

Start Date for TRIPP Connecting Armenia And Azerbaijan Pushed Back

Construction on a trade corridor seen as the lynchpin of the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace deal is facing a delay, according to a top Azerbaijani official.

The provisional peace agreement was signed in Washington in August 2025. At that time, the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) had been expected to begin construction by the end of 2026. But in comments published by the Russian news agency Interfax, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov acknowledged what was becoming increasingly obvious; work will not start on TRIPP until 2027.

TRIPP will carve a trade corridor through approximately 42 kilometers of Armenian territory to connect Azerbaijan's mainland to its Nakhichevan exclave, then integrate into Turkey's rail and road system. The route is envisioned as a key link in the emerging Middle Corridor trade network. The United States and Armenia in early 2026 signed a framework agreement covering TRIPP's development, but vital operational details remain to be determined. The United States under that agreement will enjoy a controlling interest in the corridor.

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Karapetyan Says Armenia Will Be Left ‘Without an Owner’ if Russian Military Base Closes

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

Russian-Armenian tycoon and opposition leader Samvel Karapetyan has said Armenia would be left “without an owner in the region” if Russia removes its military base from Gyumri. Russia has expressed its willingness to remove the base, which has been located in Armenia since the 1940s; in response, Yerevan said it had never made such a request but did not consider the Gyumri site a “vital necessity.”

Karapetyan built his fortune in Russia and entered politics in 2025, founding the Strong Armenia party which is now the largest opposition group in parliament. He made the remarks on 11 September while speaking to journalists outside a court hearing in a criminal case against him, which includes charges of publicly calling for a coup and money laundering.

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Azerbaijani presidential aide Hikmet Hajiyeu (center) with foreign diplomats visiting the Gandzasar monastery in September 2026 (photo Azertac)

Azerbaijan Portrays Armenian Heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh as Caucasian Albanian

Outcry in Armenia

By Arshaluys Barseghyan and Rafiq Shahbazov

A two-day visit by representatives of foreign diplomats in Azerbaijan to Nagorno-Karabakh has prompted controversy and outcry in Armenia, as Azerbaijan portrayed Armenian religious heritage as Caucasian Albanian.

The battle over monuments in Nagorno-Karabakh has long been central to the conflict over the region, with Azerbaijan often labeling medieval monasteries or heritage as Caucasian Albanian, and denying their Armenian origin despite widespread recognition among international scholars.

Caucasian Albania, not related to modern-day Albania in the Balkans, was an ancient Christian kingdom that existed in the South Caucasus.

Since taking control of Nagorno-Karabakh, experts have accused Azerbaijan of trying to erase Armenian religious and cultural heritage, through the destruction of ancient cemeteries, residential areas, and settlements, along with former government buildings, with some cases documented by authorities or satellite imagery.

In turn, Azerbaijan has repeatedly cited the widespread destruction of

Azerbaijani heritage sites, towns, and religious buildings that occurred when the region was under Armenian control.

The visit, organized by presidential aide Hikmet Hajiyeu, took place on September 11. The delegation included 150 representatives from 58 countries and nine international organizations.

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EU Envoy Acknowledges Karabakh’s Armenian Heritage After Criticism

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A senior European Union diplomat insisted on Monday, September 14, that she did not question Nagorno-Karabakh's Armenian cultural and religious heritage with her visit to the region used by Azerbaijan for again claiming that its ancient churches are not Armenian.

Magdalena Grono, the EU's special representative for the South Caucasus, was among foreign diplomats who traveled to Karabakh at the weekend on a promotional tour led by a senior aide to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. The official, Hikmet Hajiyeu, showed them around the territory and its 13th century Gandzasar Monastery in particular three years after an Azerbaijani military offensive that restored Azerbaijan's control over Karabakh and forced its entire ethnic Armenian population to flee to Armenia.

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EU envoy Magdalena Grono (second from right) visits the Matenadaran museum-institute of Armenian manuscripts, Yerevan, September 14, 2026

NEW YORK

Across the Waters Of Lake Van, a Pilgrimage Reaches Its Sacred Heart



ARMENIA

Tunik App Brings Armenian Bedtimes Stories to Diaspora Children



LOS ANGELES

‘Echoes of Our Ancestors’ Thrills with Packed Lineup





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Land Returned to Dilijan National Park

YEREVAN (Pan.am) — Two plots of land with a total area of 1.75 hectares located in the Dilijan National Park have been returned to the possession of the Republic of Armenia.

The Prosecutor's Office of Tavush Region, within the framework of its authority to file a lawsuit to protect state interests, filed lawsuits with the Anti-Corruption Court against two individuals. The Prosecutor's Office has demanded the compulsory termination of the right to develop land plots with an area of 0.5 and 1.25 hectares located in the territory of the Dilijan National Park. The value of the land plots, approximated to the market value, amounted to 119.6 million drams (\$328,000), the Prosecutor General's Office reported.

The Anti-Corruption Court made rulings on satisfying the claims on July 23 and 24, 2026, which have already entered into legal force. The land plots were returned to the possession of the Republic of Armenia.

Armenia, Azerbaijani Ministers to Meet

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and his Azerbaijani counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov are expected to meet in New York this month on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, Mirzoyan has revealed.

"We plan to meet in New York within the framework of the UN General Assembly session. There is no final agreement yet; it depends on our schedules," Mirzoyan said in response to a question.

He did not provide further details about the agenda.

The 81st session of the UN General Assembly opened in New York on September 8.

