY

- SEPTEMBER 13** — Barrymore Film Center will screen Elia Kazan’s 1963 Oscar Winning film “America, America”. This groundbreaking film, which Kazan called his favorite, brings together a deeply personal story with an important human rights history. Set in the late 1890s during a period of oppression and violence toward Christian minorities--Armenians and Greeks-- in Ottoman Turkey--the film tells the story of Kazan’s uncle’s harrowing odyssey out of Turkey with his Armenian friends who are fleeing the massacres that have ravaged their communities. The film will be introduced by Pulitzer Prize winning poet and New York Times bestselling author Peter Balakian, and renowned film historian Foster Hirsch. 5 to 8 p.m. 1 Park Avenue in Fort Lees. For more go to barrymorefilmcenter.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 Kalaijan (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

from previous page

the rocket fuel that caused their fights to achieve escape velocity and really take flight, the verbal pyrotechnics growing from cruel to clever to merely mean by the fourth drink some nights. Sometimes I could control them: I’d insist on being the dutiful daughter and mix them their drinks, adding more water or soda or extra ice than they did...I’d been doing this since I was eight.” So here we get not only a picture of American addiction, but also of family disfunction and the toll that it took those surrounding them.

As the novel unfolds, things look increasingly dire for Mira, a character we initially dislike but slowly come to love as we understand the real motivations behind her behavior. The book culminates in a trial in which she must fight much incriminating evidence against her. Until the very end, she insists that she did not take the target down. The reader wants to believe her, but the question remains: will the jury? In the end, Mira emerges as the most resilient character in the book — more so than her unhappily married parents or her postcard-perfect older brother Spencer, a Princeton student that they refer to simply as The Pinnacle.

Bohjalian’s novels, while careening toward nail-biting resolutions, almost always address important societal issues. Continuing in that vein, *The Amateur* is both fun summer reading and a novel that makes you think — about everything from golf netting to 1980s drug culture and predatory sex.

The Amateur is available widely.

Kamurjner Presents Rising Soprano Lucia Papikian In a Successful Boston-Area Recital

PAPIKIAN, from page 13

Papikian was joined by accomplished pianist Michele Wong, who traveled from New York for the performance. Wong’s sensitive and expressive playing complemented the soprano’s voice with nuance and musicality, creating a close musical partnership throughout the recital. Wong is currently a C. V. Starr Doctoral Fellow at the Juilliard School, where she studies with Lydia Brown, and holds degrees in piano performance from the Eastman School of Music and collaborative piano from Indiana University.

Following the concert, guests gathered for a reception, where they had an opportunity to meet and congratulate the artists.

Through special concerts and recitals, as well as programs such as its annual United in Music Festival, Kamurjner Cultural Connections continues to provide young performers with meaningful opportunities to share their artistry while strengthening cultural and community connections.



Lucia Papikian sings, accompanied by pianist Michele Wong



COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN
**MIRROR
SPECTATOR**
— SINCE 1932 —



An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE
ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE
UNITED STATES

EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

CONTRIBUTORS

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

REGIONAL
CORRESPONDENTS

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

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

ISSN 0004-234X

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

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

IARA: A Strong Armenia Needs a Strong Diaspora

The Armenian Institutions of the Argentine Republic (IARA) consider it necessary to publicly state their position on the relationship between the Republic of Armenia and the Armenian communities of the Diaspora, in light of the convening of the Armenia 2026 World Summit and, especially, in view of recent statements made from the floor of Armenia’s own National Assembly by ruling-party MP Arman Yeghoyan, who claimed that “if the Diaspora grows stronger, Armenia will grow weaker,” that “the Diaspora must weaken for Armenia to grow stronger,” and that Armenian communities abroad must “do whatever Armenia asks of them.”

These statements, coming from a representative of Armenia’s ruling party and voiced from the parliamentary floor, cannot be treated as a minor matter or a mere personal opinion, since they put forward a view of the Armenia–Diaspora relationship based on subordination. IARA considers it necessary to state clearly that the Diaspora is not a structure at the service of the Armenian State, nor a recipient of instructions, but an essential part of the Armenian Nation and a strategic ally of the Republic of Armenia, whose experience, institutional capacity, international ties, and views must be heard, respected, and taken into account in building common goals.

