

Armenian Court Files
Confirm Turkey’s Pipeline
For Deploying Jihadists to
Artsakh, Libya

By Abdullah Bozkurt

STOCKHOLM (Nordic Monitor) — Armenian court documents have provided yet another detailed account of a modus operandi developed under the Islamist government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for advancing Ankara’s regional interests through jihadist fighters, showing how men recruited from Turkish-backed armed factions were moved across Turkey and deployed to Azerbaijan after similar networks had already been used in Syria and Libya.

The long-running criminal case against two Syrian nationals captured during the 2020 Armenia-Azerbaijan war offers an unusually granular look at the infrastructure behind that policy, apparently sanctioned by President Erdogan and carried out by his intelligence agency MIT and the Turkish military.

According to information entered into Armenia’s judicial database, recruiters linked to the Turkish-backed Sultan Sulaiman Shah Brigade, a jihadist group that has been built by Turkey in Syria, enlisted hundreds Syrians, trained them in northern Syria, moved them across the Turkish border in a clandestine operation, transported them between Turkish airports on civilian

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Lawyer Says Armenian
Prisoners In Azerbaijan
Kept in ‘Absolute Isolation’

By Naira Bulghadarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenian prisoners in Azerbaijan are being kept in “absolute isolation” from the outside world, with their only contact with it coming through monitored telephone calls, according to Siranush Sahakyan, a Yerevan-based lawyer representing the prisoners at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

“There is no physical contact with the outside world,” Sahakyan said at a news conference on September 4. “They do not see their families, consular officials, independent doctors, lawyers or representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross.”

She said that while monitored telephone calls were allowed, Azerbaijani authorities could forcefully terminate them at any time.

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Robin the Robot creators Davit Martirosyan, left, and Karén Khachikyan

Meet Robin the Robot

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

LOS ANGELES/WATERTOWN — Whatever one’s opinions about robots, they are seldom viewed as nurturers.

Robin the Robot, however, is as far away from that as possible; this compilation of software, metal and plastic is designed to offer compassion and warmth, in conjunction with human care givers, to the youngest and oldest members of society.

Robin is the creation of the Los Angeles-based Expper Technologies. Davit Martirosyan, the co-founder and head of engineering at Expper, in a recent interview, spoke about how Robin, a decidedly non-human-looking robot, is finding a home in many pediatric hospitals and dental practices, as well as nursing homes. Martirosyan founded the company with his friend, Karén Khachikyan, in Yerevan in 2019. The latter is the company’s CEO.

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Children play with Robin.

Prosecutor in Case
Against Armenian
Church Leader
Resigns

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

Khachatur Galstyan, the prosecutor in the case against Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and six senior bishops, has resigned from his post. The Prosecutor General’s Office said on September 7 his departure was at his “own request” and unrelated to the criminal case, from which three judges have withdrawn in a month.



Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II

The trial is the first time in Armenia’s modern history where criminal charges have been brought against the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church and concerns the church’s refusal to reinstate a bishop who supported Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s Church reforms.

If convicted, Catholicos Karekin II and six other senior bishops could face up to two years in prison.

Opposition-affiliated News.5tv.am was the first to report the prosecutor’s resignation on Saturday, September 5. The

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US Promised Armenia Nvidia Chips as Part of Azerbaijan
Peace Deal, Wall Street Journal Reports

By Nate Ostiller

The US has promised Armenia access to highly desired Nvidia AI chips as part of its quest to broker a peace deal with Azerbaijan in 2025, the *Wall Street Journal* reported over the weekend, citing sources. The pledged chips, numbering some 70,000, will be installed in the recently inaugurated Firebird data center, the largest such facility in the region.

US negotiators reportedly promised to authorize the sale of the chips as a carrot to bring Armenia to the table, culminating in the Washington summit in August 2025 between US President Donald Trump, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. The summit resulted in

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Firebird data center in Armenia



ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

New French Ambassador Presents Credentials

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The newly appointed French ambassador to Armenia, Florian Escudié, presented his credentials to Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan on September 7.

The president congratulated the ambassador on his appointment and wished him success in his diplomatic mission, and emphasized the importance of further deepening the special relations between Armenia and France.

Escudié thanked Khachaturyan and conveyed the greetings of President Emmanuel Macron.

Export of Produce from Armenia to UAE Has Started

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The export of fresh Armenian fruits and vegetables to the United Arab Emirates has begun at an initial volume of up to 40 tons per week, with plans to increase volumes in the future.

According to the Ministry of Economy of Armenia, the exports are being carried out within the framework of a Memorandum of Understanding signed on August 27 with the Dubai-based company Watermelon Ecosystem.

During his recent visit to Dubai, Minister of Economy Gevorg Papoyan toured the company's premises together with its founders, getting acquainted with its activities, infrastructure, and production facilities.

Watermelon Ecosystem is a technology platform for the food and beverage industry that brings together restaurants, hotels, food suppliers, producers, and farmers. The company also actively cooperates with local manufacturers and suppliers.

Yerevan Selects Consortium to Build Waste Plant

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Yerevan has selected a consortium of Chinese, Arab and Armenian companies to build a waste recycling plant in the Armenian capital, Mayor Tigran Avinyan said on September 8.

The Yerevan Municipality will now negotiate the details of the project with the consortium and draw up the necessary agreements and contracts, Avinyan told a meeting of Yerevan's City Council.

He said earlier attempts to launch the project had failed to get off the ground.

"The process is still a challenging one, but we believe we have now reached a stage where the winning bid meets our requirements," Avinyan said.

Two bidders took part in the tender, with one selected as the winner, she said.

Pashinyan Orders Probe Into Claims Linking His Family to Businesses

By Ruzanna Stepanian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has called for an investigation into claims that a local entrepreneur is seeking to "create the impression" that his businesses are linked to the prime minister's family.

During a press briefing on Thursday, September 3, Pashinyan said he had instructed law-enforcement authorities to question people over media reports alleging that shops in Armenia's provinces had been acquired on the instructions of his wife, Anna Hakobyan, and subsequently turned into "88" supermarkets.

"I have instructed them to question those people one by one," Pashinyan said, adding that he had repeatedly demanded that the authorities investigate the allegations and that his response would be "harsh" if evidence was found that the businessman, Narek Nalbandyan, was attempting to link himself to his family.

The Prosecutor-General's Office confirmed later in the day that a criminal case concerning the activities of the "88" supermarket chain had been initiated still in February. It did not provide details on the article of the Criminal Code under which the proceedings were launched or which body is currently investigating it.

Nalbandyan has been repeatedly linked in media reports to Hakobyan in recent months. The reports alleged that shops in Armenia's provinces were being taken from their owners and subsequently turned into "88" supermarkets with Hakobyan's approval.

Hakobyan denied the allegations last year, saying she had no connection with Nalbandyan's supermarket chain. She even called for a boycott of the stores allegedly linked to her name and filed a report with the Prosecutor-General's Office, which took up the matter.

Pashinyan said he was particularly angered by Nalbandyan's alleged failure to publicly deny any connection with his family.

"I am surprised that he doesn't deny it," he said. This really gets on our nerves."

Nalbandyan issued a denial shortly after Pashinyan's remarks, blaming "various groups" for "repeatedly seeking to link my name and business projects to Pashinyan, members of his family or former officials."

"I have repeatedly denied these reports and once again clearly state today that I have no personal, family or business ties with any current or former political figures or any political force," Nalbandyan said.

Nalbandyan, whose business holdings expanded dramatically after Armenia's 2018 "velvet revolution," which brought Pashinyan to power, has built a diverse business portfolio spanning supermarkets, hotels, factories, agricultural enterprises, mines and other assets.

In a 2025 interview with the online video channel of the investigative publication Hetq, Nalbandyan acknowledged that, based on media speculation, some people might view him as the authorities' "favorite oligarch," a characterization he strongly rejected.

The businessman first attracted wider public attention after buying the Golden Palace hotel in the resort town of Tsaghkadzor from former Customs Committee chief Armen Avetisian following the 2018 change of power. The hotel, later renamed "88", had been surrendered to the state by Avetisian, who was involved in a criminal proceeding, and was subsequently sold by

the state to Nalbandyan. Hetq reported that Nalbandyan bought the property in 2022 on preferential terms.

That same year, Nalbandyan also bought a mansion in an upscale Yerevan district that was owned by former Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamian. Media reports put the sale price at \$5 million.

The transaction took place despite prosecutors' ban on the Cadaster Committee to



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and businessman Narek Nalbandyan (file photo)

carry out any deal involving the property, which had been recognized as material evidence in a criminal case.

The deal has also been repeatedly criticized by the opposition, which has accused Pashinyan of transferring property confiscated from former officials not to the public but to his "favorite oligarch."

"People have for years claimed that Hovik Abrahamyan's villa was illegally acquired and must be returned to the public, but over the course of years it turned out that the public's name is Narek Nalbandyan," opposition Hayastan alliance lawmaker Anna Grigorian said sarcastically in one of her recent speeches in parliament.

Pashinyan, meanwhile, said on September 3 that his family had no business interests in Armenia or abroad and that all of their assets had been listed in the annual income declaration.

Lawyer Says Armenian Prisoners In Azerbaijan Kept in 'Absolute Isolation'

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Twenty Armenians are currently imprisoned in Azerbaijan, including eight former leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh who were detained after Baku's military recapture of the breakaway region in 2023.

All of them have been tried and convicted on various charges related to alleged war crimes, with prison terms ranging from 20 years to life. Human rights lawyers are now seeking to defend their rights before the ECHR.

Sahakyan also mentioned complaints among Armenian prisoners about inadequate medical care provided to them in Azerbaijan.

"Basically, medication may be provided in extreme situations to alleviate certain symptoms, but no measures are being taken to treat existing illnesses or prevent their deterioration," she said.

"According to our information, medical assistance and treatment are not being properly organized for the Armenian prisoners," Sahakyan added, stressing that she has no independent assessment of their actual health condition.

Sahakyan also spoke in detail about the case against Ruben Vardanyan, an Armenian-born businessman who briefly served as Karabakh premier in late 2022 and early 2023.

Vardanyan, 58, was sentenced to 20 years in prison by a military court in Baku

in February after being convicted on multiple charges, including financing terrorism, creating and supplying illegal armed groups, committing violations of the laws and customs of war, illegally crossing a state border and other offenses. He denies the charges, calling his conviction baseless.

The lawyer said the individual charges brought against Vardanyan were not substantiated by any evidence.

She said she had examined details of Vardanyan's verdict and found no evidence of any specific order he allegedly gave to carry out killings, torture or displacement, or attacks on civilians.

"His involvement in the crimes attributed to him has not been established," Sahakyan said, adding that there was "not a single piece of evidence, witness or victim who said that Vardanyan had committed a crime that harmed any Azerbaijani."

Among the dozens of crimes attributed to Vardanyan, Baku has also accused him of financing terrorism in connection with his role as a co-founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, which has annually awarded individuals for their humanitarian work on behalf of survivors of the 1915 Armenian Genocide.

In particular, Sahakyan said, in the case files Vardanyan was portrayed as a member of a criminal organization as one of the awards was described as financing for Kurdish-origin relatives of an awardee.

Sahakyan also alleged that Armenian prisoners in Azerbaijan have been subjected to targeted actions involving religious symbols.

She said international reports had documented a case in which a cross-shaped tattoo was removed from an Armenian prisoner's skin by burning, describing the act as torture. She also said that Christian Armenian prisoners had been denied access to the Bible and that there had been cases in which they were forced to read the Quran.

Azerbaijani officials did not immediately respond to the attorney's allegations of ill-treatment of Armenian prisoners, which RFE/RL's Armenian Service could not independently verify.

Armenian authorities say they continue to work for the release and repatriation of Armenian prisoners.

At a press briefing on September 3, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan confirmed that the issue was discussed during his latest meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev that took place on the margins of a Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on August 31.

"Naturally, issues related to prisoners and missing persons were part of the discussions," Pashinyan said, declining to provide details. He added that publicly discussing such matters "could not in any way be beneficial."



ARMENIA

New Documentary Chronicles Resilience and Healing Among Displaced Youth from Artsakh

YEREVAN — The short documentary film (33 min.) “I Will Come” (original “Եւ կգամ”), directed by Sona Aleksanyan and produced by Ani Manukyan, offers a moving exploration of displacement, resilience and hope. The film follows the lives of four teenage girls forcibly displaced from Artsakh in 2023, capturing their intimate personal testimonies, the trauma of blockade and war, and their courageous journey toward rebuilding their lives in a new reality.

Built upon raw, personal narratives and a sensitive human-centric approach, “I Will Come” goes beyond the headlines of geopolitical crisis to focus on the inner worlds, unyielding spirit, and future aspirations of youth forced to start over from scratch.

Manukyan shared the vision behind the project: “This film is not merely a documentation of loss; it is a testament to the extraordinary resilience of the human spirit. Through the eyes of these young girls, we wanted to ensure that their stories of survival, adaptation, and unwavering hope are heard and preserved for international audiences.”

Aleksanyan added: “Directing this project required immense emotional care. We wanted to give our heroes a platform to speak for themselves, capturing both the heavy shadows of what was left behind and the quiet, stubborn light of their new beginnings.”

The documentary was released in May. It is now entering its festival and screening circuit, with plans for international screenings outside of Armenia to raise global awareness about the ongoing reverberations of the 2023 Artsakh displacement.



From left, Mane Melkumyan, Elina Atajanyan, Mariam Mnatsakanyan and Ani Manukyan

Echmiadzin Condemns ‘Inappropriate Events’ at Church Run by Defrocked Priest

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin has condemned what it described as “inappropriate events” at a church still run by a priest who was defrocked last year after publicly supporting a government campaign against Catholicos Karekin II.

In a statement issued on September 7, the governing body of the Armenian Apostolic Church referred to videos circulating on social media since Sunday, September 6, showing loud pop music being played on the grounds of Hovhannavank, a medieval monastery in Armenia’s western Aragatsotn province.