Health Minister Urges Syunik Residents to Use Bottled Water only

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenian Health Minister Anahit Avanesyan on September 14 urged residents of Tsav, a village in Syunik Province, to use only water supplied by the local community or bottled water for drinking and household purposes.

"I urge [residents] during this period to use only water supplied by the community or bottled water for drinking and household purposes, including washing food, cooking and bathing," Avanesyan said.

She also advised residents to seek medical attention immediately if they experience weakness, headaches, nausea, swelling, trembling hands, skin rashes or any other deterioration in their health.

The warning follows laboratory tests which found elevated levels of mercury in a water sample taken from a resident's home in Tsav.

St. John Armenian Church of San Francisco Helps Provide Home for Family of Fallen Artsakh Hero

Two families from Gishi, Artsakh receive permanent homes in Armenia, bringing Lorik Humanitarian Fund's housing program to 15 families, including seven families of fallen servicemen

The Abgaryan family's new home was made possible through a \$20,000 contribution from St. John Armenian Church of San Francisco to Lorik Humanitarian Fund, providing a permanent home in Echmiadzin for the widow and four children of fallen Artsakh serviceman Armo Abgaryan.

Armo Abgaryan and Gagik Balayan were both from the village of Gishi in the Martuni region of Artsakh. Both were killed in the same attack in June 2023.

Lorik's relationship with the Abgaryan and Balayan families began in Artsakh in 2023. Following the deaths of Armo and Gagik, Lorik Fund stood with both families during their funerals in Martuni and provided assistance in the months that followed.

Their Graves Remain in Artsakh Today

Three months later, Azerbaijan's September 2023 attack forced the Armenian population of Artsakh from their homeland. The Abgaryan and Balayan families were among those forcibly displaced.

Three years later, Lorik Fund was with



Armo Abgaryan's family

Together, we laid flowers at the Artsakh Memorial and visited the gravesites of other fallen Armenian servicemen, remembering Armo and honoring those who gave their lives defending their homeland.

Later that day, we traveled with the family to Etchmiadzin, where Armo's wife and children opened the door to their new permanent home.

There, Der Hovannes blessed the Abgaryan family's new home. For a family from Artsakh, having their home blessed by a priest whose own spiritual service is

so deeply connected to Artsakh gave the moment particular meaning.

The day began with remembrance and ended with a new beginning. On Armo's birthday, his family gathered in a home that will now be theirs.

"I was in Martuni when Armo was killed and attended his funeral there. Three years later, we began his birthday at Yerablur remembering him and ended the day standing with his wife and children as Der Hovannes blessed their new home," said Lorik Humanitarian Fund President Shunt Jarchafjian. "There was a lot of emotion in that moment. We cannot replace what this

family lost, but we can stand beside them as they rebuild."

The Abgaryan family's new home stands as a lasting result of St. John Armenian Church of San Francisco's support. The church's contribution went beyond providing immediate assistance. It helped give a widow and four children the security of a permanent home and a place to rebuild their lives.

A Second Home, A Shared Story

During the same visit to Armenia, Lorik also gathered with the family of Gagik Balayan for the blessing of their newly completed home.

Gagik and Armo came from the same village of Gishi and were killed in the same Azerbaijani attack in June 2023. Lorik had also assisted Gagik's family following his death and remained connected with them after their forced displacement from Artsakh.

For the Balayan family, Lorik provided renovation assistance that helped complete their permanent home in Armenia.

Their home was blessed by Der Andreas, who served at Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi before the forced displacement from Artsakh.

The two blessings brought together people whose lives remain deeply tied to Artsakh. Der Hovannes from Dadivank and Der Andreas from Ghazanchetsots stood with two families from Gishi, blessing the new homes where those families are now rebuilding their lives.

The families have been forcibly displaced from their homeland, but carry their faith, traditions and memories with them as they rebuild their lives in Armenia.

With the completion of these two projects, Lorik Humanitarian Fund has now provided 15 permanent homes for families forcibly displaced from Artsakh.

Seven of those 15 homes have been provided to families of fallen Armenian servicemen.

The Abgaryan and Balayan families are also reminders that Lorik's relationship with many of the families it serves did not begin with the forced displacement of September 2023. In this case, it began in Artsakh, during some of the most difficult days these families experienced, and has continued as they rebuild their lives in Armenia.

Learn more about Lorik Humanitarian Fund's housing program at LorikHF.org.



The Abgaryan funeral in Artsakh

both families again, this time in Armenia and for a very different reason: to open the doors to permanent homes of their own.

A New Home on Armo's Birthday

The timing of the Abgaryan family's home blessing carried particular meaning.

September 2 was Artsakh Independence Day. September 3 would have been Armo Abgaryan's birthday.

On the morning of September 3, Lorik joined Armo's wife and four children and Der Hovannes, who served at Dadivank Monastery in Artsakh, at the Yerablur Military Pantheon in Yerevan.



Gagik Balayan's family



ARMENIA

Karapetyan Says Armenia Will Be Left ‘Without an Owner’ if Russian Military Base Closes

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“Well, put a Turkish base there instead. There has to be a base; the base exists now: either it’s the Russians or the Turks. Decide,” Karapetyan said, responding to a journalist who asked why Armenia should be considered “without an owner” if the country lacks a foreign military base.

“We have Armenian bases,” Karapetyan said after being asked why there should be foreign military there rather than an Armenian base.

The comments came following Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on September 1, after which Putin said Russia was ready to withdraw “if Armenia believes that the Russian military base in Armenia is not needed.”

The issue emerged amid tensions between Yerevan and Moscow that escalated ahead of Armenia’s June elections. A number of issues between the countries remain unresolved, especially surrounding Yerevan’s EU membership ambitions and Moscow’s introduction of trade restrictions. The two countries have agreed to continue talks in the near future.