IARA maintains exactly the opposite: strengthening Armenia does not require weakening the Diaspora. A strong Armenia needs a Diaspora that is strong, active, committed, and able to contribute.

The Diaspora is not an obstacle to the consolidation and strengthening of the Republic of Armenia, nor is it an actor outside the national project. It is a fundamental part of the Armenian Nation, built up over generations by communities that, in numerous countries and, in many cases, for over a century, have preserved the identity, culture, memory, institutions, and values of the Armenian people.

Weakening the Diaspora would mean weakening one of Armenia’s main sources of strength. The extensive network of Armenian institutions, professionals, entrepreneurs, academics, leaders, and citizens around the world constitutes human, institutional, cultural, and relational capital of enormous value to the Nation.

For this reason, the relationship between Armenia and the Diaspora cannot be built on a logic of subordination, instruction, or one-sided compliance. The Diaspora cannot be conceived of as a mere recipient of decisions made in Armenia, subsequently asked to fall in line with them.

Armenian communities around the world must be recognized as strategic allies of the Republic of Armenia, capable of contributing knowledge, experience, resources, international ties, institutional influence, and a deep commitment to the Nation’s future. That human, institutional, and relational capital must not be weakened — it must be called upon, listened to, and put to use.

In Argentina’s case, the Armenian community has spent more than a century building institutions and developing a presence deeply integrated into society, with ties across the political, academic, business, cultural, educational, sports, and social spheres. That trajectory is a heritage belonging both to the community

and to the Armenian Nation as a whole.

The convening of the Armenia 2026 World Summit represents, in this sense, an opportunity to move toward a new stage in the relationship between Armenia and the Diaspora. IARA values the chance to take part, but considers it essential that this participation go beyond a merely protocolary or consultative role and become a genuine space for dialogue, where communities can voice their positions, contribute their experience, and take part in defining common goals.

IARA understands that building a national Armenian policy also requires listening to the voices of those who, from different corners of the world, have upheld Armenian identity for generations, defended its memory, contributed to the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, and built institutions that today form an essential part of the Nation’s heritage.

The Diaspora should not be weaker so that Armenia can be stronger. On the contrary, the Diaspora must be stronger so that Armenia can be too.

A strengthened Armenia and a strengthened Diaspora are not contradictory projects. On the contrary, they need each other. The defense of national interests, the preservation of our identity, the protection of heritage, the defense of memory, and Armenia’s international standing will all be more effective the greater the capacity for coordinated work between the Armenian State and Armenian communities worldwide.

In this context, IARA has presented to the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs a series of priorities it considers fundamental to the debate at the Armenia 2026 World Summit, including: respect for the autonomy and integrity of the Armenian Apostolic Church; including the release of Armenian prisoners on the agenda of talks with Azerbaijan; giving greater priority to April 24 and to the demand for recognition of the Armenian Genocide; respect for the symbols that identify and unite Armenians around the world; the return of the Armenians of Artsakh; reparations for displaced families; the preservation of Armenian cultural heritage; the establishment of real, permanent institutional mechanisms for Diaspora participation; and the inclusion of local Armenian institutions on the agenda of officials visiting Argentina.

IARA has also requested a virtual meeting with the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, Zareh Sinanyan, in order to present these positions in person, exchange views, and establish a working methodology that allows for substantive participation by Argentina’s Armenian institutions in the Summit.

IARA reaffirms its commitment to working for a strong, sovereign Armenian Nation, recognized and respected internationally. And it understands that this goal will not be achieved by shrinking the space given to the Diaspora, but by integrating its capabilities, listening to its views, and building a common strategy together with it.

Armenia and the Diaspora do not compete for the same space. They are two inseparable dimensions of one and the same Nation.

(This opinion piece by the IARA was originally as published in Spanish in *Sardarabad*, the Buenos-Aires-based ADL newspaper, on August 20.)

How to Better Leverage US AI Diplomacy in the Caucasus

By Marine Collins Ragnet and
Aiza Shahid Qureshi

When Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan and Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang met on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum, they focused their conversation on the digital sector and Armenia’s energy grid. A day earlier, US President Donald Trump presided over the signing of the Charter of the Board of Peace. Leaders from 19 countries, including Armenia and Azerbaijan, joined him to mark the start of the new international body.