Despite being defrocked in October 2025, Father Aram, now referred to by the church by his secular name, Stepan Asatryan, refused to hand over the keys to Hovhannavank and continues to conduct services there, while banning clergymen loyal to Karekin II from the site.

The church expressed concern over the

alleged party held at Hovhannavank, saying it “disrupted the monastery’s spiritual and prayerful atmosphere, causing concern among local residents.”

The Mother See said the events were the direct result of what it described as “open government patronage and permissiveness” towards the defrocked priest. He said this violated Armenian law and the rights of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

“The fact that Hovhannavank has been seized, as well as the arbitrary actions taking place there, also offend the pious feelings of the faithful and violate their rights, misleading devout visitors through invalid rites and religious services,” the Mother See said.

Asatryan rejected allegations that inappropriate music was played at Hovhannavank following a wedding ceremony, describing the videos posted online as “defamatory.” He claimed that the music had been added to the footage through “simple

computer editing.”

Still, the Mother See renewed her appeal to state authorities to refrain from what she called “divisive interference” in church affairs and to restore the legal status of Hovhannavank and other “seized” churches.

Asatryan was defrocked by the order of the Catholicos of All Armenians after he was accused of discrediting the Armenian Church, a diocesan leader, and fellow clergy through public statements and speeches. The Church also accused him of arbitrarily omitting the names of the Ca-

tholikos of All Armenians and diocesan leaders during liturgies.

Asatryan has disputed the legality of his defrocking. He has said that, as a citizen, he has the right to express his views and support the positions of political forces, while also arguing that the Armenian Church needs reform.

The Armenian Apostolic Church’s failure to reinstate a defrocked priest despite a court order is at the heart of a current legal dispute in which Catholicos Karekin II and six other senior clergymen stand trial.

Prosecutor in Case Against Armenian Church Leader Resigns

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Prosecutor General’s Office confirmed to local media that Galstyan left the post at his request. They denied his departure was related to the Karekin II case.

The prosecutor’s resignation came after three judges withdrew from the case within a month. Most recently, Vahagn Melikyan withdrew from the case in early September by applying to the Court of Cassation to resolve a dispute over its territorial jurisdiction. According to Armenian state-run media outlet Armenpress, his decision was based on the charges against Karekin II not specifying the location of the alleged offence.

The case was originally heard in Vagharshapat, Armavir Province, on 7 August, where the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, the seat of the Catholicos, is located. The first judge, Hakob Manukyan, recused himself. The second judge, Serzh Rushanyan, decided at the end of August to

transfer it to Yerevan.

Karekin II and six other senior clergy members are accused of deliberately “obstructing the enforcement of a lawful court decision” through “abuse of power.” Despite a court order, the Catholicos refused to reinstate Bishop Gevorg Saroyan, who was defrocked in January after supporting Pashinyan in his conflict with the church and Karekin II.

The court case comes amid already tense relations between church and Pashinyan’s government, which have deteriorated since May 2025 when Pashinyan accused church leadership of failing to properly maintain churches. The Armenian prime minister also alleged that Karekin II is fathering a child and senior clergy members have ties with foreign special forces. Ousting the Catholicos has now been included in the new government’s 2026–2031 program.

(This article originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on September 7.)

US Promised Armenia Nvidia Chips As Part of Azerbaijan Peace Deal

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the initialing, but not signing, of a peace treaty to end decades of conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. A year later, the treaty remains unsigned, but significant steps have been made towards peace, including the opening of trade between the two countries and the launching of the proposed Trump Route infrastructure project, which would link Azerbaijan to its exclave of Nakhichevan through Armenian territory.

Ahead of the summit, US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff prepared a memo “outlin[ing] a plan to deepen Armenia’s economic relationship with the US and bolster the country’s tech industry, including giving export licenses for the Firebird chips.”

Despite his lack of experience, Witkoff has emerged as one of the Trump administration’s top negotiators in international affairs.

Then-US Ambassador to Armenia Kristina Kvien also helped promote the deal, personally meeting with Commerce Department officials to ask if the sale of chips could be authorized.

Nvidia also took steps independently to build ties with Armenia, utilizing Nvidia executive Rev Lebedian, who is of Armenian descent, the Wall Street Journal reported.

“For this administration, chip diplomacy is front and center. Our presence in Armenia and our investment in it is a big factor in creating the conditions by which peace can unfold,” Lebedian told the Wall Street Journal.

Sen. Steve Daines, who has made several official trips to the South Caucasus in Trump’s second term, said, “Firebird is the most tangible thing that Prime Minister Pashinyan can point to and say, ‘Peace delivered this.’ Getting the chips was a crucial political win.”

While Firebird had already applied for an export license for some graphics processing units (GPUs), it was only after the Washington Summit that the actual export of tens of thousands more Nvidia chips were officially approved, the Wall Street Journal reported.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Turkish Opposition MP Visits Ani

YEREVAN (Pan.am) — This past week, Inan Akgun Alp, a member of parliament from Kars for the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) of Turkey, visited the archaeological site of historic Ani.

After visiting the Turkish-Armenian border, Alp touched upon the ongoing processes in the region, noting that the ongoing settlement processes between Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Armenia have highlighted the importance of Turkey becoming a security center, Factor.am reported.

The MP also stressed the need to resolve the issues between Azerbaijan and Armenia through lasting peace.

“As you know, the ancient city of Ani was included in the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List in 2016. In front of us, across the water, is the territory of Armenia. The bridge you see is the bridge of the historical Silk Road, which we hope will become the ‘Bridge of Peace.’ We demand that the problems between Azerbaijan and Armenia be resolved with lasting peace, that Turkey become a security zone, and that border trade between us and Armenia be resumed,” he said.

Mirzoyan Meets with Latvian Counterpart

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, Ararat Mirzoyan, met with the President of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, Daiga Mieriņa on September 7, in Riga.

The two expressed satisfaction with the growing relations between Armenia and Latvia. The meeting also highlighted the importance of continuing cooperation between the friendship groups of the parliaments of Armenia and Latvia, as well as the parliamentary platform for the consistent development of cooperation in the Armenia – Northern Europe-Baltic States (NB8) format.

Mirzoyan and Mieriņa also touched upon the strategic agenda of the Armenia-EU partnership.

Armenia to Provide Medical Treatment for Gaza Children

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Armenian government will facilitate the transfer of children with serious health conditions from Gaza and organize the necessary medical care for them at Armenian healthcare facilities.

The Cabinet approved an additional 16.7 million drams (\$46,000) in funding for this purpose in late August.

The Ministry of Health has expressed its readiness and is currently working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the World Health Organization to transfer up to 10 children with serious health conditions from the Gaza Strip to Armenia.

Armenian Court Files Confirm Turkey's Pipeline For Deploying Jihadists to Artsakh, Libya

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aircraft and eventually flew them to Azerbaijan, where Turkish and Azerbaijani military personnel helped organize their deployment.

The Armenian prosecution went further, alleging that Muhammad al-Jasim, better known as Abu Amsha, the commander of the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade, had previously been recruited by Turkish intelligence services and was acting on instructions to recruit fighters for Azerbaijan's planned military campaign against Armenian forces in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

The allegations were laid out in the cases of Syrian nationals Muhrrab Muhammad al-Shkheri (51) and Yousef Alaabet al-Hajji (38), who were captured during the 44-day war that erupted on September 27, 2020, and ended with major Azerbaijani territorial gains.

The two Syrian fighters captured during the 2020 Armenia-Azerbaijan war were included on Armenia's list of designated persons pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1373. The list was approved at the 36th session of Armenia's Interagency Committee on Combating Money Laundering, Terrorism Financing and Proliferation Financing on October 18, 2021:

Nagorno-Karabakh was internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, although it had for decades been controlled by ethnic Armenian authorities backed by Armenia. Azerbaijan regained much of the territory it had lost in the first Karabakh war during its 2020 offensive.

The importance of the Armenian criminal files lies less in the eventual convictions of the two Syrians than in what investigators said they uncovered about the mechanism that delivered them to the battlefield.

According to the Armenian court files, Abu Amsha had been recruited by Turkey's special services, meaning the notorious Turkish intelligence agency MIT, and received instructions to recruit Syrians willing to fight on Azerbaijan's side for money.

The indictment said Abu Amsha and his associates targeted men struggling financially in areas of northern Syria under the influence of Turkish-backed armed groups. One of the defendants, Muhrrab Muhammad al-Shkheri, was allegedly approached in June 2020 by a representative of Abu Amsha identified as “Abu Hussein 23.”

He was offered \$2,000 a month to undergo military training and then travel to Azerbaijan to participate in the anticipated fighting against Armenian forces. Similar sums were also offered for Syrian jihadists who were transported to Libya to fight alongside the Libyan Islamist factions that were backed by Turkey in the post-Gaddafi period as well.

After accepting, al-Shkheri was taken to Sheikh Hadid in northern Syria, a stronghold associated with the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade. Armenian prosecutors said approximately 500 recruits underwent physical and military training there for three months.

A November 6, 2020, UN communication to the Turkish government raised concerns over allegations that Turkey recruited, financed and transported Syrian fighters to Azerbaijan for deployment in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The Armenian investigation placed recruitment and training months before the large-scale Azerbaijani offensive began on September 27, suggesting that the deployment was organized in advance rather than improvised after hostilities started.

On October 17, al-Shkheri and 17 other recruits were transported by truck to a

crossing point where approximately 250 fighters had assembled. They were subsequently taken toward the Turkish border near Kilis.

Commanders from the Suqour and Hamza factions were also present, according to the indictment, and were operating under Abu Amsha's authority. A commander identified as Colonel Mahmoud selected 250 men and divided them into five groups.

At about 11 p.m. the fighters crossed from Syria into Turkey. What followed is one of the most revealing allegations in the Armenian court record. Prosecutors said Turkish officials guarding the border did not request passports or other identification and knowingly allowed the entire group to cross.

That would mean Turkish border guards had been instructed to stand down and that the operation was being coordinated by MIT.

MIT also facilitated the movement of hundreds, if not thousands, of foreign fighters from around the world who traveled to Turkey and then crossed into Syria to join jihadist groups operating there.

On several occasions MIT's clandestine activities were exposed, prompting local prosecutors in Turkey in 2014 to open terrorism investigations targeting intelligence officials over secret assistance to jihadist groups. Those investigations were abruptly shut down after intervention by President Erdogan, shielding MIT personnel from potential prosecution over serious allegations that they had aided and abetted designated terrorist organizations.

Similar methods were apparently used in 2020 to move jihadist fighters to Azerbaijan for deployment against Armenian forces. The Armenian indictment therefore portrayed the Turkish state not merely as having failed to detect the clandestine movement of armed men across its territory but as actively facilitating and enabling the operation.

Once inside Turkey, the 250 Syrians were transported between civilian airports aboard aircraft bearing the Turkish flag, according to the case file. At the second airport they were allegedly met by about 50 Turkish military personnel. Under Turkish military escort, the fighters then boarded an aircraft displaying the Azerbaijani flag and flew to Azerbaijan on the morning of October 18, 2020.

There, more than 30 Azerbaijani servicemen allegedly met the recruits and transported them to a military installation. During the following seven days, Armenian prosecutors alleged, Abu Amsha participated in repeated discussions with Turkish and Azerbaijani military personnel concerning the upcoming combat operations. The Syrian fighters were given Azerbaijani military uniforms and weapons, including Kalashnikov rifles, PKS machine guns and RPG anti-tank grenade launchers.

The second defendant, Yousef Alaabet al-Hajji, was fed through much the same pipeline. His recruiter was identified as Ibrahim Rab al-Ayal, known as Abu Ahmad, from the Jisr al-Shughur area of Syria's Idlib Province. Al-Hajji also underwent training at Sheikh Hadid along with hundreds of other prospective fighters.

On September 25, 2020 — two days before the outbreak of the war — he was taken to the Bab al-Salam crossing in northern Syria. There, according to the court record, Abu Amsha's brother, identified as Seif, selected approximately 500 Syrian men between the ages of 20 and 40 and told them they would receive \$2,000 a month.

The 500 men then crossed into Turkey without Turkish border officers request-

ing passports or identification documents, prosecutors alleged.

According to al-Hajji's testimony, the bus journey from the Turkish-Syrian border to a Turkish airport took approximately two-and-a-half hours, suggesting that the fighters may have boarded their flight at Gaziantep Oğuzeli International Airport (GZT). They were eventually transported to Azerbaijan, where each fighter was photographed, issued an individual identification tag and provided with an Azerbaijani uniform, weapons and ammunition.

The Armenian allegations did not emerge in isolation. While the 2020 war was still underway, United Nations special rapporteurs formally confronted the Turkish government with reports of substantially the same system.

In a November 6, 2020, communication to Ankara, UN experts said they had received information concerning Turkey's involvement in recruiting Syrian fighters for deployment to Azerbaijan and specifically named the Hamza Division, Sultan Murad Division, Al-Amshat faction and Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade.

According to the information received by the UN experts, recruitment began in August 2020 in war-ravaged Syria.

A related UN communication to Azerbaijan said an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 Syrian fighters had been deployed by late September 2020, with more under recruitment. It said their recruitment, payment and transfer had reportedly been undertaken by Turkey.

As expected, Turkey rejected the UN allegations. In its January 2021 response, Ankara called the allegations “unfounded,” “baseless” and based on Armenian disinformation. Azerbaijan likewise denied allegations that it had relied on foreign mercenaries.

The Armenian court documents therefore represent one side of a highly contested interstate conflict. Yet the details contained in the criminal file substantially overlap with information independently collected by UN special procedures while the fighting was taking place.

The deployment to Azerbaijan was also not the first time Turkey had been accused by the UN of moving Syrian fighters to another country to pursue Ankara's strategic objectives. Months earlier, UN experts had confronted Turkey over the recruitment and deployment of Syrian fighters to Libya.

A June 10, 2020, UN special procedures communication said information had been received alleging that Turkey recruited, deployed and paid fighters, including children, from several Syrian armed groups to participate in military operations around Tripoli on behalf of Libya's internationally recognized Government of National Accord.