After Putin’s September 2 statement, Pashinyan said that Armenia did not consider the presence of the Russian base a “vital necessity,” adding that Yerevan would not object if Moscow decided to withdraw it and that Armenia had never itself raised the issue.

The Russian 102nd Military Base in Gyumri was established in the 1940s and is believed to house more than 3,000 Russian military personnel. It has served as a



Samvel Karapetyan addresses reporters on election day (photo Mariam Nikuradze/OC Media)

key Russian military presence in the South Caucasus.

The base has been the subject of several controversies over the years, including allegations involving the detention and abduction of deserters from the Russian military, as well as crimes committed by Russian soldiers outside the base. The most serious such incident was the 2015 killing of seven members of the same family by a Russian soldier.

Following Pashinyan’s remarks, Civil Contract MP Vilen Gabrielyan, chair of the Armenian parliament’s Standing Committee on Defense and Security, said the with-

drawal of the base would not negatively affect Armenia’s security because Moscow had failed to fulfill its obligations during Azerbaijani attacks on Armenia in 2021 and 2022.

Gabrielyan did not rule out Armenia eventually asking Russia to withdraw the base, or to pay rent. At the moment, Moscow pays nothing to have the base situated there, but Pashinyan has said that if Russian gas prices increase, Armenia would “also see what we can increase in price, or what there is that has been free until now, after which a price may proportionately emerge.”

“My personal view is that yes, such a financial recalculation — as you put it — could also apply to the base, because, as we know, the territory and maintenance [of the base] are largely covered by the Republic of Armenia,” the Armenian leader said.

Karapetyan, during his press briefing, also addressed the ongoing dispute over the Electric Networks of Armenia (ENA), which is owned by the Tashir Group, which he owns.

Yerevan sought to take over the company shortly after Karapetyan’s arrest in June 2025, after Karapetyan publicly supported the Armenian Apostolic Church while it had tensions with Pashinyan: a situation which escalated in May 2025.

“Regarding [the] ENA, don’t worry, [the] ENA will return to its rightful owner, and they won’t be able to do anything,” Karapetyan said.

Asked whether the ENA could be sold to foreign investors, he replied that the Armenian authorities first need to “take it before they can sell it.”

“We can sell it, but we are not going to sell it,” Karapetyan said.

Karapetyan refused to give a number of the price his company was offered and insisted that the “ENA is not for sale.”

The government has not publicly disclosed the sum it offered Karapetyan. According to documents obtained by RFE/RL, the offer was 23.3 billion drams (\$59 million), on the condition that Karapetyan return more than 23 billion drams (\$60 million) in dividends he had received from the company over the previous 10 years.

RFE/RL calculated that this would leave an effective offer of 142 million drams (\$360,000) for the ENA shares if the dividends were returned to the company.

In early September, Armenian authorities drafted a bill seeking to declare an overriding public interest in the ENA, paving the way for a state takeover with compensation.

According to legal amendments rushed through parliament in summer 2025, shortly after Karapetyan’s detention in June, if the ENA loses its license, the grid must be recognized as a “publicly overriding interest” and have its value assessed. The current owner, Tashir Group, would then be compensated for the takeover.

In November 2025, Armenia’s Public Services Regulatory Commission voted to revoke the ENA’s electricity distribution license, citing serious violations, and appointed a state interim manager.

In turn, Tashir Group had initiated international arbitration, seeking hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation over what it describes as unlawful interference in its investment in Armenia’s power sector.

(This story originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on September 14.)

EU Envoy Acknowledges Karabakh’s Armenian Heritage After Criticism

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Hajiyev repeated Baku’s claims that Gandzasar had been built not by an Armenian prince but a nobleman of Caucasian Albania, an ancient kingdom that covered much of modern-day Azerbaijan’s territory. He also showed mockups of old Armenian manuscripts kept there to deride Armenian arguments to the contrary, prompting laughter from many of the visiting diplomats.

The scene sparked an uproar from Armenian opposition and public figures as well as exiled Karabakh Armenian activists. Some of them were particularly enraged by Grono’s presence, accusing her of thereby helping Baku whitewash ethnic cleansing and erase traces of centuries-old Armenian presence in Karabakh.

“I certainly do not contest past Armenian presence and rich footprint in former conflict-affected areas in Karabakh,” Grono told the Armenpress news agency in Yerevan on Monday. “I could see it firsthand for the first time during the visit to Kalba-

jar and Aghdara (Martakert) districts last week.”

“I heard perspectives from both sides, and I know that both sides feel very strongly about them,” she said. “And I was very happy to also have the opportunity during my visit over the weekend to witness the heritage that is important that is indeed in Karabakh.”

Grono spoke after Armenia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Vahan Kostanyan took her on a tour of Yerevan’s Matenadaran museum-institute of ancient Armenian manuscripts. Its repository holds Gandzasar’s Armenian-language medieval manuscripts whose replicas were mockingly demonstrated by Hajiyev. The Matenadaran director, Ara Khzmalian, told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service ahead of Grono’s visit that he is ready to show those originals to “any diplomat or ambassador who harbors even the slightest doubt about their authenticity.”

According to an Armenian Foreign Ministry statement on the visit, the EU official familiarized herself with “rich collection

of Armenian manuscripts and their history as well as the traditions of preserving, processing, and creating facsimiles of ancient manuscripts for museum display.”

Grono also held a separate meeting with Kostanyan at the museum’s premises. The ministry statement said they discussed her recent activities and their “effectiveness in the context of institutionalizing the peace established between Armenia and Azerbaijan.” It did not elaborate.