The two nations have clashed for decades in the South Caucasus. Still, on August 8, six months before the Board of Peace charter signing, Trump, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev got together in Washington to sign the Joint Declaration on Future Relations. No official record connects these meetings. But at Davos, DC, and elsewhere, compute capacity has become a sort of bargaining chip in American foreign policy. And Nvidia has emerged as a key architect of that policy, acting as an informal and unrestrained diplomatic actor.

The declaration is not ratified and does not yet mark a definitive end to the long-standing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. It does, however, effectively sideline the OSCE Minsk Group, the multilateral framework that had structured international mediation between Armenia and Azerbaijan since 1992. In its place, it outlines “the importance of maintaining and strengthening peace between our two countries” and recognizes the inviolability of their national borders.

It also states ambitions for economic cooperation through promoting connectivity between Azerbaijan and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, located within Armenia’s borders. This will be achieved in part through the forthcoming Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP), a transportation and energy corridor that will connect the two territories in a new route linking Europe and Central Asia.

But the talks did not stop at railroad planning. That same day, Armenia and the United States signed a Memorandum of Understanding on a bilateral AI and Semiconductor Innovation Partnership. Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy Michael Kratsios met with Arme-

nia’s Minister of High-Tech Industry, Mkhitar Hayrapetyan, to discuss opportunities for the Armenian tech sector. Hayrapetyan briefed Kratsios on Armenia’s priorities for semiconductor design and artificial intelligence and outlined a partnership with Nvidia for a \$500 million investment.

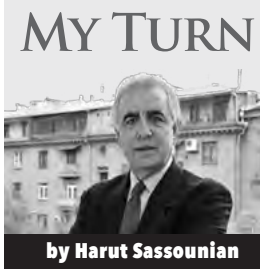
That investment was in FirebirdAI, a public-private partnership with Nvidia and the Armenian government. Razmig Hovaghimian, a young founder of a streaming video site and a Messi sports tech venture, now leads the Hrazdan AI data center project from San Francisco. To Hovaghimian, the project demonstrates “how trusted US infrastructure can power emerging economies.” Armenia, like most of the world, is not a hub for compute infrastructure such as chips and data centers. But thankfully for the country, deals with Nvidia came at the same time as deals with Washington.

On November 20, the United States granted export authorizations for Nvidia Blackwell GPUs for Firebird, elevating Armenia to be among the world’s top five largest AI GPU clusters. The approval did not come easily. Under the Foreign Direct Product Rule (FDPR), products like the

continued on next page



COMMENTARY



by Harut Sassounian

MY TURN

Baku May Regret Suing CNN for its Report on Israeli Forces in Azerbaijan

The government of Azerbaijan filed a lawsuit last week against CNN in a U.S. federal court for reporting that “Israel sent troops to Azerbaijan during the Iran war.”

Based on unnamed sources, CNN reported on June 5, 2026, that the Israeli forces in Azerbaijan “consisted of several dozen troops, including members of Israel’s special operations forces, its elite heliborne combat and rescue force, and Mossad personnel.” CNN said that it was informed that the Israeli teams, located on several bases in southern Azerbaijan near the Iranian border, conducted intelligence-gathering missions and drone operations, and maintained positions that could support aerial rescue missions in case of downed Israeli pilots over Iran.

CNN reported that Israel had spent months preparing intelligence infrastructure along the Azerbaijan-Iran border before the outbreak of hostilities. According to sources cited by the news network, Israeli operatives installed surveillance and intelligence-gathering equipment near the frontier in early 2026, reflecting Israeli concerns that diplomatic efforts between Washington and Tehran would ultimately fail.

CNN further reported that this relationship with Israel “gives Azerbaijan access to a critical diplomatic resource, according to Joshua Kucera, a senior analyst for The Crisis Group, allowing Baku to utilize Israel’s lobby in Washington, D.C.”

According to CNN, one of the key operations launched from Azerbaijan was the killing on March 4, 2026, of Rahman Moghaddam, who led the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ (IRGC) intelligence division.

The CNN report highlighted the longstanding strategic relationship between Israel and Azerbaijan. Baku supplies 40 percent of Israel’s oil imports, while Israel provides 70% of Azerbaijan’s advanced military equipment. President Ilham Aliyev had described Baku’s relationship with Israel as an iceberg, with 90 percent of it hidden below the surface.