Most strikingly, Abu Amsha himself provides a direct personnel link between the two theaters. In August 2023 the US Treasury Department sanctioned Abu Amsha, his Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade and the Hamza Division for serious human rights abuses in northern Syria.

Treasury said the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade had engaged in abductions, extortion and forced displacement, particularly against Kurdish residents of Afrin. The US government also noted that Abu Amsha's brother Walid Hussein al-Jasim took command of the brigade when Abu Amsha left Syria to fight in Libya.

The same US sanctions notice revealed another important Turkish connection: Abu Amsha owned Al-Safir Oto, an autodealership headquartered in Istanbul with mobile

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INTERNATIONAL

Rally in Paris for Release of 11 Armenian Prisoners in Baku

By Jean Eckian

PARIS — On September 2, the Armenian community and prominent figures from the French political and artistic worlds gathered on the steps of Paris City Hall in support of the 11 Armenian hostages being held in Azerbaijan. The event was organized by two representatives of the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations in France (CCAF), Ara Toranian and Mourad Papazian, demanding the immediate release of the 11 prominent figures from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) held captive by the Baku regime, with the support of the European Parliament, the French National Assembly and Senate, as well as the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee.

That same day, shortly before 10 a.m., even though Paris City Hall was scheduled to participate in the event, it was learned that City Hall representatives were forced to withdraw from the event due to threats.

Mayor Emmanuel Grégoire was called out on Twitter by Azerbaijan's ambassador to France, Leyla Abdullayeva, who stated that: "Those convicted by the military court in Baku, including former leaders of the puppet regime in Azerbaijan's Kara-



Ara Toranian speaking, with Mourad Papazian (photo Jean Eckian)

bakh region, have been found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity" (pic. twitter.com/GeD7FjHTir).

The following inquiry was addressed to the ambassador by the mayor after her statement, an excerpt of which is provided below:

"Madam Ambassador,

Your reaction to the exhibition opening today on the plaza in front of Paris City Hall calls for a few factual clarifications.

Peace between Armenians and Azerbaijanis will not be built by rewriting history or by erasing those who lived through it.

The Armenian presence in Nagorno-Karabakh did not begin in 1988 or with the collapse of the USSR. It is part of a history spanning many centuries, attested to in particular by ancient Armenian religious and cultural heritage.



Ara Toranian, left, and Mourad Papazian (photo Jean Eckian)

Above all, your account omits a crucial event: the near-total disappearance of the Armenian population from Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023.

After decades of war, reconciliation is not built through contested trials and the continued detention of representatives of the former adversary, but through acts of reconciliation, foremost among which is their release."



A poster at the rally (photo Jean Eckian)



A scene from the rally (photo Jean Eckian)

from previous page

locations in southern Turkey operated by commanders of the Sultan Suleiman Shah Brigade. Treasury described the company as an outlet through which Abu Amsah invested income generated by his militia activities.

The picture that emerges is therefore of a militia leader operating inside Turkish-backed Syrian security architecture, maintaining business interests in Turkey, fighting in Libya and later appearing in an Armenian criminal case as the principal organizer of Syrians sent through Turkey to Azerbaijan.

Turkey's cultivation of Syrian armed groups dates to the uprising against then-president Bashar al-Assad in 2011. Ankara became one of the most important foreign sponsors of the Syrian opposition and eventually assembled a large number of factions under the umbrella of what became known as the Syrian National Army.

Those groups served Turkish objectives inside Syria, particularly during Turkish military operations that established Ankara-backed zones along the border and displaced Kurdish-led forces from areas Turkey considered strategically important.

Over time, however, the fighters also acquired a value beyond Syria. The Libya and Azerbaijan deployments demonstrated how forces originally cultivated for the Syrian conflict could function as an expeditionary proxy pool.

The system offered several advantages. Local commanders handled recruitment. Desperate economic conditions supplied willing manpower. Turkish-controlled territory in northern Syria provided staging areas. Turkey provided access to transport infrastructure, funding and arms. Fighters could then be integrated with allied local forces while Ankara maintained a formal distance from their battlefield conduct.

That structure also reduced the political cost of sending larger numbers of Turkish soldiers into foreign conflicts. The Armenian files provide a rare courtroom-level reconstruction of how such a system functioned in practice.

In al-Hajji's case, prosecutors alleged that the recruits were promised a \$100 bonus for presenting the severed head of an Armenian and were supplied with long-bladed knives. The indictment further alleged that groups of fighters were ordered to attack Armenian villages, kill civilians and soldiers and carry out arson and explosions designed to terrorize the population.

Al-Shkheri was captured after fighting near settlements in Armenia's Syunik Province, while al-Hajji was captured near Davit Bek, also in Syunik, according to the Armenian file. That detail means the case was not limited to allegations concerning fighting inside internationally recognized Azerbaijani territory. Armenian prosecutors alleged that operations involving the Syrian fighters extended toward sovereign

Armenian territory as well.

Armenia's Investigative Committee completed its investigation in April 2021. It charged both men with offenses including terrorism committed by an organized group, international terrorism, attempted serious violations of international humanitarian law and mercenary activity. The Investigative Committee said its evidence established that the Syrians were not Azerbaijani citizens or residents and had joined the war for financial compensation as members of an organized group.

The case was sent to the Syunik Provincial Court and assigned to Judge Napoleon Ohanyan. On May 4, 2021, the court sentenced both defendants to life in prison. The defendants' public defender, Mushegh Vardanyan, said the two admitted that they had been hired as mercenaries but denied committing war crimes.

Armenia initially treated the two Syrian fighters as criminal defendants rather than prisoners of war. In December 2020 the Armenian Investigative Committee said they were not eligible for release or exchange under post-war prisoner arrangements with Azerbaijan. That position appeared to shift five years later. In September 2025 Armenian media, citing an unnamed source, reported that Azerbaijan had asked Armenia to release the two Syrians as part of discussions concerning Armenian detainees held in Baku. The report was never officially confirmed.

On January 14, 2026, Armenia transferred the two men through Turkey to Syrian authorities, officially so they could continue serving their Armenian life sentences in Syria. On the same day, Azerbaijan released four Armenian detainees to Armenia, fueling speculation that the two moves were connected.

Armenia's Ministry of Justice announced that the two Syrian nationals had been handed to Syrian authorities "via the Republic of Turkey" under cooperation between the relevant authorities and existing legal mechanisms. Justice Minister Srubhi Galyan later said the transfer was based on the principle of reciprocity and was intended in part to improve relations with Syria and help protect the interests of the Armenian community there.

She acknowledged that other routes had been considered before Armenia decided to move the prisoners through Turkey. Hetq, a Yerevan-based Armenian investigative news outlet, subsequently reported that the Armenian Justice Ministry did not confirm that it had obtained guarantees that the two men would actually remain incarcerated and continue serving their Armenian life sentences after their transfer to Syria.

Taken together, the Armenian judicial record, UN communications and subsequent US sanctions material add to a substantial body of evidence showing how Erdogan's government turned armed Syrian factions into instruments of Turkish regional policy.



INTERNATIONAL

Aliyevs Own up to 15 Luxury Estates across Azerbaijan, Investigation Finds

By Aslan Bairamovi

A Meydan TV investigation has found that Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and his family own 15 estates across the country, with no official records available to the public. The properties drew controversy due to the demolition of houses near them, and the authorities’ restriction of access to surrounding public areas.

According to the independent media outlet, Aliyev’s properties were built in strategic areas near scenic areas such as forests, lakes and beaches. The properties are scattered across different regions of Azerbaijan and are only built for the Aliyev family’s private use.

Meydan TV based their investigation on “research compiled from various sources over the years”, noting that access to official property registry records was “impossible.” They said they were able to map these homes based on information obtained from local residents and through satellite imagery.

The outlet reported that the construction of some of these estates led to the eviction of local residents and the demolition of whole villages in some cases. Additionally, construction workers who had worked on the estates faced issues receiving their wages.

In 2011, the village Kusat in the Gabala region was demolished by the Azerbaijani government. There, Meydan TV says, a residential palace was built for Aliyev and his daughter Leyla Aliyeva. According to the outlet, 16 families were forced to leave their houses and were moved to Gabala with compensation. The outlet has not specified how much these residents were compensated.

Another 120 families residing in a 16-story building in a Baku suburb were reportedly evicted for the construction of the Khutor Palace.

Meydan TV reported that in 2021, Khoshbulagh village locals in the Dashkasan

district held a protest in front of the Presidential Administration building. They said that the village’s agricultural and pasture lands had been handed over in exchange for bribes. A property reportedly built for Aliyev’s son now stands in one of the most noticeable locations in Khoshbulagh.

“The village’s only forested area has been closed off for the president’s family.”

Another property believed to belong to the Aliyevs is located in the area of Nohur Lake, known for its scenic views and recreational status. After the property was built, entering or taking photographs near

the lake area became prohibited.

The outlet noted another huge luxurious complex that was built on the coastline of Bilgah, a Baku suburb, worth millions of dollars.

Meydan TV also said that Emergency Situations Minister Kamaladdin Heydarov built a large property in the village of Gamarvan, Gabala region, and gifted it to Aliyev. This complex has a tennis court, an artificial lake, and a view of the river Bum. The property is under strict security.

Aliyev’s family also reportedly owns properties outside of Azerbaijan.

In 2021, the OCCRP found that a nearly \$700 million collection of London real estate had been acquired by the family and close associates of the Aliyev.

The Register of Overseas Entities publicly shows that Aliyev’s daughters, Leyla and Arzu Aliyeva, personally own six luxury apartments just across the street from Hyde Park in London.

According to the Guardian, Leyla and Arzu Aliyeva are the joint owners of Sofitel, a luxury resort in Dubai.

(This article originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on September 4.)

Azerbaijani Human Rights Activist Anar Mammadli Sentenced to 13 Years in Prison

By Rafiq Shahbazov

The former head of the Azerbaijani Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Centre, Anar Mammadli, has been sentenced to 13 years in prison, over two years since his detention in April 2024. A co-defendant in the case, Anar Abdullayev, has received a 12-year sentence.

Mammadli and Abdullayev were sentenced on Monday, September 7, by Judge Aygun Gurbanova.

Mammadli was detained on charges of smuggling in the case against independent media outlet Abzas Media. Several articles on financial crimes were later added to the charges including currency smuggling, illegal entrepreneurship, tax evasion, document forgery, and money laundering.

Mammadli was detained and charged in April 2024. He denies the charges and international human rights organizations, including the UN, recognize him as a political prisoner.

Maria Dahle, the director of the Human Rights House Foundation, commented on the sentencing, describing it as “a day of deep sorrow and disgrace,” and calling for



Anar Mammadli

Mammadli’s immediate release.

“There is no mistaking what this sentencing is: punishment for Mammadli’s independent and legitimate work defending human rights, monitoring elections, and advocating for democracy in his home country. The charges against him are entirely politically motivated, and his conviction is a clear act of retaliation by the

Azerbaijani authorities.”

Amnesty International’s Eastern Europe and Central Asia Director Marie Struthers said the conviction highlights how “journalists and other critics who expose government abuses and challenge the interests of President Ilham Aliyev’s family are being severely punished.” She noted that the authorities have “increasingly tightened restrictions on critical NGOs and independent media outlets” since 2009.

“Amid growing restrictions on freedom of expression, many organizations have adopted strategies to continue their legitimate work. However, the authorities have sought to criminalize these efforts through burdensome tax, currency, and other regulatory requirements designed to obstruct their activities.”

In May 2026, the Institute for Peace and Democracy announced that there were 328 “political prisoners” in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan handed out lengthy sentences to detained Abzas Media staff members in June 2025, ranging from seven and a half to nine years in prison.

(This article originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on September 7.)

15-hour Hearings in İstanbul Mayor’s Trial May Amount to Torture: Turkish Doctors Group

ISTANBUL (Turkish Minute) — Court sessions lasting up to 15 hours in the mass corruption trial of jailed İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu could impair the defendants’ right to a fair trial and amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, Turkey’s main doctors group warned Monday.

The Turkish Medical Association (TTB) reached the conclusion in a scientific assessment that İmamoğlu’s lawyers filed with the İstanbul 33rd High Criminal Court this week.

TTB Central Council Secretary General Ali Karakoç signed the assessment and sent it to İmamoğlu lawyer Tora Pekin on August 27.

The schedule examined by the association began on August 17 and called for hearings on four days each week from 10 a.m. until after midnight.

Some sessions ended at 1:30 a.m., while lawyers had to travel at least 100 kilometers, or more than 60 miles, each day to reach the courthouse.

The hearings take place at the Marmara Prison complex in Silivri, about 70 kilometers west of central İstanbul.

Too little time for sleep, meals and rest can cause physical and mental fatigue to build over consecutive days, the association found.



İstanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu

Such strain may cause a rapid heartbeat, low blood pressure and low blood sugar.

It may also impair attention, memory, information processing, reasoning and decision making.

The resulting fatigue could hinder defendants from explaining their cases and protecting their rights, while limiting their lawyers’ ability to provide a defense.

Judges and prosecutors may also lose some of their ability to weigh evidence

and make decisions after hours of work without enough rest, the assessment warned.

The TTB described any resulting harm as “human-caused trauma” and cited the World Health Organization’s (WHO) International Classification of Diseases.

It said the conditions should be assessed under the category of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The assessment also cited Article 148

of Turkey’s Code of Criminal Procedure, which bans wearing suspects down while taking their statements.

Whether the schedule meets the legal definition of that ban or of ill-treatment must be decided by the courts, the association added.

Pekin asked the judges to end sessions by 4 p.m. unless a defendant’s questioning was already in progress.

He told the panel that İmamoğlu’s lawyers would leave the courtroom if the request was denied.

The İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality case has 414 defendants, 51 of whom are jailed pending trial after the court released two defendants on September 3.

The trial got underway on March 9, almost a year after police detained İmamoğlu, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s main political rival, in a sweep that sparked Turkey’s largest protests in more than a decade.