Ignoring opposition complaints and demands, the Armenian government did not officially react to Hajiyev’s claims as of Monday evening. The government essentially stopped accusing Baku of systematically desecrating or destroying Armenian monuments in Karabakh after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan first recognized Azerbaijani sovereignty over the territory during an EU summit in 2022. Pashinyan’s critics claim that the EU-backed move facilitated the subsequent Azerbaijani offensive. The premier and his political allies deny this.

Armenia’s Leadership Meet with German Bundestag EU Affairs Committee Chair

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan this week met with a delegation led by Anton Hofreiter, Member of Germany’s Bundestag and Chairman of its Committee on European Union Affairs.

The Prime Minister’s Office said in a readout that Pashinyan welcomed the delegation’s visit to Armenia and emphasized the importance of active bilateral political dialogue.

Pashinyan emphasized the importance of the consistent development of Armenia-Germany relations, including close cooperation in various formats and platforms at the inter-parliamentary level.

During the meeting, the sides exchanged views on the further development of Armenia-Germany and Armenia-EU relations, as well as regional developments.

In addition, Speaker of Parliament Ruben Rubinyan met with Hofreiter and his delegation.

The Armenian Parliament press service said in a readout that the sides discussed the Armenia-EU partnership, efforts to strengthen it, and further cooperation.



The Armenian and German delegations meet in Yerevan



ARMENIA

Inconsistencies Noted in Vardanyan's Conviction in Baku

YEREVAN (News.am) — Siranush Sahakyan, representative of the interests of Armenian prisoners and detainees before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), recently announced that the English Translations of Ruben Vardanyan's Indictment and Judgment have been published, calling on the legal community to examine the file. NEWS.am discussed this latest development with Taron Simonyan, specialist in international law and founding partner of the ELL Partnership Law Firm.

Mr. Simonyan, human rights defender Siranush Sahakyan recently announced that the English translations of Ruben Vardanyan's indictment and judgment, spanning a total of 3,302 pages, have been made public for the first time. Pointing out several absurdities, she urged legal professionals to examine the case. As an attorney specializing in international legal affairs, have you had the opportunity to review these documents?

As you mentioned, the dossier totals 3,302 pages. I am currently conducting a meticulous review, and a more comprehensive assessment will likely follow soon. However, the nature of what we are dealing with is already blatantly clear.

I could add an entire series of examples to the absurdities cited by Ms. Sahakyan — examples that reflect not merely absurdity, but gross negligence, incoherence, and utter professional incompetence.

For instance, at the very beginning of the judgment, Mr. Vardanyan is explicitly recorded as having “no prior criminal record.” Yet, when imposing the sentence, the same court cites a provision of the Azerbaijani Criminal Code defining “recidivism” as an aggravating circumstance.

Furthermore, the verdict finds Mr. Vardanyan guilty under one specific article, but imposes a 14-year prison sentence under an entirely different article (Article 214-2), one that never appeared in the initial charges nor in the final list of convictions. Consequently, Mr. Vardanyan was deprived of any opportunity to defend himself against the charge for which he was ultimately sentenced.

Regarding the charge concerning aviation safety (Article 270-1.2), the court itself explicitly states in writing that the two-year statute of limitations for criminal prosecution has expired. Immediately following this acknowledgment, the court finds him guilty under that exact same article. The court officially declares that it lacked the legal authority to proceed with prosecution, yet it does so anyway and hands down a sentence.

The judgment also directly notes that Mr. Vardanyan “refused to testify and presented no evidence,” subsequently treating this refusal as corroborating proof of his guilt. Refusing to testify is the constitutional right of any defendant, not evidence of guilt. The burden of proof rests entirely on the prosecution at all times.

In addition, Mr. Vardanyan was found guilty of actions and events spanning from 1988 to 2022, long before he assumed public office in the Republic of Artsakh. Such an illogical, retroactive application of law is virtually unimaginable. The first several hundred pages of the judgment describe alleged events during the First Nagorno-Karabakh War involving various Armenian individuals; the court then concludes that all these actions can be attributed to Mr. Vardanyan simply because he later joined the Republic of Artsakh, which Azerbaijan characterizes as an “illegal and terrorist organization funded by the Republic of Armenia.” It is not difficult to discern where this logic leads: toward establishing the state liability of Armenia, a reality our

own authorities seem reluctant to grasp.

Moreover, the September 2022 border hostilities resulting from Azerbaijan's aggression against Armenia took place on the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia along the interstate border, not in Artsakh. The judgment flips the narrative by portraying injuries sustained by Azerbaijani military personnel as “Armenian provocations” and incorporating them wholesale into Vardanyan's file, even though Vardanyan would not assume the post of State Minister of Artsakh until two months later, on November 4.

Another revealing episode involves witness statements. One witness states that a vehicle skidded into a mined zone due to rain, and another states that he slipped in the dark while carrying an ammunition crate and injured his hand. Neither incident has any connection to Mr. Vardanyan, yet both individuals are designated as “victims” in his case. A weather-related traffic accident and a stumble in the night fog are



Attorney Taron Simonyan

transformed into central prosecutorial evidence, demonstrating not the strength of the evidence, but the absurd breadth of the prosecution's scope.

Finally, charitable work is framed as the financing of terrorism. The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative is presented as an elaborate scheme for terror funding. In his pre-trial testimony, Mr. Vardanyan describes funding the reconstruction of schools and sponsoring weddings for hundreds of families in Artsakh. The judgment quotes these exact words as evidence of how “deeply integrated” he was into what Azerbaijan deems a “criminal enterprise.”