Israel was among the first countries to recognize Azerbaijan’s independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the two countries have developed extensive defense, intelligence, and energy cooperation.

Neither Israel nor Azerbaijan has publicly acknowledged any military cooperation related to the war with Iran beyond their existing defense relationship. A spokesperson for Azerbaijan’s embassy in Washington denied CNN’s report. “We firmly reject unfounded claims regarding the alleged use of Azerbaijan’s territory for operations against third countries,” the embassy said in a statement to CNN. Azerbaijan’s foreign ministry described the CNN report as “entirely baseless” and called on CNN several times to retract the report. CNN declined Azerbaijan’s demand. “We stand by our reporting,” a spokesperson

for CNN asserted. Significantly, Israel’s Prime Minister’s Office and the Israel Defense Forces have not responded to CNN’s request for comment.

On August 17, 2026, the government of Azerbaijan filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Delaware against CNN, alleging two counts:

Count I: Defamation — Azerbaijan claimed that CNN ignored its denials and exercised systematic bias. It further alleged that CNN prepared its report “with actual malice,” that is, with knowledge that its statements were false or with reckless disregard for the truth.

Count II: Intentional Infliction of Harm — Without excuse or justification, CNN intentionally inflicted harm on Azerbaijan, resulting in damages.

Azerbaijan’s lawsuit accused the news network of “causing immeasurable reputational harm to Azerbaijan and endangering Azerbaijani civilians.... CNN’s reckless reporting threatened to drag Azerbaijan into war.... CNN’s claims in this regard are demonstrably and knowingly false and recklessly exacerbate geopolitical tensions in an already volatile region.”

Azerbaijan asked the Court to “award damages [against CNN] in an amount to be determined at trial; award pre-judgment and post-judgment interest; direct CNN to publish a full, conspicuous, and unequivocal retraction of the Defamatory Post; direct CNN to remove the Defamatory Post from its website, print editions, social media feeds, and all digital archives under CNN’s control; and award such further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.”

Interestingly, similar reports about the presence of Israeli forces have been published by the international media for years, but for unknown reasons, the government of Azerbaijan did not file a lawsuit against any of those organizations. In a detailed essay in *Foreign Policy* in 2012, Mark Perry of the Quincy Institute wrote that Azerbaijan was “Israel’s secret staging ground” against Iran.

There are several complex legal issues involved in Azerbaijan’s lawsuit against CNN:

1) Does Azerbaijan, as a foreign country, have the right to sue in a U.S. court an American news organization for publishing a critical report?

2) Can Azerbaijan prove that CNN acted with “actual malice,” which means that it issued the report knowing that it was false and with reckless disregard for the truth?

3) Can Azerbaijan ask the Court to demand that CNN disclose its confidential journalistic sources?

4) Does Azerbaijan’s lawsuit infringe on CNN’s First Amendment right to freedom of expression and of the press?

5) In its defamation claim, Azerbaijan must be able to prove not only that the CNN report was false and issued with malice, but, more importantly, that Baku suffered actual monetary damages as a result of CNN’s report.

The biggest potential bombshell of this lawsuit is CNN’s ability to subpoena Azerbaijan’s and Israel’s secret internal documents to discover what military agreements they have signed with each other. If the Judge approves the issuance of such a subpoena, Azerbaijan may conclude that it is in its best interest to drop the lawsuit rather than risk disclosing its secret military agreements with Israel. Pres. Aliyev’s description of Azerbaijan’s relationship with Israel as an iceberg, with 90% of it hidden below the surface, is extremely relevant in this regard.

from previous page

Blackwell GPUs are subject to US export restrictions because they are partly manufactured in the United States and use US-origin technology.

At a press briefing the same day as Firebird’s announcement, Pashinyan revealed he had personally helped advance the export authorizations with President Trump, discussing investor concerns over procedural and regulatory delays. He thanked the White House for moving things “very quickly” with the investment project and allowing the project to ‘be confidently brought to life’ with expedited export approvals that circumvented the traditional US Bureau of Industry and Security regulatory process.

He also tied the project’s implementation to the AI and Semiconductor Innovation MoU signed in Washington on August 8, the same day as the peace declaration. Hovaghimian has thanked the US and Armenian governments for “their partnership in enabling American technology to operate globally at scale.”