Prosecutors accuse İmamoğlu of leading a criminal network and seek his conviction on 142 counts, with a possible sentence of up to 2,430 years. İmamoğlu denies all accusations and calls the case an attempt to bar him from challenging Erdoğan. The government denies political interference and claims that Turkey’s courts are independent.



Community News

L.A. Sparks to Hire Former 76ers Executive Ariana Andonian as New General Manager

By Sabreena Merchant

LOS ANGELES (The New York Times) — The Los Angeles Sparks are hiring Philadelphia 76ers vice president of player personnel Ariana Andonian as their new general manager, the team announced Friday.

Andonian is replacing Raegan Pebley, whom L.A. parted ways with in July following 2 1/2 years with the organization.

The Sparks significantly built out their front office during the past off-season after failing to invest in the team's basketball operations for several years. Many of those hires came from the NBA, and Los Angeles still lacks personnel with a significant background in women's basketball.

The search for Pebley's replacement was conducted by Farhan Zaidi, special advisor to Sparks owner Mark Walter. This is the third executive hire the Sparks have made out of the NBA in the past year.

They hired assistant general managers Zach Knowlton and Nate Nielsen from the Sacramento Kings and Cleveland Cavaliers, respectively,



Ariana Andonian

before the 2026 season. Andonian has been with the 76ers for two seasons after seven years with the Houston Rockets and Memphis Grizzlies. She also consulted with Duke's basketball program while getting her MBA.

Andonian is tasked with revitalizing one of the WNBA's legacy franchises, which has fallen out of relevance of late. The Sparks will miss the playoffs for the sixth consecutive season, but win-now trades have left them with only two first-round picks from that stretch on their roster: Cameron Brink and Rae Burrell.

Andonian will be the public face of an organization that has been mostly quiet since Pebley's departure, besides the seismic move to deal Kelsey Plum at the trade deadline.

Andonian will also get to decide the future of coach Lynne Roberts, who is 36-48 in her two seasons in Los Angeles. Roberts has an uneven track record developing the Sparks' young players; while Burrell has taken significant steps forward, Brink has been relegated to a bench role and hasn't made the same impact as other members of the highly touted 2024 draft class.

The franchise is on track to open a new practice facility in 2027, finally giving the team a home after years of being displaced across the expanse of Los Angeles County.



ABMDR Executive Director Dr. Sevak Avagyan (Shahe Melelian photo)

ABMDR Annual Gala Celebrates Internship Program, Adoption of Advanced Genetic Technology

LOS ANGELES — On Sunday, August 30, the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR) marked its 27th anniversary with its annual gala.

The event was a celebration of ABMDR's most recent achievements, including its adoption of a pioneering genetic-testing system and the expansion of its Summer Internship Program.

The Match for Life Gala took place at the Glendale Hilton, attended by more than 300 supporters.

Opening remarks were delivered by Gala Committee Co-chairs Amy Boyadjian and Sona Ashjian.

Ashjian acknowledged the night's award recipients and members of the Gala Committee, as well as the event's major sponsors: Platinum sponsors Ara and Garinee Soudjian and Zaven and Vehanoosh Grigorian.

The gala's other sponsors included Adventist Health Glendale; Dr. Evlyn Avnessian; Drs. Garni and Evelyn Barkhoudarian; Michael and Amy Boyadjian of Tri-Tech; Artem Darbinyan and Rosie Diremsizian of Rama Drugs; Mark Geragos, Esq.; the Gourchounian family; Gayaneh Kostikyan, Beayna Hovsepien and Arpineh Grigorian; Carmen Lukassian; Dr. Vergine Madelian; Paulette Malekian of Engel & Volkers Real Estate; West Coast University; and William and Company. Documentary videos shown throughout the evening were produced and donated by filmmaker Garen Mirzaian of Table 22 Films.

The evening's invocation was performed by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese; and Rev. Nzhdeh Keshishyan.

see GALA, page 12



Students from the US and Canada who completed this year's ABMDR Summer Internship Program and received certificates. From left: Darren Avanesian, Natalia Avanesian, Jacqueline Khatchadourian, Alexia Minassian, and Emma Kardzair. The interns also included Iren Babajanyan, of Canada, who could not attend the Gala. (Shahe Melelian photo)

Ani Khachian Elected First Female President-Elect of Armenian Jewelers Association USA – East Coast

NEW YORK — The Armenian Jewelers Association USA – East Coast (AJA East Coast) announces the election of its 2026–2027 Board of Directors, with award-winning jewelry designer, GIA credentialed professional, and industry advocate Ani Khachian elected as president-Elect.

Khachian's election marks a historic milestone as the first woman elected president-elect in the association's history since its founding in 1999. Her election reflects both the continued evolution of AJA East Coast and the growing role of women in leadership throughout the global jewelry industry.

Building on the momentum of AJA



Ani Khachian

East Coast's recent 25th Anniversary Celebration, Khachian brings decades of jewelry industry experience, formal gemological education, entrepreneurial leadership, and a commitment to mentorship, responsible sourcing, and professional development. Her election positions the Association for continued growth while expanding opportunities for current and future generations of jewelry professionals.

Founded on September 22, 1999, at the historic Diamond Dealers Club of New York, AJA East Coast unites Armenian jewelry professionals through networking, education, mentorship, charitable initiatives, and strategic partnerships. Today, the organization represents manufacturers, designers, retailers, wholesalers, gemstone professionals, and service providers committed to advancing professional excellence while preserving and celebrating Armenian jewelry craftsmanship.

"It is an extraordinary honor to serve as the first female President-Elect of AJA East Coast," said Khachian. "For more than twenty-five years, our Association has celebrated Armenian craftsmanship, entrepreneurship, and professional excellence. I am grateful for the confidence of our membership and look forward to working with our Board to strengthen member engagement, expand educational opportunities,

see JEWELERS, page 8

COMMUNITY NEWS

Levon Aronian Helps Kick Off Glendale Chess Week

GLENDALÉ (glendaleplayschess.com) — Grandmaster Levon Aronian helped kick off Glendale Chess Week with a simultaneous exhibition at the Center for Armenian Arts on August 28.

Spots to play were sold out before the event. During the exhibition, Levon moved from board to board to face dozens of opponents at once while families, community members, and chess fans gathered around the room to follow the games. It gave players a chance to test themselves against one of the world's elite grandmasters and gave spectators a close-up look at high-level chess.

Among those attending were Glendale Mayor Ardy Kassakhian, Glendale Fire Chief Jeff Brooks, American Chess Academy President Armen Ambartsoumian, and other civic and community leaders.



Chess players at the exhibition

Khachian Elected First Female President-Elect of Armenian Jewelers Association USA – East Coast

JEWELERS, from page 7

support emerging professionals, and continue elevating Armenian excellence throughout the global jewelry industry.”

Ardem Aslanian, Immediate Past President and newly elected Treasurer of AJA East Coast, welcomed the leadership transition.

“It has been a privilege to serve as President of AJA East Coast and to work alongside so many dedicated members throughout my term,” said Aslanian. “I

congratulate Ani on her election as President-Elect and look forward to everything she will bring to our organization. I am confident AJA East Coast will continue to thrive under her leadership.”

Khachian is the founder and creative director of Ani Fine Jewelry, a women-owned fine jewelry design firm specializing in bespoke jewelry and heirloom creations. A third-generation jewelry professional, she has served AJA East Coast in leadership roles since 2016 and currently serves on the

Board of Directors of the Jewelry Design Professionals Network (JDPN).

She is the recipient of the Women's Jewelry Association Cindy Edelstein Jewelry Design Scholarship and holds the Accredited Jewelry Professional (AJP®), Graduate Diamonds, and Graduate Pearls credentials from the Gemological Institute of America (GIA). Continuing her commitment to technical excellence and lifelong learning, she will attend GIA's Jewelry Design & Technology program, further advancing her expertise in jewelry design, engineering, manufacturing, CAD/CAM technologies, and production innovation.

Throughout her career, Khachian has championed the belief that jewelry is more than adornment—it is a lasting expression

of craftsmanship, culture, personal history, and human connection. As President-Elect, she is committed to expanding educational opportunities, mentoring emerging professionals, strengthening ethical business practices, encouraging responsible sourcing, and fostering greater collaboration across the global jewelry community.

The newly elected Board of Directors will focus on expanding educational programming, strengthening member engagement, mentoring emerging professionals, promoting Armenian jewelry craftsmanship, increasing strategic partnerships, and building meaningful connections among jewelry professionals throughout the United States, Armenia, and the global Armenian Diaspora.

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BAIKAR WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

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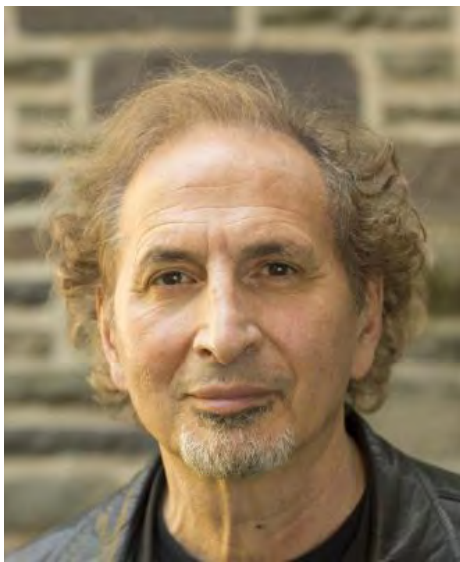
COMMUNITY NEWS



BELMONT, Mass. — On Friday, August 28, Rev. Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian of the Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, visited Nishan and Margrit Atinizian and their family. In gratitude for their generosity to the Armenian community and the churches of New England — especially their contribution to the building of Holy Cross Church in 1997 and their continued support, Fr. Ghazar presented the couple with a special award on behalf of Bishop Mikael Mouradian and the parish community.

Balakian to Give Annual Dr. Berj H. Haidostian Annual Lecture at University of Michigan

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — On September 16, Pulitzer Prize winning poet Peter Balakian will give a reading of his poetry and discuss the impact of traumatic history on his work exploring the issue of the impact of history on the literary imagination and the transmission of trauma across generations. He will also discuss how his own ancestors have provided a ground-



Prof. Peter Balakian

ing for his work. His double-great-uncle, Krikoris Balakian (Bishop in the Armenian Church), was one of the 250 cultural leaders arrested on April 24, 1915, and his grandmother Nafina Shekerlemdjian, was the sole survivor (with her infant daughters) of her family and endured a harrowing death march into the Syrian desert.

Balakian is an award winning poet, author and translator. His Ozone Journal was awarded the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for poetry. Most recently he has published a book of poems, New York Trilogy (2025), that moves between decades of tumultuous life in New York City and the politics of the Middle East. Balakian's poems have appeared widely in leading magazines and journals including, The New Yorker: 100 Years of Poetry. His prose books range from Vice and Shadow: Essays on the Lyric Imagination, poetry, art and culture, to Black Dog of Fate: A

Memoir — winner of the 1998 PEN/Martha Albrand Prize for the Art of the Memoir (a best book of the year for the New York Times, the LA Times, and Publisher's Weekly). Balakian is the recipient of many awards and prizes amongst them: the Pulitzer Prize, The Presidential Medal and the Movses Khorenatsi Medal from the Republic of Armenia, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. He is the Rebar Professor of the Humanities, Professor of English at Colgate University.

The talk on September 16, will start at 6 p.m. at the Helmut Stern Auditorium Museum of Art.

Those who are interested can tune in remotely at <https://umich.zoom.us/j/99080532632>.

The event is sponsored by the Armenian Studies Center at the University of Michigan.



Sponsor a Teacher Program

Any inquiries for information about the Sponsor a Teacher Program or donations should be henceforth directed to the central office of the Tekeyan Cultural Association at 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown MA 02472, or emailed to Aram Arkun at tcadirector@aol.com.



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

Celebrate Armenia! Brings Culture and Traditions to Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway

BOSTON — All are invited to Celebrate Armenia!, a joyful celebration in honor of Armenian Independence Day, taking place on Saturday, September 19, at Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway.

The event is returning for its second consecutive year and it brings together schools, cultural organizations, musicians and the greater community for a festive day filled with music, dance, food, storytelling and traditions.

The program begins at 1 p.m. with welcoming remarks by Vahan Dilanyan, director of pProgramming and development for the Armenian Heritage Foundation, sponsor of Armenian Heritage Park, and Izabella Djevalikian, Founding Director of KAMURJNER Cultural Connections.

The schedule is as follows:

1:15 p.m. - Armenian Folktales: Meghri Dervartanian, children’s book author and illustrator, shares Armenian folktales with young audiences, introducing a new generation to beloved stories and traditions.

1:30 p.m. - Children in Song: Young singers from St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School, Erebuni Armenian School, and Holy Trinity Armenian Church’s Armenian School join voices in a combined children’s choir, performing a selection of Armenian patriotic and folk songs.

2 p.m. - Young Dancers: Performers from Armenia Dance Studio, led by Founder and Artistic Director Anahit Torosyan, showcase the beauty and grace of traditional Armenian dance.



2:30 p.m. - Let’s All Dance!” Nareg Stepanian and Lori Kouyoumjian, co-founders and instructors of Daron Folk Ensemble, lead a lively, participatory dance session. Everyone is invited to join in and experience the joy of Armenian dance.

3:30 p.m. - Music, Tea & Sweets: Dr. Garo Saraydarian and a student ensemble representing MIT, Berklee College of Music, and Longy School of Music offer a program of traditional music, while guests enjoy tea and sweets.

4:30 p.m. - Sharing Stories: Reflections on the Immigrant Experience with Dr. Avak Khavajian, life sciences inventor and entrepreneur, partner at Flagship Pioneering, and Chair of the Board of Directors of the International Institute of New England; and Sylvie Zakarian, solo percussionist.

Faculty at the Longy School of Music of Bard College, and Department Chair of Woodwinds, Brass & Percussion, Winchester Community Music School.