These are merely a fraction of the absurd, illogical, unlawful, and unprofessional conclusions embedded in the judgment — conclusions that exist precisely because Azerbaijan feels entirely unconstrained in the complete absence of international legal and political pressure, as well as pressure from Armenia.

Judging by these facts, it appears there are solid grounds for the ECtHR to issue a favorable ruling.

From that perspective, a ruling against Azerbaijan at the ECtHR is unequivocally to be expected. Precedent shows that when even one percent of such egregious violations are present, the European Court finds a breach of the Convention.

Therefore, work in this direction must be pursued methodically. We should not be deterred by the fact that Azerbaijan has previously ignored ECtHR rulings regarding Artsakh, including interim and urgent measures. We must exert every effort to utilize the existing international legal framework and deploy every available mechanism of pressure so that at a certain juncture, which will inevitably come, we break Azerbaijan's resistance, put an end to the torture of

Armenian prisoners, and secure their return from captivity in Baku.

In her recent press conference, Ms. Sahakyan highlighted numerous alarming violations, ranging from the detention conditions of Armenian POWs to procedural abuses. Strangely, the Azerbaijani Ombudsman chose to respond only to the religious aspect, denying that their Christian identity played any role and claiming there was “no evidence” to support it. Why do you think they reacted so sensitively to this particular point while ignoring the rest?

This ties back to my earlier point: accurate legal documentation, particularly when brought to light through international legal mechanisms, deeply irritates Azerbaijan. They realize that Azerbaijan's gross violations of international law and human rights will ultimately be exposed to the entire world, and the international community will no longer be able to turn a blind eye to the crimes of Azerbaijan's political and military leadership.

Within this framework, the religious dimension of the inhumane treatment inflicted on Armenian prisoners is well-documented in international reports, particularly by the United Nations and the Council of Europe, as well as in national reports. For instance, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) designated Azerbaijan as a “Country of Particular Concern” due to systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom. The report notes that, despite official assertions supporting religious tolerance, state authorities act quite to the contrary, engaging in torture, strictly controlling religious activity, expelling independent media and Red Cross representatives, and destroying religious heritage sites.

The report includes a dedicated section on Armenian detainees, noting that Armenian prisoners in Azerbaijan are denied religious materials, specifically Bibles, according to their families. A key excerpt reads: “The nearly two dozen Armenian Christian prisoners from Nagorno-Karabakh, who were tried behind closed doors without adequate legal counsel, have received beatings, psychological abuse, lack of access to medical care and proper food, denials of Bibles, and the erasure of cross tattoos through burning. Police are not held accountable for these actions.”

A rather strange, if not bizarre, situation has emerged regarding the Armenian POWs. The Armenian authorities refrain from addressing the issue publicly, claiming it remains a top priority under daily review and arguing that publicity would cause harm. Yet remarkably, Ruben Vardanyan's wife, Veronika Zonabend, has spent nearly a month attempting to obtain contact information for the official responsible for prisoner affairs, to no avail.

If the issue of prisoners were truly a top priority for our government as they claim, officials would be in daily contact with the detainees' families as a matter of course. They would not wait for public letters from Ms. Zonabend before agreeing to meet her, only to remain unable to identify the designated official a month later. This speaks volumes about their actual attitude toward

this “priority.”

More broadly, discussing our authorities evokes deeply conflicting emotions. On one hand, it is difficult to accept that the leadership of one's own country, driven by internal fears or a peculiar moral compass, is pursuing policies that effectively mirror those of Azerbaijan while attempting to convince themselves and the public that this serves Armenian interests. On the other hand, one cannot ignore the stark reality at hand.

It makes one pause and reflect: by constitutional mandate, they are sworn to protect Armenian national interests, the Republic of Armenia, and its citizens. Yet, their conduct fails to demonstrate this responsibility. Instead, it displays the exact opposite. Consider, for example, the President of the Republic expressing gratitude and seemingly flattering Azerbaijani President Aliyev, the very leader whose state has occupied sovereign territories of Armenia and Artsakh, orchestrated another wave of ethnic cleansing resulting in depopulation, committed acts bearing the hallmarks of genocide, perpetrated war crimes and crimes against humanity, and continues to detain and torture Armenian citizens. It is baffling. This is not diplomacy. It risks becoming a practical manual for the degradation of a nation's dignity and moral collapse — a textbook example for future generations of how foreign policy should never be conducted.

Azerbaijan also exhibits a distinct strategy regarding information. Statements from various international bodies concerning Armenian POWs, including European Parliament resolutions, are routinely dismissed by Baku as attempts to “obstruct the peace process.” How do you evaluate this behavior?

It is entirely expected. Azerbaijan will do everything in its power to compel Armenia to abandon every international legal instrument available to protect its national, state, and individual citizens' interests. They want Armenia to withdraw lawsuits seeking international court judgments that document Azerbaijani violations, to refrain from utilizing international resolutions highlighting human rights abuses, and to suppress evidence detailing ethnic cleansing and the destruction of Armenian cultural heritage. All of this will consistently be framed as an obstacle to “peace.”

Turkey employs the exact same strategy by accusing both the Armenian Diaspora, as well as states that recognize the Armenian Genocide, of hindering the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations.

The objective is clear: keep Armenia in a weakened state, stripped of any practical capacity to defend its interests, so that its dependency on the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem continually increases until Armenian statehood and sovereignty cease to hold any practical meaning. This will naturally leave Armenia without the capacity, or even the will, to endure as Armenia.