As Armenia becomes a regional AI hub, it needs fiber, energy and transit to support connectivity. TRIPP could reasonably provide the fiber and transit. The Electric Networks of Armenia, the country’s main power utility, was owned by Russian-Armenian billionaire Samvel Karapetyan until June last year, when he was arrested on charges of “calling for the seizure of power.” The Armenian government has since opened talks on potentially nationalizing the utility or transferring it to an “internationally reputable” — and likely American — energy operator.

tionally reputable” — and likely American — energy operator.

The changing landscape for physical and digital infrastructure in Armenia through TRIPP, export authorizations, and a state- or internationally-owned energy grid can pave the way for Firebird’s success. Questions about the future of the ENA create both opportunity for US control and risk for US investment. What is certain, though, is that this infrastructure-as-leverage strategy is being deployed without clear boundaries for private-sector involvement.

Through this strategy, the United States can bind partner economies to American technology at a moment when Chinese alternatives are gaining ground, giving recipient states a stake in a sector that will define the next era of economic growth. But this approach has emerged without the governance architecture that accompanied earlier American efforts to spread dual-use technologies. No multilateral framework constrains how chip access is granted, no safeguards regime monitors where the hardware ends up, and no public accounting tracks the terms on which a private company plays a role in development investments and partnerships.

That has not given the US pause. In February, Vice President JD Vance visited Armenia and Azerbaijan, where he noted that the Firebird project could reach “\$4 billion in total investment.” A TRIPP Enterprise Fund, seeded with roughly \$200 million, aims to mobilize private capital along the transit corridor in logistics, energy, and critical minerals, deepening ties between

the United States, Armenia, and Nvidia in data centers and the infrastructure networks surrounding them.

The path to billion-dollar data centers in Armenia began with promises of manufacturing in the United States. On April 14, 2025, Mr. Huang committed Nvidia and its suppliers to building up to \$500 billion of AI infrastructure in American factories over four years. After the deal, Trump and Huang began collaborating to pursue AI chip deals alongside diplomatic negotiations. Over the past year, Nvidia helped facilitate more than 35,000 chips to Saudi Arabia and the UAE after Trump made deals with the countries.

Kazakhstan signed onto the US-brokered Abraham Accords, which normalized ties between Israel and several Muslim-majority countries, and soon after announced a \$2 billion deal for Nvidia chips to develop local AI data centers. Kazakhstan, however, already has full diplomatic ties with Israel. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Kazakhstan’s president, noted that the Abraham Accords development was to ensure Kazakhstan gets “certain dividends from the point of view of economic cooperation.” A US official confirmed that the chip deal helped bring Kazakhstan to the table.

Huang has continued to press for authorizations to sell Blackwell chips to China, against the strategic logic of the deals he has helped broker in the Middle East. He has argued selling Nvidia’s most advanced technology to China is preferable to ceding the market to a stronger, less US-reliant competitor. But a company with incentives

to sell to every customer is a poor partner for advancing US strategic goals and navigating complex national security dynamics. In Armenia and elsewhere, Nvidia is not making foreign policy. But without any governance framework, it is shaping it — on terms the public cannot see, and Congress has not approved.

In Armenia, Firebird grants the host nation roughly 20 percent of compute, with the remaining 80 percent allocated to United States and international companies. The host state provides land, energy, regulatory accommodation, and political cover, while US companies primarily capture the value generated by the infrastructure.

During the Cold War, the United States began to sell nuclear power to other countries on the condition that they use the technology for peaceful purposes. But the government was overconfident in its ability to control the nuclear behavior of other nations, and several governments succeeded in producing weapons from nuclear technologies sold under the pretense of peaceful use. The misuse of US technology transfers cast a long shadow on the Atoms for Peace program. Although the scientific, commercial, and political benefits of US nuclear exports were real, so were the risks of recipient nations developing nuclear weapons.

The nuclear nonproliferation regime came to encompass norms and safeguards for commerce and nuclear development, and led to the establishment of the IAEA. The structure was far from perfect. But it see DIPLOMACY, page 20

How to Better Leverage US AI Diplomacy in the Caucasus

DIPLOMACY, from page 19

limited the possession of a nuclear weapon to a handful of nations, and not a single nuclear weapon has been employed in a military conflict since World War II. With AI, the risks parallel some of those that characterized nuclear energy—but no equivalent architecture exists for regulating the sale and transfer of semiconductors.