5 p.m. - Signature Dishes: Guests are invited to enjoy tastings of signature dishes offered by anoush’ella, celebrating the flavors and culinary traditions of Armenia. Nina and Raffi Festekjian are co-owners of anoush’ella. The Festekjians are the 2026 Honorees of Celebrating Contributions of Our Nations Immigrants, gala to benefit Armenian Heritage Park, recognizing them as “Distinguished Leaders in Philanthropy, Business and the Arts.”

7 p.m. - Music Under the Stars: The celebration continues into the evening with performances by Berklee College of Music students and faculty, featuring vocalist Lia Sarkisyan & Friends.

A Thank You Reception follows Music Under the Stars for all to enjoy, meet and greet.

For further information, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Meet Robin the Robot

ROBOT, from page 1

Martirosyan and Khachikyan grew up in Armenia. Martirosyan graduated from the radio physics faculty at Yerevan State University and was working on electronics and laptops before switching to software development.

Children in hospitals can face an array of scary medical procedures and tools. Robin can offer them company as well as a welcome distraction, he said. In addition, when it comes to the elderly, Robin can offer them games and social activities.

"It works very well for kids. Kids accept the robot as their friend. They start immediately to communicate with him. It's much easier to kids to engage with robots than adults," Martirosyan said.

Currently there are 33 Robins deployed in healthcare and senior care organizations in Massachusetts, California, New York and Indiana with another eight slated to arrive at their new homes this fall.



Davit Martirosyan

At UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center in Worcester, Mass., Robin interacts with children and care teams, helping young patients cope with stressful medical experiences and the loneliness associated with hospitalization.

"When we started to observe different potential places for Robin, we figured out nursing homes for elderly people are very accepting of Robin. Elderly people accept Robin as their friend child, and they spend time with him with big pleasure," Martirosyan said.

Robin's head is a screen, where words can appear also. Every day new content is added to Robin's brain. He can show how an MRI works or how dentists work. "Kids see that their friend had this procedure and he's ok and they start to feel confident," he added. The videos are cartoon style.

Robin is programmed with some specific information by the staff about the patients. If a child is facing surgery, Martirosyan said, "Robin will talk with him and bring the conversation around to the surgery. Robin teaches the kids what the procedure is" and can be reassured.

Robin's is equipped with proprietary software. One team member is an occupational therapy specialist and helped and designed Robin's personality, that of a 7-year-old child. He has specific likes and dislikes programmed too, he said. For example his favorite animal is a chicken.

Robin's appearance is intentional.

"All credit goes to Karén, who had a vision of how Robin should look like and worked very closely with the designer," Martirosyan said.

"I don't see any reason to build robots similar to people," Martirosyan concurred.

Prototype Robin

Martirosyan and Khachikyan started working together in Armenia and that was where they launched the prototype version



Children interact with Robin

of Robin. "After two years, in the middle of Covid, we built our first robots in the US," he said, putting one at a dental clinic and another at the UCLA Children's Hospital.

That initial Robin at the UCLA hospital, served as a prototype to examine and maximize the work of Robin.

"I am a very curious person and I want to learn how things work. ... I broke literally any device I had in my childhood to see how they reworked," Martirosyan recalled. "My co-founder is also an engineer and had an idea to have a friend robot. Somehow we came together and built this."

One factor in the early success of Robin was the limitations caused by Covid. "When everything is closed and no one can enter a hospital, people are alone. Therefore they started to be deployed in hospitals," first in Armenia and then in the US.

In the early days, the company had four employees in Armenia, each working remotely. "In one place, the robot was made, in another place the software was done, in another place we reached out to potential customers and from the fourth place we organized all things together," Martirosyan said.

Khachikyan, according to Martirosyan, had contacts in Los Angeles, and that is where they focused their efforts. Now, the company has more than 40 employees.

"There is no difference between the kids who stay for a short time or those who stay long-term. Kids accept them as a friend so they started to communicate with their friend," Martirosyan said. He stressed that Robin does not offer any medical diagnoses. Its job, instead, is to engage with the children in a positive way.

Robin typically walks into a child's room and starts to wave and talk. "Robin can play games and the kids want to teach Robin something," he said. As for his personality, "Robin is a child. It can't know everything. In some situations, it asks the child, 'can you teach me?'"

"When kids meet Robin, they naturally



come and hug it. It's a very cute moment. We didn't do anything especially for that, but kids accept Robin," he said.

One case involved a child who was refusing to eat, he recalled. Robin visited his room and after 20 minutes, said he had to go recharge and told the child that while he was recharging, he should also refuel. "After Robin left, the child started to eat," he said.

"Robin usually works with child interaction teams at hospitals. They love Robin more than the kids do. They accept Robin as their family member. They become sad when Robin has a hardware issue," Martirosyan said.

As for the cost, the range is from \$1,500 per month and up to lease a Robin. The wait time, according to the company's website, is one to three months.

"When we started Robin, AI was not like it is now," he said. Now, Robin has AI and the human monitor operating Robin. At all times, Robin is monitored, first for AI and second for safety reasons.

As for what is next, Martirosyan said, "We are going to develop more and more to bring him to a position where we can trust Robin fully. It will take time."

To see Robin in action, visit <https://robinrobot.com/>.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

ABMDR Annual Gala Celebrates Internship Program, Adoption of Advanced Genetic Technology

GALA, from page 7

In his welcome remarks, Master of Ceremonies Dr. Vicken Sepilian, president of the Armenian Medical International Committee, said, “We are here tonight to celebrate a very dedicated and gifted group of individuals who are working tirelessly throughout the world to bring innovation, to bring cutting-edge science and know-how, to Armenia, in order to benefit not only ethnic Armenians, but all people who may share a genetic relation with us. This has been accomplished thanks to the support of all of you here. Tonight, we’re not only celebrating ABMDR’s 27th anniversary, but kicking off its next 27 years.” Sepilian ac-



Master of Ceremonies Dr. Vicken Sepilian (Shahe Melelian photo)

knowledgeed the presence of distinguished guests, including Glendale City Mayor Ardy Kassakhian; Glendale City Council members Elen Asatryan and Alek Bartrosouf; former Mayor of Pasadena William Paparian; Greg Krikorian of the Glendale Unified School District Board of Education; Glendale City Planning Commissioner Editha Fuentes; Bob Barsam, Chairman of the St. James Armenian Church Board of Trustees; Dr. Evgeni Sokurenko, founder and Chairman of ID Genomics and the ArmGen project; Adventist Health Glendale Vice President of Business Development Dr. Ramella Markarian; LA Cancer Network Board members Dr. Boris Bagdasarian and Dr. Nubar Boghossian; Armenian American Medical Society President



ABMDR President Dr. Frieda Jordan (Shahe Melelian photo)

Elizabeth Zoryan and past presidents Dr. Garni Barkhoudarian, Dr. Varoosh Alavardian, Dr. Kevin Galstyan, and Dr. Raffi Tachdjian (in addition to past presidents Dr. Boris Bagdasarian and Dr. Vicken Sepilian himself); Head of School of AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School Dr. David

Ghoogasian; from the Armenian Relief Society Western region, Board members Varduhi Petrosian and Jasik Jerahian, as well as former ARS Central Board Chair Vicky Marashlian; and Taleen Khatchadourian, President and Board Leader of the Armenian Autism Outreach Project as well as an ABMDR Board member.

Sepilian then invited the evening’s keynote speaker, ABMDR President Dr. Frieda Jordan, to the podium.

“For the past 27 years, we have stayed committed to our mission, recruiting donors, finding matches, and saving lives, all the while trying to make our voice heard in new communities and engaging them to join us and help us grow,” Dr. Jordan said.

“To this end,” she continued, “we turned to our youth, and after establishing our NextGen group, we launched our Summer Internship Program, in Yerevan. This



Ara Soudjian, the ABMDR Man of the Year (Shahe Melelian photo)

program, now in its second year, draws the young generation to ABMDR’s mission, introduces them to the exciting field of immunogenetics and transplantation, and provides them with hands-on training in modern molecular techniques. The hope is that as informed young men and women, they will return to their communities as advocates and enthusiastic members of the ABMDR family, and help us in our outreach and recruitment efforts.

“But while we try to engage our youth for our future, we never forget that we wouldn’t be here without you, our generous and devoted supporters. Your trust and support are the driving force that keeps us doing what we do: not just helping our leukemia and lymphoma patients, but also playing a vital role in kidney and liver transplantation programs in Armenia.”

After Jordan’s remarks, ABMDR Executive Director Dr. Sevak Avagyan addressed the audience. “The ABMDR Lab, in Yerevan, has continued to make significant strides during the past year,” he said. “Our team has organized several donor recruitments in the homeland, while our doctors and experts have represented ABMDR at prestigious conferences across the globe. In addition, our Lab supervisor, Armine Hyyusan, as an official EFI inspector, helped conduct an inspection of a top immunological facility in Istanbul. In tandem with these activities, we have continued to conduct HLA-typing, and to play an increasingly greater role in the work of kidney and liver transplant centers in Armenia.”

Dr. Avagyan continued, “I think one of our most important achievements this past year was adopting the Oxford Nanopore Technology. When a transplant patient



Dr. Evelyn Baghdasarian, the ABMDR Woman of the Year (Shahe Melelian photo)

High School, Los Angeles; and Alexia Minassian, from Chaminade College Preparatory High School, West Hills, California. A sixth intern to receive a certificate is Iren Babajanyan, from Lucille-Teasdale International School, Brossard, Quebec, Canada, who could not attend the Gala.

Following this segment, Sepilian announced the bestowal of the ABMDR Inspiration Award on John Thorrington, President of Soccer Operations for the Los Angeles Football Club (LAFC). Sepilian said, “As a proud Armenian, John has embraced opportunities to celebrate and uplift the Armenian community throughout Los Angeles, from championing LAFC’s annual Armenian Heritage Night to welcoming ABMDR at the stadium during soccer matches. He has used the platform of sports to bring communities together and amplify ABMDR’s life-saving mission.” Thorrington, who could not attend the Gala, delivered his acceptance speech via a video recording.

The presentation of the video was followed by remarks from ABMDR Board members Taleen Khachadourian and Paulette Malekian, who shared their experiences as volunteers with the organization. As a bone marrow donor, Malekian also spoke of the profoundly-rewarding experience of having helped save someone’s life.

Next came the “Be an Angel, Save a Life” fundraising portion of the evening, featuring the young ABMDR Angels. As this segment was underway, Allen G and his orchestra delighted the guests with performances of Armenian and world pop classics.

The evening’s main awards ceremony followed the musical interlude.

The ABMDR Lifetime Achievement Award was conferred on Karine Khudikian. The Business of the Year Award was presented to Porto’s Bakery which for the past several years, has donated pastries to ABMDR’s annual walkathons in Los Angeles.

The ABMDR Volunteer of the Year Awards were presented to Lori Mehdikhani, Emineh Hacopian and Metaksya Diremsizian.

The Woman of the Year Award was bestowed on Dr. Evelyn Baghdasarian, and the Man of the Year Award was conferred on filmmaker Ara Soudjian.

Soudjian was introduced by Glendale Mayor Ardy Kassakhian. “Ara Soudjian has spent his life telling stories through film,” Kassakhian said and continued, “His own story is one of art, compassion, and service. He is an activist and a fierce patriot. For him, helping his people is not just about words, but selfless action.”

needs a donor, identifying a potential match is only the first step. More detailed testing is then required to determine the best possible match. The new technology that we adopted makes that process much faster and more precise, allowing transplant centers to



John Thorrington, President of Soccer Operations for the Los Angeles Football Club, was honored with the ABMDR Inspiration Award (Shahe Melelian photo)

receive vital information more efficiently — and, ultimately, giving patients a better chance of finding the donor they need.”

Certificates of Completion were presented to the participants of this year’s ABMDR Summer Internship Program, including siblings Natalia and Darren Avanesian, from Providence High School, Burbank; Emma Kardzair, from Holy Martyrs Ferrarian High School, Los Angeles; Jacqueline Khatchadourian, from Immaculate Heart



Arts & Culture

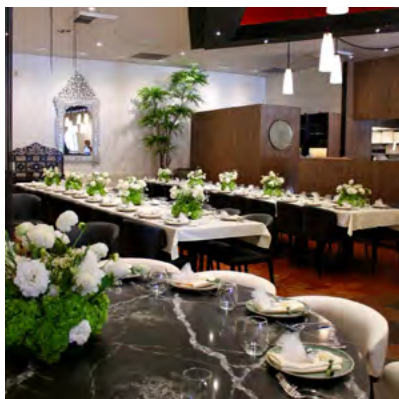
Carousel Restaurant Celebrates 40 Years With Renovation

GLENDALÉ — Carousel Restaurant is marking 40 years in Los Angeles with a renovation at its Glendale location. “The priority was to maintain that lived-in, no-fuss sense of ease,” said owner Rosalie Tcholakian.

Carousel’s longevity is tied to consistency. The menu has remained rooted in the same approach to Middle Eastern cooking, and the atmosphere has always been built around how people actually dine there. Groups arrive together, order for the table, and stay. That pattern has held for four decades.

Over the years, Carousel has developed a wide following across Los Angeles. Locals return regularly, and visitors are often brought in by friends who treat it as a reliable point of reference. The restaurant has also become a familiar stop for athletes, entertainers, and industry regulars, drawn by the food and the fact that the room never changes its tone for anyone.

The update focuses on the physical space. The dining room, bar, and private dining areas have been refreshed with new finishes and lighting. The bar has been given more presence within the room. Private dining spaces have been updated to better accommodate celebrations and large groups,



Interior of the renovated Carousel Restaurant



which have always been a core part of how Carousel operates.

The layout remains familiar. Tables still move. Groups still grow. The room still feels the way it always has, gradually and all at once.

“Our focus has always been the food, and everything we serve is made in-house from scratch,” said owner Mihran Tcholakian. “We’re very specific about how it’s prepared, and that consistency is something we don’t plan on changing.”

Carousel Restaurant is a family-run Los Angeles landmark with locations in Glendale (304 N. Brand Blvd) established in 1998, and Hollywood (5112 Hollywood Blvd, Suite 107), established in 1984.