Yet, we must remember: a slow death is not peace. A life without identity, character, or dignity is not peace. Flattering an adversary who has tortured and killed your children and loved ones is not a “clever” peace. Forgetting your brothers currently undergoing torture in pursuit of temporary comforts is not peace.

Real peace exists when you develop and multiply your potential, safeguard the rights of every member of your society, defend the national and state interest, and force your adversary to reckon with your readiness to fight for dignity, ultimately compelling them to accept peace on your terms.



INTERNATIONAL



Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan and Chinese National Defense Minister Dong Jun meet in Beijing on 15 September 2026. Official photo

Armenian Defense Minister Papikyan visits China

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

Defense Minister Suren Papikyan paid a working visit to China on Tuesday, September 15, where he met with his Chinese counterpart Admiral Dong Jun in Beijing.

“During the meeting, issues related to Armenia–China cooperation in the defense sector and prospects for its development were discussed”, the Armenian Defense Ministry said in a readout.

The sides also underscored “the level of bilateral cooperation in the defense sphere” and the importance of developing new areas of interaction and long-term planning.”

The latest visit comes amid closer political ties between the two countries. In September 2025, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Chinese President Xi

Jinping announced the signing of a strategic partnership agreement during a Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit.

Armenia has started to diversify its military cooperation after Russian inaction in the face of Azerbaijani offensives in 2021 and 2022. Yerevan has also repeatedly criticized Moscow for failing to fulfil weapons purchase contracts signed in 2021. For their part, Russian officials have cited the impact of Moscow’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine as the main factor affecting deliveries. Later, Armenia and Russia reached an agreement under which the amount paid by Armenia for undelivered weapons would be deducted from interstate debt.

As part of his visit Papikyan also attended the Xiangshan Forum, a security and de-

fense forum held annually in Beijing.

Papikyan has made several visits to China in recent years, where, aside from meeting his Chinese counterpart, he has also attended the same forum. Armenia and China have recently expanded their defense cooperation.

During a military parade in Yerevan in May, Armenia displayed Chinese-made weapons, including Chinese CH-4B drones and GAM-102LR fire-and-forget anti-tank guided missiles, among other equipment.

According to Armenian independent outlet EVN Report, Armenia “previously acquired Chinese equipment in 1999 and possibly 2011.”

(This story originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on September 15.)

Armenia Boosts Cellphone Reexports to Russia

By Robert Zargarian

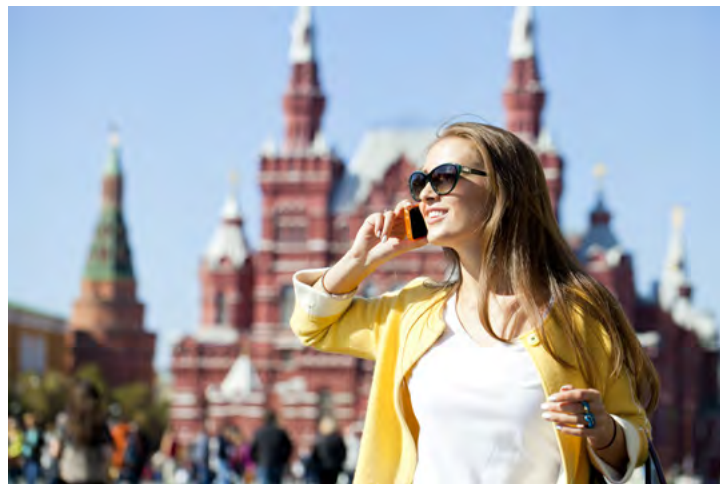
YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia’s multimillion-dollar re-exports of mobile phones to Russia, made possible by Western sanctions against Moscow, continued to grow rapidly in the first half of this year despite mounting tensions between the two states.

According to the Armenian government’s State Revenue Committee (SRC), almost 1.27 million handsets worth around \$400 million were shipped to Russian retailers, up by 38 percent from the same period of 2025. They accounted for nearly one-third of Armenia’s overall exports to Russia that dropped by over 4 percent year on year due to Russian bans on Armenian agricultural products.

The lucrative re-exports are the reason why a company importing smartphones manufactured by Western companies became Armenia’s number one corporate taxpayer last year. The SRC collected 38.2 billion drams (\$105 million) in various taxes from the company, Mobile Center, in January-June 2026, a year-on-year increase of about 16 percent.

Mobile Center is an official distributor of the world’s leading smartphone manufacturers, notably Apple, Samsung and Xiao-

mi. Like many other Armenian firms and individual businesspeople, it has cashed in on Western bans on exports of various goods to Russia imposed after the 2022



Russian invasion of Ukraine. Their re-exports have since been a key driver of economic growth in Armenia.

This is now a rare bright spot in Russian-Armenian commercial ties increasingly affected by Russian trade restrictions imposed on Armenia in May and June. Citing sanitary grounds, Moscow blocked the import of Armenian fruits, vegetables, cut flowers, mineral water, fish and some

alcoholic beverages as it pressed Yerevan to quickly choose between continuing to seek membership of the European Union and remaining part of a Russian-led trade bloc. Armenian exports fell significantly in June and July.

Russian officials have warned of other punitive measures such as a sharp rise in the price of Russian natural gas supplied to the South Caucasus country and curbs on Russian tourists visiting it. Nevertheless, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has ruled out any reversal of his government’s European integration policy.

Russia is still Armenia’s number one trading partner and export market, having accounted for 27.5 percent of its first-half foreign trade. Armenian exports to Russia and the EU stood at \$1.23 billion and \$516 million respectively, according to government data.