Blackwell chips can fall into foreign possession, and energy disruptions by Russia or Iran-aligned actors can quickly halt operations at the Hrazdan data center. In June, the US Department of Commerce rushed to stop AI chip exports to Chinese-owned AI firms outside China, filling a regulatory gap created after the Commerce Department decided to stop enforcing the AI diffusion rule. But diverting chips to adversaries is just one risk of the current US policy approach. A more fundamental threat lies in how the United States is building the precedent for how the most consequential dual-use technology of the century will be diffused.

American engineering and consulting firm AECOM recently visited Armenia and is preparing to break ground for the TRIPP

corridor project. Construction is moving faster than considerations of the national security implications if China or Russia replicate the US approach. Huawei and DeepSeek already have the components for a parallel arrangement that could take form in any state willing to trade infrastructure investment for political alignment. The question is not if a similar partnership will arise in Iran or Russia, but whether the United States can manage its consequences.

Two governance measures would help close the gap.

The first is a transparency requirement for state-brokered private sector deals on dual-use technology, with a congressional notification role similar to the structure governing arms sales. The August MoU terms should be in the public record. The November FDPR waiver should have been more transparent, with a case presented to regulators and journalists.

Second, a compute analog to IAEA safeguards is critical. The Bureau of Industry and Security already operates end-use monitoring for sensitive exports. What is missing is a multilateral verification re-

gime, with third-party authority to confirm where high-end GPUs physically end up under what operational control. Wassenaar, the existing multilateral export control arrangement, is voluntary and was designed for different technology, making it ill-suited to meet the governance needs for AI semiconductors.

During the Cold War, the United States leveraged its public institutions to respond to the scale and risk of the nuclear issue. Today’s approach to AI skips deliberation entirely.

There are legitimate merits to working with partner economies through selling American technology at a moment of strategic competition. But this chip-for-tat diplomacy opens the door to significant political and security risks. As AI development gains unprecedented strategic importance, the infrastructure around its diffusion needs thoughtful reconstruction.

(Marine Collins Ragnet is head of innovation at NYU’s Peace Research and Education Program (PREP) and adjunct faculty at NYU’s Center for Global Affairs. She leads the Peace x AI Program at NYU. She spent a decade in diplomacy, advising

senior officials across three governments and a multilateral mission, including at the US Mission to the OECD in Paris. Her research examines how compute and data infrastructure are reshaping sovereignty. Aiza Shahid Qureshi is a researcher and writer focused on economic development, emerging markets, and AI infrastructure. She works on development finance policy at the United Nations Foundation in New York and previously worked at the US Mission to the OECD in Paris. This commentary originally appeared on the website of the National Interest on August 18.)

Armenians Well Represented in Venice Art Scene This Summer

VENICE, from page 13

Moving through three rooms and three sensory experiences, the visitor makes a transition from the material to the intangible and then to the invisible and mystical. It is a space for contemplation, introspection, and reflection, inviting the viewer to listen to silence, perceive the unseen, and distinguish the scents and barely audible sounds of the intangibility.

In our noisy world, the artist invites visitors to enter his space on the condition that they switch off their mobile phones and remain silent, thus becoming more receptive both to the inner world of the artworks and to themselves. Here, time unfolds slowly in different layers: the material of the first part — in



Armen Agop

this case, a granite mass reminiscent of a vishapakar (dragon stone) — carries within it its geological and human history, while memory reverberates in invisible voids. Contrary to the usual conventions of museums and exhibitions, in the second room visitors are allowed to touch the exhibited work, establishing, in semi-darkness, a silent connection between themselves and its smooth material surface. In the third room, elusive sounds are heard at first, eventually transforming into the beating of a heart, while a spreading scent creates yet another intangible connection between the viewer and what is presented, prompting reflection on the perceptible and elusive bonds between human beings and their surroundings.

Incidentally, on August 17, the exhibition “The Parajanov Battalion” opened in Venice, which explores themes of transnational solidarity, identity, war, and militarism through the prism of queer experience. This project was initiated by Russian conceptual artist Yevgeniy Fiks and should last until September 15.



15TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

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

Join us in supporting the next chapter in Armenia.



September 20, 2026

Vibiana | Los Angeles