Tina Afiyan Breiova demonstrates choreography

Tina Afiyan Breiova *‘The Armenian Spirit Is Made for Art’*

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/LONDON — Tina Afiyan Breiova, born in Slovakia in 1993, is an award-winning movement director, performer, choreographer and educator based. A graduate of P.A.R.T.S. in Brussels and the Duncan Centre Conservatory in Prague, she has built a distinctive multidisciplinary career at the intersection of dance, theatre, film and circus.

As a performer, Tina has collaborated with internationally renowned artists and companies including Marina Abramović, Gecko Theatre, Alexander Vantournhout, Roberto Oliván, Thomas Ryckewaert, Milan Tomášik, Cie Willi Dorner and Cirk La Putyka.

Her work in film and music videos includes collaborations with Paul Thomas Anderson, Thom Yorke, Damien Jalet, Simon Riechel, Emma Farnell-Watson, Joe Connor, Emile Rafael and Ran Li, alongside experience within the movement departments of productions for Warner Bros. Pictures and Universal Pictures.

As an independent choreographer, Tina has received recognition for her solo “Shalakho” and duet “Blue Gloom.” Her duet “Ruina,” inspired by the 1988 Spitak earthquake, has toured across Europe and Central and South America. She is regularly invited as a movement director and choreographic collaborator on new productions, bringing together physical performance, dramaturgy and interdisciplinary creation.

Tina’s current research explores the relationship between AI, sound and immersive performance, developed in collaboration with AI specialist Colas Fizman and sound designer Laurent Delforge. She is also the founder of Axis of Action, an evolving interdisciplinary training and performance methodology that she teaches and develops internationally.

Since 2020, Tina has lectured at London Contemporary Dance School at The Place, joining the course team for the MA Dance: Performance program in 2023 — one of the leading postgraduate dance courses in the United Kingdom.

Dear Tina, you have worked across dance, theatre, circus, music videos, and major film productions. How does your approach to movement direction change between live performance and the cinematic medium?

That’s a good question. I’d first say that I approach movement direction through the lens of a dancer. In the same way that actors who direct bring something different to the process than those who have only ever directed, I come to this work as a dancer by craft — I have the embodied knowledge, and I share the same language as the performers I work with.

The frame is completely different between live work and film, but the essence — having to be fully present — remains the same. On camera, you’re choreographing what the lens sees, so my job shifts from directing energy outward into a room, to directing precision into a frame that will be watched. But the question I’m always asking stays the same: what does this movement need to communicate?



Pegasus Celebrates Decade with Two Concerts Marking Most Ambitious Season

NEW YORK — Ten years after Pegasus: The Orchestra was founded on a belief in artistic trust, friendship, and the individual voices of its musicians, the ensemble opens its 10th Anniversary Season with two concerts that tell the story of what Pegasus has become. The season is led by Karén Hakobyan, founder, artistic director and principal conductor of Pegasus.

On Saturday, September 26, at the DiMenna Center, “From Within: Strings & Voices” brings audiences close to three musicians who have helped define the orchestra: concertmaster Ruggero Alliffranchini, principal oboist Noah Kay, and principal cellist Ari Evan. One month later, on



Karén Hakobyan conducting

Saturday, October 24, at Merkin Hall, Brilliance in Motion reveals Pegasus in full orchestral force, culminating in Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No. 3 with internationally acclaimed pianist Reed Tetzloff.

Together, the concerts offer two perspectives on Pegasus at 10: the intimacy and trust of its musical family, followed by the energy and ambition of the full orchestra.

“Pegasus began with a deeply held belief that an orchestra should be shaped by the voices of the musicians within it,” Karén Hakobyan said. “For our tenth anniversary, I did not want simply to look back. I wanted this season to show who we have become and how much further we are ready to go. These two fall concerts tell that story, first through the intimacy of our core artists and then through the full energy and scale of the orchestra. I hope audiences will come not only to hear these remarkable musicians, but to become part of this moment in Pegasus’s history.”

The anniversary season continues Pegasus’s commitment to placing its own musicians at the center of its artistic life while welcoming distinguished guest artists and pursuing projects of exceptional scale. It will culminate on May 7, 2027 at Alice Tully Hall with all five Saint-Saëns piano concertos in a single evening, each performed by a different internationally acclaimed soloist: Asiya Korepanova, Albert Cano Smit, Nicolas Namoradze, Reed Tetzloff and Vyacheslav Gryaznov. Recording sessions for the Aparté label will follow.

see BREIOVA, page 16

see PEGASUS, page 17

ARTS & CULTURE

Award Winning Authors Sarah Ignatius and Dana Walrath To Launch *Kaleidoscope of Destiny* at NAASR

BELMONT, Mass. — The International Armenian Literary Alliance (IALA), the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), and the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information will present the latest in their Literary Lights Series: a conversation with debut author and former NAASR executive director Sarah Ignatius with renowned author and graphic artist Dana Mashoian Walrath in celebration of the launch of Ignatius' debut novel, *The Kaleidoscope of Destiny*, on September 22, at 7:30 p.m., at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave.

The program is available for viewing online via Zoom and YouTube.

Walrath has just launched her own immersive graphic history, *The Book of Genocides*, published by Harvard University Press.

Ignatius and Walrath will reflect on the creative process, their portrayal of the Armenian Genocide, and finding hope and common humanity in times of darkness. A book signing and reception will follow. The program is co-sponsored by the Belmont

Public Library. Both books are available for pre-order through bookstores and online, and books will be available for sale in the



Sarah Ignatius and Dana Walrath

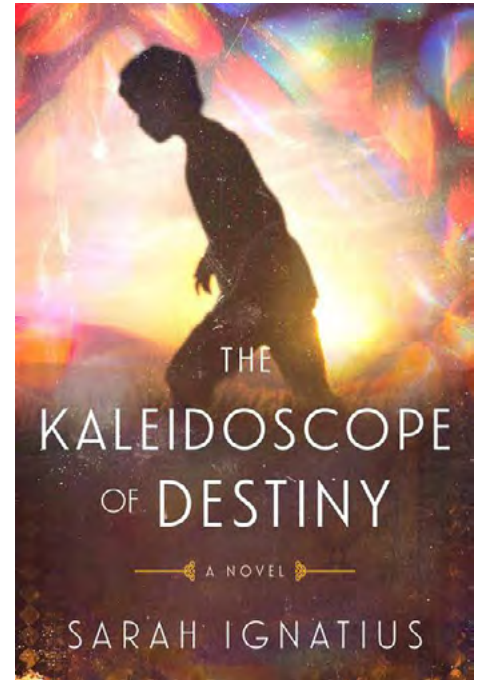
NAASR Bookstore.

The Kaleidoscope of Destiny, published by Koehler Books, centers around fourteen-year-old Arakel, who dreams of traveling the Silk Road with his two best friends—one Armenian and the other Turkish. But it's 1915. He is exiled from his home along with his family and nearly every other Armenian. To survive the genocide, he must reach out to people he considers enemies—Arab camel drivers, nomadic Bedouins, Germans,

Turks, Kurds, even a wandering dervish—but how can he trust them? The novel explores what lies deep within the human heart and ultimately reaffirms our collective humanity.

The novel begins in Kharpert, where Ignatius' grandfather was born and where her great-grandfather graduated in one of the earliest classes at Euphrates College in 1881. "Writing this book meant everything to me," said Ignatius, "although it is not the story of any one of my relatives. They never imagined one of their descendants would return to the place they were forced to abandon. But I went there on NAASR's 2006 trip to Armenia and Historic Armenia. That experience opened the door to another world for me. Their memory kept me going during all the years of revision and rejection as did the sincere support and extraordinary literary talent of IALA staff, board, and members and my stellar IALA mentor Dana Mashoian Walrath."

Kirkus Reviews has given Ignatius' novel high praise: "This moving account . . . deserves a place on classroom bookshelves



and on reading lists next to Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*." Several scholars have also endorsed it, including these: "A magisterial work of fiction steeped in historical authenticity," Dr. Khatchig Mouradian, Columbia University, author of *The Resistance Network*; and "Courageous, tender, and timely. At last, a novel that gives the Armenian Genocide the literary witness it has long deserved. Devastating and quietly luminous," Dr. Ümit Kurt, University of Newcastle Faculty, Royal Historical Society Fellow, and author of *The Armenians of Aintab*.

Kirkus describes Walrath's book as "A highly creative and devastating overview of a grim and global phenomenon." Publisher's Weekly has this to say: "While Walrath never shies away from human behavior at its most barbaric, her soulful, naïve-style drawings and collage work deliver grace and humanity to the victims of these cruelties. This brave, heartrending study commands attention."

Walrath is also the award-winning author of *Like Water on Stone*, a verse novel about the Armenian Genocide and Alzheimer's, a graphic memoir about dementia. A MacDowell Fellow, Fulbright Scholar, and Atlantic Fellow, Walrath has published work in *The Nation*, *The Lancet*, *Slate*, on public radio, and in numerous anthologies, including *Menopause: A Comic Treatment* — an Eisner Award-winning collection named one of the New York Times Best Graphic Novels of 2020.

"We welcome these two accomplished authors and friends back to NAASR," said Marc Mamigonian, NAASR director of academic affairs, "and look forward to hosting them as part of this dynamic literary series."

"It's gratifying to celebrate Sarah and Dana's successes together and reflect on IALA's positive role after knowing how hard Sarah worked, over many years, to make this a reality," said Olivia Katrandjian, IALA founder and president.

"We're so happy to see Sarah's novel coming out," said Shahé Mankerian, director of IALA's mentorship program, which is now in its sixth year. "We're grateful to Dana for her creative insights as a dedicated mentor and Sarah for her belief in this story and perseverance in bringing it to light."

Two days later, Belmont Books will feature *The Kaleidoscope of Destiny* on September 24, at 7 p.m., where Ignatius will be in conversation with award-winning author Donna Gordon. A listing of upcoming events appears on Ignatius' website at www.sarahignatius.com.

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ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church's Armenian Bourma

According to *Food & Wine*, bourma is a rich, sticky, and sweet phyllo dough-based dessert studded with nuts and redolent with butter. In some ways, it may be similar to baklava, but it truly stands alone. Bourma is explicitly Armenian. *Food & Wine* defines bourma as “a phyllo-based dish filled with walnuts that is baked and then doused with sugar syrup.” The most interesting component about making bourma? It calls for a thin dowel, which in many instances is actually an “heirloom often passed down in Armenian families.” After brushing with nuts and melted butter, the uber-thin dough is rolled up with the dowel and then “scrunched” up, before being slid off and placed on a baking sheet.

Bourma's signature look is “crispy and scrunched” according to a recipe shared by *Food & Wine*, and a *Saveur* story even calls them “accordion pastry.” Their recipe also calls for cinnamon and rosewater. Additionally, it mentions a variation on bourma called glore, which is bourma “curved into a circle before baking, then filled with more nuts in the center.” How delicious does that sound? While the flavors may vary slightly depending on the recipe, if you're unable to eat nuts, then bourma unfortunately may not be the dessert for you.

This recipe was featured in a story by Polly Clingerman, cookbook author (*The Kitchen Companion* and *Polly Clingerman's Dinner Companion*) and reporter about the many devoted members of the Women's Guild at St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church in Washington, D.C. It was published on November 3, 1993 in the *Washington Post* about the Guild's Annual Food Festival recipes and advance food preparations. The Women's Guild activities include various service projects for the parish: Annual Women's Saints Day Celebration; fundraising activities such as the Annual Food Festival and Lenten Food Festival and Armenian Cultural and Christian educational programs.

The story began, “Every autumn for 44 years, the women of St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church have plunged into a six-week frenzy of chopping and stirring and rolling and patting and baking that ends in four days of glorious eating: the buffet lunches and weekend dinners of the annual bazaar. Today, when the bazaar opens its doors for the 45th year, Washingtonians will throng buffet and carryout lines. Many will leave laden with jars and bowls of soups and spicy mixtures (the regulars bring empties), boxes and bags of pastries, meatballs and meat pies. And

no wonder. The food is rich-flavored, but the cooks are quick to point out that Armenians don't do much frying.”
(Makes about 50 to 60 pieces)

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 package phyllo dough, thawed and at room temperature
- 1 pound walnuts, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 8 ounces unsalted butter, melted and separated (discard the white milk solids)

The syrup:

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

PREPARATION:

Phyllo dough is typically sold frozen. Place your box of phyllo in the refrigerator overnight to gently thaw it before using.

In a bowl, mix the walnuts, cinnamon and sugar.

Set the pile of phyllo sheets on your work surface, covered with a very slightly damp towel so they don't dry out while you work. Place one sheet of phyllo in front of you, with a long side facing you. Brush lightly with melted butter (you don't have to cover every bit of surface). Top with a second sheet. Cover this with a thin layer of walnut mixture, leaving at least a 1/2-inch margin all around. Fold in the two short sides 1/2 inch. Lay the dowel along the long side near you, fold the edge over the dowel and start rolling loosely.

As you roll, brush the bottom side of the phyllo lightly with butter so the finished cylinder looks shiny. Don't touch the dough or you'll disturb the butter glaze. Now gently nudge the roll toward the center, first from one end, then from the other. It will shorten (like an accordion) by a couple of inches. Slide off the rod onto a baking sheet. Continue preparing and rolling sheets until all ingredients are used.

Bake the bourma in a preheated 350°F oven for 30 to 40 minutes or until nicely golden. Cool. Cut in 1- or 2-inch lengths. Store tightly covered in a cool, dry place for up to 2 weeks. (Some of the cooks at church freeze their bourma at this point, some view this idea with horror — all assured Polly Clingerman that their bourma are excellent). The bazaar bourma have not been frozen.

For the syrup: Before serving (this can be the day before), mix sugar and lemon juice with 1 cup water in a small saucepan. Simmer for 10 minutes. Holding each piece of bourma with your fingers, dip each piece into the hot syrup, immersing it completely, then holding for a moment to drain. Place on a rack to drain or put directly on serving plate lined with a paper doily.