INTERNATIONAL

Deputy Asks Speaker to Visit Baku Prisoners

YEREVAN (Pan.am) — Aghvan Vardanyan, a deputy from the “Armenia” faction, suggested to NA Speaker Ruben Rubinyan to form a delegation to travel to Baku and meet with the Armenian hostages.

“I have proposed to NA Speaker Ruben Rubinyan to form a parliamentary delegation, which will include 5 MPs from the Communist Party, 3 from the “Strong Armenia” bloc, and 2 from the “Armenia” bloc, and leave for Baku,” he said from the podium of the National Assembly, reports Aysor.am.

“The goal is to meet all the hostages, get acquainted with the conditions of detention, their health status, receive the verdicts, meet with the Human Rights Defender, and also try to meet with the ambassadors of the US, France, and Russia to Azerbaijan,” Vardanyan said.

He suggested that Rubinyan lead the delegation.

BRICS Call for Ceasefire in Gaza

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — BRICS (Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia), during their annual summit, this year being held in India, called for the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to be maintained and for full humanitarian access to be ensured in the territory.

“We support the implementation of UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and call on all parties to ensure that the ceasefire is maintained and that humanitarian aid has full and unhindered access to the Gaza Strip,” the document states.

EP Approves Temporary Trade Liberalization

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The European Parliament has approved the European Commission’s proposal to introduce a system of trade measures for products from Armenia, temporarily removing customs duties on a range of goods for import into Europe.

The proposal was approved by the European Parliament’s plenary session on September 14 in Strasbourg with 583 votes in favor, 49 against and 39 abstentions.

Under the proposal, the EU will suspend customs duties on a number of Armenian products for two years. It will also establish duty-free import quotas for eight types of Armenian agricultural products, including grapes, apricots, cherries, peaches and cucumbers.

The next step is formal approval by the Council of the EU.

On September 2, the Council of the EU agreed to introduce temporary trade-liberalization measures for Armenian products to support Armenia’s economy following trade restrictions recently imposed by Russia. These measures will liberalize around 80 percent of Armenian exports to the EU.



INTERNATIONAL

Azerbaijan Portrays Armenian Heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh as Caucasian Albanian

ALBANIA, from page 1

While there, Hajiyev told the diplomats that Nagorno-Karabakh “has been, is, and will remain the cultural heart of Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani people.” While there, Hajiyev shared a video from the delegation’s visit to the Gandzasar and Dadivank (referred to by Azerbaijan as “Khudavang”) monasteries. Hajiyev claimed that the two monasteries were Caucasian Albanian, and that Gandzasar was built in the 13th century by Hasan Jalal, who he said was a ruler of Caucasian Albania.

However, most sources agree that the Hasan-Jalal and his dynasty, the Hasan-Jalalyans, were of Armenian descent.

Hajiyev additionally said that historical monuments in Nagorno-Karabakh were subjected to “external intervention” under the guise of “restoration,” which damaged their architectural authenticity and character.

While there, Hajiyev showed the diplomats books containing Armenian historical materials and manuscripts on display inside the churches, pointing out that their pages were empty. The remarks were not well received in Armenia, where officials denied the claims and said such rhetoric could undermine the peace process.

The EU’s Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Magdalena Grono, also joined the delegation, marking her first visit to Azerbaijan’s former conflict-affected territories.

“The peace process is, of course, led by the parties, and we fully respect that. However, we are ready to be partners in supporting both governments and both countries in implementing very practical measures. In this region in particular, I believe we have been an important partner in mine clearance. This work, of course, helps create the conditions for people to safely return to their homes,” Grono said in a statement on Sunday, September 13.

While in Yerevan, Grono visited Matenadaran, Armenia’s Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, where she viewed “the rich collection of Armenian manuscripts and their history,” the Armenian Foreign Ministry said.

After the tour, Grono spoke to Armenian state-run media outlet Armenpress about



Foreign diplomats visit the Gandzasar monastery in Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2026 (photo Azertac)

her controversial post on X in which she said that “deeply diverging views and narratives persist, for instance on origins of some sites” in the region.

“I certainly do not contest the past Armenian presence and rich footprint in former conflict-affected areas in Karabakh. I could see it firsthand for the first time during the visit to Kalbajar and Aghdara districts last week,” Grono said.

Matenadaran’s head, Ara Khazmalyan also told FIP.am that all original manuscripts from Gandzasar were being kept in Yerevan in the institution.

The portrayal of Armenian heritage as Caucasian Albanian caused an outcry in Armenia, with questions raised over how genuine efforts in the peace process were.

Armenian authorities have generally refrained from commenting on the destruction of Armenian heritage in the region amidst the fragile peace process, but they

the Peace Bridge Initiative between Armenia and Azerbaijan, who have conducted several mutual visits as part of the peace process, expressed concern over the “presentation” of Armenian cultural heritage.

“Building peace requires difficult and honest conversations, attention to each other’s concerns, and a conscious effort to avoid actions that may reopen wounds or reinforce hostility. We therefore call on all actors involved in the peace process to act with the responsibility required at this moment and to refrain from statements and actions that may be perceived as unconstructive,” the statement read.

In turn, political analyst and Regional Center for Democracy and Security head Tigran Grigoryan, who is originally from Nagorno-Karabakh, argued in a CivilNet op-ed that the diplomats were taken to the region to “add another layer of legitimization to the ethnic cleansing,” referring to the mass exodus of the Armenian population following Azerbaijan’s final offensive in 2023.