Note: The trick for bourma and baklava is to have syrup and pastry at different temperatures. If pastry is hot, syrup must be cold. If pastry is cold, have syrup hot.

This recipe originally appeared at:

THE ARMENIAN KITCHEN KLATCH

By Polly Clingerman

November 3, 1993

See: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/food/1993/11/03/the-armenian-kitchen-klatch/0ff2bef1-5dd5-4ca7-962d-9a7414b2bbf0/?noredirect=on>

St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church
4125 Fessenden St. NW
Washington, DC 20016
Office: (202) 363-1923
Email: stmarychurchdc@gmail.com

*Ruth M. “Polly” Clingerman is the author of 12 cookbooks, including *Polly Clingerman's Kitchen Companion* and *Polly Clingerman's Dinner Companion: Glorious, Easy Meals in Less Than an Hour*. *Kitchen Companion*, published by the American Cooking Guild in Gaithersburg, was nominated best cookbook for the 1995 James Beard Awards. She started writing in the mid-1980s, including food articles for the *Washington Post*, and did consulting work for *The All New, All Purpose Joy of Cooking*, published in 1997. She was a native of Lansing, Mich., and a graduate of Michigan State University. She received a degree in African affairs from the Sorbonne in France. She passed away in 2000. Her husband was John R. Clingerman, a retired Foreign Service Officer and former US ambassador to Lesotho from 1979 to 1981, who passed away in 2004.

Simon and Schuster Division Publishes New Edition of *The Tamerlane Game*

SAN DIEGO — Author George Kirazian's mystery, *The Tamerlane Game*, has been published in a new edition by Archway/Simon and Schuster. It is available on the Archway website as well as on Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

In the novel, detective Alex Gordian investigates the murder of Victor Lomax, uncovering decades-old secrets involving rare books, lost love and hidden family ties. As Gordian unravels the case, he discovers betrayal, forgery and a tragic legacy stretching from wartime Philip-

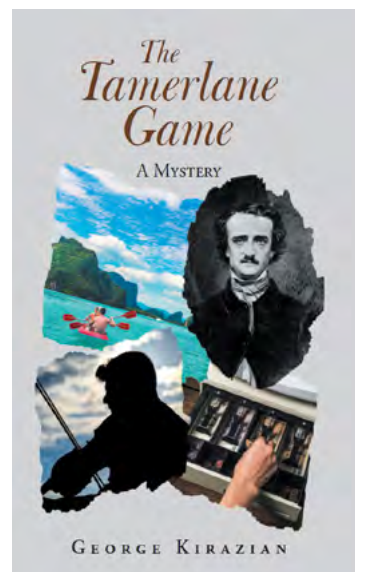
pinos to modern San Diego.

Kirazian, a longtime leader in the San Diego Armenian community and retired English professor, graduated from New York University and taught writing/literature for 40 years at Grossmont College. His books include *The Tamerlane Game: A Mystery*, *A Time for Fathers*, *The Princess of December*, *The Sleeping Violet*, *Perry the Peacock*, *Beyond the Koala Kingdom*, *Leo and the Mulberry Flute* and *Easy Writing*.

He has also composed sacred classical mu-

sic for the last two decades, including a new version of *The Divine Liturgy* of the Armenian Apostolic Church (recordings available on CD by Paros Chamber Choir and Pacific Camerata), and “The Book of Ruth: A Ballet,” based on the Old Testament story, which was produced by Mojalet Dance Company at the Poway Performing Arts Center.

Kirazian lives in San Diego with his wife, *Armenian Vegan* cookbook author Dikranouhi Kirazian, and enjoys time with his family and grandchildren.



ARTS & CULTURE

Tina Afiyan Breiova: ‘The Armenian Spirit Is Made for Art’

BREIOVA, from page 13

Having collaborated with artists such as Marina Abramović and Paul Thomas Anderson, what have these interdisciplinary cooperations taught you about the expressive possibilities of the human body?

Oh! This question makes me think about the fact that I’ve always enjoyed a wide range of work, and when I look back, I really have tried so many genres. Working with Paul Thomas Anderson on “Anima” (which you can see on Netflix) was completely different to working with Marina Abramović at the Royal Academy of Arts. On “Anima,” I only played a small role within the choreography by Damien Jalet; it was really just a chance encounter that I ended up doing it at all.

But what I learned, mainly from watching Thom Yorke and the incredible professional he is, was where the similarity lay: endurance. You have to stay committed when you’re doing one take after another, and it’s the same with Marina’s work — you have to commit fully when you perform it.

As the founder of Axis of Action and an educator at London Contemporary Dance School, what principles do you

consider most essential for training the next generation of performers and movement directors?

This is exactly what we were asking ourselves when we were creating the MA in performance course. And I’m lucky, because my practice. Axis of Action takes me to so many different countries, festivals and institutions, which means I get to see the tendencies that are arising across the field.

What we’re seeing is that dancers are less often employed within one theatre or company for many years — in fact, most are now freelancers. To survive and succeed in a very competitive industry, they need to be versatile and unafraid to experiment with different styles and ways of working. They need to keep their minds open.

Your acclaimed duet “Ruina” is inspired by the 1988 Spitak earthquake in Armenia. What first drew you to this subject, and how did you translate such a profound historical tragedy into movement without words?

Well, let’s start with the fact that I merely tried — you cannot truly translate such a tragedy. The duet was less based on the earthquake itself, and more on what it left behind: the spaces that were once full of life, now destroyed and empty. It wasn’t

the event itself that drew me in, but its consequence.

I was lucky to work with two brilliant dancers, and I focused mainly on the idea of interdependence. We wanted to create movements that would not be possible if the other person weren’t there.

You come from an Armenian and Czech family. Your mother Gayane Breiova is a well-known restaurateur, cookbook author, and TV presenter, recognized for promoting traditional Armenian culinary heritage in Moscow and Prague. Could you tell us how your multicultural background has shaped your artistic identity?

I think art is personal at its core. Every culture I’ve encountered — even the ones that shaped me just by living there — is part of my identity. I’ve lived in seven countries now, so I’ve picked up a lot of influences along the way.

My mum, originally from Yerevan, has always been an advocate for Armenian culture, and her way of expressing it is through food — she’s incredible at it. When I came back to visit her after living in China, she made *tolma*, and I cried. Food is memory, and it’s one of the most primal kinds. My dad always spoke Czech to us growing up,

and it’s probably my strongest language today. Language shapes how we understand the world, and speaking Russian, broken Armenian, English, and Czech all shapes my thinking — and by extension, my art.

Recently the contemporary dance scene in Armenia has become vivid. What was your experience from your workshop in Yerevan last August 3-4?

I was delighted to teach in Yerevan. I must say I still don’t know the dance scene there well enough — I’d love to know it more, so please feel free to educate me whenever you have a moment.

The workshop was an opportunity to understand the field by actually being in the studio. My main expertise is teaching at a professional level, working with dancers who are already established in their craft. To build a scene with that kind of professionalism, we need investment in culture and a genuine appreciation of it. Only then will parents, children and adult dancers alike believe that this is a career worth pursuing. I expected to find charismatic and beautiful people, and I did — the Armenian spirit is made for art. I really hope to see more Armenian dancers making a difference, both in Armenia and around the world.

Armenian Poets Celebrated in National Literary Magazine

BROOKLYN, N.Y. — Eleven Armenian writers from around the globe are featured in a specially curated section of the current issue of *Hanging Loose*, the oldest independent literary journal in the country.

Every semi-annual issue — roughly a hundred pages of work by American and international writers — turns over about 20 percent of the magazine to a guest editor, who selects poets and poems for that special section, sometimes with a particular theme.

In this issue — *Hanging Loose* number 119, just out — distinguished Armenian-American poet Alan Semerdjian is guest editor. In the introduction to his selection of work by Armenian and Armenian-American poets, titled “Through the Darkest Corridors,” he says this: “Wherever we are, there is Armenia. And wherever Armenia is, there is the ghost of the Genocide hovering near it, inextricably tied. May we all learn from that which haunts us, and may it become our greatest folio of instruction.”

Thus the section focuses on the continuing impact of the Armenian Genocide, as it affects contemporary writers’ lives, memories, and art. All the poems are in English, though some are translations from Armenian. For those, the original Armenian language versions appear on facing pages — a proud first for *Hanging Loose*.

Poets and translators featured in the magazine include Diana Arterian, Peter Balakian, Lory Bedikian, Tamar Marie Boyadjian, Tatev Chakhian, Gregory Djanikian, Sarah Giragosian, Silva Kaputikyan, Karén Karslyan, Margarit Ordukhanyan and Marine Petrossian.

Information about purchasing the magazine, ISSN: 0440-2316, can be found on the *Hanging Loose* Press website: <https://www.hangingloosepress.com>

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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 18 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston Chapter presents “Arshile Gorky: Between the Figural and Abstract,” an illustrated talk by Kim Servart Theriault. Friday, 7 p.m. Baikar Building, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. Free admission. 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 5 — Monday, Saint James Men’s Club Social Event combined with Holy Trinity Men’s Club, mezza 6:15 pm, 7:00 pm, Losh Kebab & Kheyma Dinner. Our Guest speaker will be; Pierre Terjanian, the new director of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Please RSVP at the church office, 617-923-8860 we expect a large audience for this event, Located 465 Mt. Auburn Street , Watertown.

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 Tjeknavori-

an, 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 12 — **CITY OF SMILE WILL HOST AN ASTONISHING, MAGICAL MYSTICAL NIGHT. CITY OF SMILE HELPS TREAT CHILDREN IN ARMENIA WHO ARE SUFFERING FROM CANCER.** 7 TO 10 P.M., OAKLEY COUNTRY CLUB, 410 BELMONT ST., WATERTOWN. **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 Monday before publication.

Pegasus Celebrates Decade with Two Concerts Marking Most Ambitious Season

PEGASUS, from page 13

Pegasus opens its anniversary season with a celebration of the whose friendship, artistry and shared values have shaped the orchestra.

At the heart of the evening are three artists who have become integral to Pegasus: concertmaster Ruggero Alliffranchini, principal oboist Noah Kay and principal cellist Ari Evan.

Alliffranchini joins Kay in Bach’s *Concerto for Violin and Oboe* before taking center stage in Haydn’s elegant *Violin Concerto in G Major*.

After intermission, Evan is featured in the lyrical *Cello Concerto* by Georgian composer Vazha Azarashvili.

Hakobyan then moves from the harpsichord to the podium as the program culminates in Britten’s vibrant *Simple Symphony*.

Drawn from music Britten composed in his youth, the work brings together elegance, humor, tenderness, and exhilarating rhythmic energy.

The concert begins at 7 p.m. on Saturday, September 26, at Mary Flagler Cary Hall at the DiMenna Center for Classical Music, 450 West 37th Street. Tickets are \$40, with \$25 student tickets available. A celebratory sparkling wine reception will precede the performance.

Tickets and information: <https://secure.givelively.org/event/pegasus-the-orchestra-inc/from-within-strings-voices>

On October 24, Pegasus returns to Merkin Hall in full orchestral force with “Brilliance in Motion,” a program shaped by energy, elegance, and extraordinary momentum.

The concert brings together three works that move with distinctly different characters while sharing a powerful sense of propulsion and orchestral imagination. Glinka’s *Overture to Ruslan and Lyudmila* opens the evening with speed, theatrical sparkle, and luminous orchestral color. Nielsen’s *Symphony No. 1* follows.

After intermission, the program culminates in Prokofiev’s *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major*. At the heart of the evening is pianist Reed Tetzloff, a remarkable artist whose rare combination of intelligence, intensity, and fearless virtuosity makes him a compelling interpreter of Prokofiev.

“Prokofiev’s *Third Concerto* is exhilarating because its brilliance is never merely display,” Tetzloff said. “Beneath its velocity and wit, there is extraordinary lyricism and a constant need for chamber-like lis-

tening between the piano and orchestra. I am thrilled to join Karén and Pegasus in a work that invites everyone onstage to take risks together.”

A private VIP reception celebrating Pegasus’s the anniversary will follow the concert.

The concert begins at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, October 24 at Merkin Hall at Kaufman Music Center, 129 West 67th Street. Prime tickets are \$60 and regular tickets are \$40, with \$30 senior and \$15 student tickets available through the box office at 212-501-3330.

Tickets and information: <https://www.kaufmanmusiccenter.org/mch/event/PegasusBrilliance/>

For complete season information, visit: <https://www.pegasustheorchestra.org>



COMMENTARY

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



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EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

CONTRIBUTORS

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

REGIONAL

CORRESPONDENTS

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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

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Putin–Pashinyan Meeting: The First Since Armenia’s Elections

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

On September 1, a meeting between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Russian President Vladimir Putin finally took place in Bishkek. The meeting was particularly significant, as it was the first meeting between the two sides following the elections held in Armenia. It is noteworthy that the two leaders agreed to meet again in the near future, this time with the Armenian prime minister traveling to Moscow.

The public portion of the meeting made it clear that one of the most contentious issues in Armenian-Russian relations remains the law adopted by Armenia concerning EU membership. It is evident that Russia wants Armenia to make a final decision regarding its foreign policy orientation and appears to be taking a very serious and principled position on this issue.

The problem is that Moscow also wants an unequivocal statement as to whether Armenia intends to join the EU, while Armenia maintains that no such agenda currently exists. It cannot be ruled out that the issue of its complete absence from the current agenda is discussed behind closed doors. Publicly, however, Russia appears to want to hear precisely this clarification from Armenia.

Moreover, during his press conference later that day, the Russian president stated that if Armenia no longer needs the presence of the Russian military base on its territory, Russia can withdraw it. Interestingly, there has not been particularly extensive public discussion in Armenia regarding this issue. However, with this statement, Putin appeared to suggest that Armenian-Russian relations should be viewed as a comprehensive package. In other words, a decision by Armenia to leave the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) could also mean the withdrawal of the Russian military base and, more broadly, a freezing of Armenian-Russian relations, as happened in the case of Georgia years ago.

It is also evident that the Armenian authorities do not want to withdraw from the EAEU. During the meeting, the Armenian prime minister reminded the Russian president that, before leaving the organization, a member state must notify the other members of its intention six months in advance, and that there is no mechanism for expelling a country from the organization. In other words, Armenia is signaling that it intends to remain in the EAEU and that there is no mechanism through which it can be forced out.

At the same time, Armenia does not want to strain its relations with the EU or repeal the law on launching the process of EU

membership, as doing so would put the Armenian authorities in a difficult domestic and foreign policy position. As a result, a tense situation is developing around Armenia. On the one hand, Russia is applying pressure and demanding that Armenia hold a referendum; on the other hand, the EU has its own priorities and is broadly aligned with the Armenian authorities on different issues.

The idea of holding a referendum has most likely gained momentum because Armenia has committed to holding a constitutional referendum, in line with Azerbaijan’s demands, to remove provisions that Azerbaijan and Turkey consider problematic. Russia, in turn, appears to believe that the question of EU versus EAEU membership could also be put to a vote as part of the same referendum. This, of course, puts Armenia in an even more difficult position. If the issue reaches the stage of holding a referendum, Russia will likely seek to ensure that the same vote also provides a clear answer to the question of whether Armenia intends to pursue EU or EAEU membership. This would make both the political process and the organization of such a referendum significantly more complicated.

As for the meeting between the Armenian and Russian leaders itself, its course made it clear that the Armenian authorities have done, and will continue to do, everything possible to avoid holding a referendum on EU membership or on Armenia’s withdrawal from the EAEU. In other words, Armenia does not want to take any steps that would run counter to the interests of the EAEU or Russia, while at the same time seeking to meet the expectations of the EU.

As a result, Armenia has found itself in an increasingly difficult position. The traditional policy of balancing between competing superpowers is no longer working for a country like Armenia, and Yerevan can no longer effectively maneuver between the EU and Russia given the unprecedented level of hostility between these two poles. Therefore, the pressure on Yerevan is unlikely to decrease; rather, it is likely to increase, particularly as Armenia moves toward holding the constitutional referendum demanded by Azerbaijan in the near future.

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





COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan Wants to Turn Armenia Into a Country Without Armenians

Talaat Pasha, the mastermind of the Armenian Genocide, wrote in a letter in 1915: “We wanted to leave behind one Armenian, and only in a museum.”

If the current disastrous trends in Armenia continue, what Talaat planned to carry out, but did not fully succeed, is being accomplished by the Armenian government.

Arsen Torosyan, a high-ranking official of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s government, announced in the Armenian Parliament in May: “We need to organize immigration, even if it doesn’t fit with the so-called national ideas. Tens of thousands of people need to immigrate here. It won’t happen without that. We also need to change this monoethnic mindset in our heads. Because there’s no other way to survive in this region.” Torosyan is the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs of Armenia. He previously served as Minister of Health, Prime Minister’s Chief of Staff, member of Parliament, and is a board member of the ruling Civil Contract Party.

This is an anti-Armenian notion just like Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s almost every other action. Any sensible Armenian leader, before rushing to import tens of thousands of non-Armenians to Armenia, would try to entice some of the seven million members of the Armenian Diaspora to immigrate to Armenia.

Instead, Pashinyan is busy rejecting Armenia’s history and culture, and now diluting its demographics. He first gave away the Armenian region of Artsakh to Azerbaijan, after sacrificing thousands of young Armenian soldiers. He then permitted Azerbaijan to occupy parts of the Republic of Armenia starting in 2021 and 2022. He is now talking about giving Tigranashen to Azerbaijan.

Pashinyan went on to devalue sacrosanct Armenian nationalistic symbols like Mount Ararat.

Before we worry about the Armenian government welcoming Diaspora Armenians, we should be more alarmed about the blocking of its own citizens from coming to Armenia to vote on election day. The Armenian Parliament just passed a law that requires that those citizens who are coming home to vote must first live in Armenia for one year. This is an abuse of the citizens’ most basic democratic right.

The government is also making it much more difficult for Diaspora Armenians to acquire Armenian citizenship, instead of offering them inducements to move to the homeland, which would increase Armenia’s population.

Several years ago, when Zareh Sinanyan, the High Commissioner of Diaspora Affairs of Armenia, was on his way to visit Lebanon, he told the media that he would like to arrange for Arabs to settle in Armenia. He does not seem to know that his job is working with Diaspora Armenians, not encouraging the emigration of Arabs, Chinese or any other nationality to Armenia.

The scariest part of the Armenian officials’ talk about bringing non-Armenians to live in Armenia is paving the way for 300,000 Azeris to move to Armenia which would be the end of the Republic of Armenia. For months now, Pres. Aliyev has been demanding that the Armenian government accept 300,000 Azeris to emigrate to Armenia. Aliyev has already renamed Armenia “Western Azerbaijan.” Would Torosyan and Pashinyan extend their anti-Armenian positions to welcoming the 300,000 Azeris to Armenia? Sadly, I think this is a distinct possibility. If that is not enough to destroy Armenia, there are millions of Turks who live across the border from Armenia. Would Armenia’s leaders be so brazen as to invite a very large number of Turks to move to Armenia? I am afraid they may.

A non-Armenian analyst, Javier Villamor, wrote in *The European Conservative* that Torosyan’s remark “has opened a fierce internal debate about national identity, demographics, and the country’s strategic direction.... Armenia has spent decades defining itself as a demographic exception in a region marked by ethnic fault-lines, wars, and mass displacement. A small country of barely three million inhabitants, with a population that is homogeneously 97-98% Armenian, it is built politically around national survival in the wake of the Ottoman genocide, the Soviet collapse, and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Now, for the first time, figures close to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan are beginning to speak publicly about breaking that model.”

If the Armenian government were truly interested in increasing Armenia’s population, it would do everything possible to keep those who already live there to remain in the country. It should also provide the necessary housing and employment to keep in the country those Armenians who moved to Armenia in recent years from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Artsakh to remain in the country: Regrettably, tens of thousands of them have left Armenia already.

Rejecting the Armenian government’s announced intent to bring a large number of foreigners to Armenia is not racism. It is based on the fact that the Armenian nation, after suffering multiple massacres and even genocide needs to preserve its several millennia-long civilization from extinction.

The Asymmetry of Memory: Why Centuries of Shared History Aren’t Building Polish-Armenian Soft Power

By Miłosz Manasterski

Whenever I land at Zvartnots Airport on a flight from Warsaw, I feel an extraordinary surge of energy despite the exhaustion of a red-eye flight. There is something genuinely warm in the demeanor of the ground staff and border guards in Yerevan that makes me feel instantly welcome. I have often wondered whether this is due to my burgundy Polish passport or simply the legendary Armenian hospitality. Would I experience the same warmth if I arrived as a German, an Italian, or a Spaniard? I will never know.

I do know, however, what I feel as a Pole.

If you grow up along the Vistula, you encounter Armenian heritage almost by default. To many Poles, Armenians are not an exotic people living far away in the Caucasus, near the Iranian border. They are one of the historic communities that helped shape Poland’s cultural and political landscape.

For centuries, Polish Armenians contributed to trade, diplomacy, religion, science, and the arts. Their presence became part of the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and of modern Poland. Their legacy lives on in figures whose achievements became part of Poland’s national heritage: Józef Teodorowicz, the Armenian Catholic Archbishop of Lviv and an important religious and political figure of the Second Polish Republic; Teodor Axentowicz, one of Poland’s leading painters of the Young Poland movement and rector of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków; Zbigniew Herbert, one of Poland’s greatest poets, whose family tradition traced Armenian ancestry; and Ignacy Łukasiewicz, the pioneer of the modern oil industry, whose family origins were connected to the Armenian community.

For many Poles, these names are not reminders of a distant minority community. They are simply part of the national story. Today, Armenians in Poland are often our colleagues, neighbors, entrepreneurs, and friends. Their presence is not a foreign addition to Polish history, but one of the threads that have shaped it.

Yet here lies a striking paradox.

This deep historical perspective often collides with a

different reality when I arrive in Yerevan. During a conversation at Jezve café, a few steps from Republic Square, I asked a young Armenian analyst what he associated Poland with. After a moment of thought, he replied: “With the Schengen visa process and support within the European Union.”

When I mentioned centuries of Armenian presence in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, or even the fact that the Warsaw Stock Exchange is the majority shareholder of the Armenia Securities Exchange, he shrugged. For him, Poland was primarily an EU member state rather than a country connected to Armenia through centuries of shared history.

This asymmetry of memory is not the fault of one side alone.

Poland has also failed to transform its historical ties with Armenia into modern political and cultural influence. We have allowed a relationship with deep roots to become defined mainly by present-day instruments: European Union mechanisms, economic cooperation, development programs, and diplomatic contacts.

When I spoke with the President of Armenia, Vahagn Khachaturyan, in 2023, I asked him whether he had ever visited Warsaw, privately or as head of state. He smiled and said that he had not — not yet. Looking today at the calendar of presidential visits, I see with regret that little has changed. Then-President Andrzej Duda visited Yerevan in November 2024, but a reciprocal official visit at the highest level in Warsaw has yet to take place.

The problem is not a lack of goodwill. The problem is a lack of imagination.

Armenia possesses a remarkable but underused resource: the memory of its historical communities abroad. The Armenian story has never been limited to the territory of the modern Republic of Armenia. Armenians helped shape cities, institutions, economies, and cultures across Europe and the Middle East. Recognizing this legacy is not merely an exercise in nostalgia. It is a form of strategic thinking.

France has understood this logic exceptionally well. Through its Armenian diaspora, cultural diplomacy, and

political engagement, it has built a strong symbolic presence in Armenia. Central Europe, by contrast, has never fully used its historical Armenian connections as a source of influence.

This is a missed opportunity for both sides.

For Warsaw, relying only on EU bureaucracy in the Caucasus means overlooking a unique historical advantage. Poland can offer Armenia not only the perspective of another EU member state, but also the experience of a society that went through partition, occupation, political transformation, and institutional rebuilding.

For Armenian political elites and civil society, Poland should not be viewed merely through the neutral language of European administration: visas, grants, and monitoring missions. Poland is also a country where Armenian heritage has survived as part of the national memory.

Geopolitics determines alliances in the short term. Memory sustains relationships over generations.

The most valuable element of Polish-Armenian relations may therefore not be something that has to be built. It already exists. The challenge is that one side remembers it more clearly than the other.

Bridging this asymmetry is not a sentimental journey into the past. It is an investment in a shared European future.

(Miłosz Manasterski is a Polish journalist and commentator writing on Central Europe, demography, and the political economy of European societies. He is the CEO of Agencja Informacyjna, an independent Polish news agency, and a regular political commentator for leading Polish media outlets. A former Middle East correspondent based in the United Arab Emirates, his work examines how institutions and historical memory shape the long-term future of Europe and its neighbors. He is a recipient of the Knight’s Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta and was awarded a medal under the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) framework for his work on social policy. You can read his work on Substack (miloszmanasterski.substack.com) and connect with him on LinkedIn ([/in/miloszmanasterski](https://in/miloszmanasterski)).



Smbatyan Says State Symphony Wants to Raise Visibility Internationally

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Classical music has a strong following in Armenia, Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Tigran Virabyan said on September 8, pointing to the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra’s recent concert with world-renowned pianist Lang Lang as evidence.

The concert, held at Yerevan’s Karen Demirchyan Sports and Concerts Complex, was one of the orchestra’s high-profile recent performances.

The orchestra has an ambitious program planned for its 21st concert season, Virabyan said, adding that details of its main event will be announced within the next week.

“I believe it will be one of the biggest events in Armenia’s cultural life in recent years,” he told a news conference.

Virabyan said the orchestra is also stepping up its international activity, seeking to establish itself not only as a leading ensemble in Armenia but as a regular presence on the international classical music scene.

He also praised the international career

of Sergei Smbatyan, the orchestra’s artistic director and principal conductor.

“It is important that we have a conductor who is capable of leading some of the world’s best orchestras and is sought after in different countries,” Virabyan said. “That is an achievement for contemporary Armenian culture as well.”

Smbatyan said the orchestra’s 20th season has shown that there is a substantial audience for classical music in Armenia. The new season, he said, will build on that success with performances by internationally acclaimed soloists.

“We have world-renowned soloists lined up for the 21st season — musicians who attract audiences around the world,” Smbatyan said.

But the orchestra’s international ambitions go beyond bringing foreign stars to Armenia. Smbatyan said one of its key goals is to take Armenian music abroad and introduce international audiences to the country’s composers and musical heritage.

“Our mission is clear: We want to per-



Conductor Sergei Smbatyan of the Armenian State Symphony

form abroad and, above all, showcase Armenian composers,” he said. “We have a strategy of presenting our musical heritage and the great composers who have shaped

the way we understand the world.”

International tours can also serve as a form of cultural diplomacy, Smbatyan said, helping audiences develop a broader understanding of Armenia.

“When people see that Armenia has an orchestra of this caliber working with world-renowned musicians, it changes the way they perceive Armenia,” he stated.

Smbatyan said Armenia’s performing arts are among the country’s strongest cultural assets, noting the role of Armenian composers in developing its symphonic tradition.

He particularly highlighted Tigran Mansuryan, one of Armenia’s best-known contemporary composers.

“Mansuryan is often known in Armenia primarily for his film scores, but internationally he is recognized as a composer of contemporary classical music,” Smbatyan said. “Writing new music is extremely difficult. There are perhaps only 10 to 20 composers in the world today who are working at this level of contemporary music.”

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INTERNATIONAL SCREEN
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7:30pm - Opening Night - Other Side of Fame (US Premiere)

Sept. 26 7:30pm - In the Land of Arto (US Premiere)

Sept. 27 6:00pm - Closing Night Red Carpet followed by 7:30pm Awards Presentation

For TCL Chinese Theatre schedule and ticket information, please visit www.arpafilmfestival.com/tickets

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