Grigoryan said it was particularly troubling that countries and institutions that had been “heavily involved” in mediating the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and had “repeatedly insisted that there could be no military solution to the conflict” visited Victory Park in Stepanakert, which he described as “a marble expression of [Azerbaijani President Ilham] Aliyev’s megalomania and a primary monument to the ethnic cleansing.”

The park itself was built on the site of a historic neighborhood in the city, later completely destroyed by Azerbaijan.

He also criticized the diplomats for allowing themselves to be used in what he described as Azerbaijan’s “historical revisionism.”

(This story originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on September 14.)

Moscow Sees No Alternative to Russian Military Presence in Armenia

By Shoghik Galstian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Two weeks after President Vladimir Putin expressed readiness to withdraw Russian troops from Armenia, a senior Russian diplomat has said that their continued presence is indispensable for the South Caucasus country’s security.

“We have not received any requests from the Armenian side regarding the withdrawal of the Russian military base stationed in Gyumri,” Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin told the Moscow daily Izvestia in an

interview published on September 15. “We continue to proceed from the premise that it is a key element of the security architecture of Armenia and the South Caucasus.”

“Many quite rightly ask: what is the alternative?” he said. “In our view, no such alternative is currently in sight. Frankly speaking, it is difficult to imagine, for instance, French soldiers in this role -- if only because of the geographical distance between France and Armenia.”

Putin publicly raised the possibility of Russian troop withdrawal right after his September 1 talks with Prime Minister Ni-



The entrance to the base

kol Pashinyan during which he kept pressing Yerevan to quickly choose between seeking

to join the European Union or remaining part of a Russian-led trade bloc. Speaking to journalists, he said Moscow is ready to close the Gyumri base “even tomorrow” if asked by the Armenian government.

“But if the Armenian people want some kind of Russian military presence there, then we will stay and work,” added Putin.

Pashinyan responded by saying that his administration “will not object” if Russia decides to end its long-standing military presence. The Russian base is not of “vital importance” for Armenia, he said.

Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan referred to Pashinyan’s statement when he responded to Galuzin later on Tuesday. He did not comment further.

“If they want to remove the military base, they should announce it,” deputy parliament speaker Vahagn Aleksanyan said for his part. “If they don’t, that too is a matter for discussion — we will discuss it.”

Aleksanyan also noted that the Russian troops did not defend Armenia against Azerbaijan’s “military aggression” in 2021 and 2022.

Some Armenian opposition leaders have expressed serious concern at the prospect of their withdrawal. They view the Russian base as a vital deterrent against a perceived threat emanating from Turkey, Azerbaijan’s closest ally.

Start Date for TRIPP Connecting Armenia And Azerbaijan Pushed Back

TRIPP, from page 1

Bayramov tried to put a positive spin on the delay, saying that “according to the information we’ve received, the [US-Armenian negotiating] process is proceeding successfully.” He added that Azerbaijan is continuing work to upgrade the Nakhchivan section of TRIPP.

Bayramov’s comments followed a September 8 meeting in Baku involving senior US and Azerbaijani diplomats, including the US Chargé d’Affaires to Armenia David Allen and US Chargé to Azerbaijan Amy Carlon. TRIPP, along with the Arme-

nian-Azerbaijani peace process in general, was the focus of the discussions, Azerbaijan’s state news agency Azertag reported.

Earlier in September, reports circulated in Armenia that Iran, Yerevan’s southern neighbor, had issued a threat that could complicate TRIPP negotiations, centering on who provides security and operational oversight for the trade route.

Preliminary plans envisaged American contractors as filling those roles in an effort to finesse a dilemma under which Armenia insists on retaining sovereignty over the route while Azerbaijan demands that

their citizens and vehicles enjoy an extra-territorial right of passage.

Iran, which is locked in a quagmire conflict with the United States, reportedly let Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan know that it will not tolerate an American presence in the TRIPP corridor, which is envisioned as traversing territory near the Iranian border. If American personnel appear in the corridor, they would become a “legitimate target” in Iranian eyes, the News.am website reported.

(This story originally appeared on www.eurasinet.org on September 10.)



Community News

Simon Maghakyan To Give Virtual Lecture on ‘Western Azerbaijan’

BELMONT, Mass. — Political scientist and investigative researcher Dr. Simon Maghakyan will speak in a virtual lecture on “Deconstructing ‘Western Azerbaijan’: Synthetic Memory and the Politics of Perpetual Conflict” at 1 p.m. (Eastern U.S.) /10 a.m. (Pacific U.S.) on Saturday, September 19, presented by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research’s (NAASR) Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues.

Since the violent expulsion of Armenians from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh) in 2023, Azerbaijan has pursued normalization with a defeated Armenia while advancing a new territorial narrative against it. Delivered on the third anniversary of Azerbaijan’s capture of Stepanakert, this lecture will investigate Baku’s ongoing construction of “Western Azerbaijan” through archival research and Frederick Barghoorn’s largely forgotten concept of “synthetic memory.”

Maghakyan is a political scientist specializing in the emerging interdisciplinary field of heritage and security. He is an associate member of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Oxford. Previously, he held appointments at Colorado College, the University of Denver, Fresno State, and Tufts University.

He earned his PhD in security studies in 2024 from Cranfield University, an academic partner of the British defense ministry, after a decade in non-profit, research, and teaching roles, including at his alma mater, the University of Colorado Denver. His collaborative predoctoral research, published in *Hyperallergic* and *The Art Newspaper*, exposed Azerbaijan’s systematic destruction of the Armenian heritage in Nakhichevan. This forensic work was praised as “rock-solid” by *The Guardian* and cited at the International Court of Justice and the United Nations Security Council.

Maghakyan is the author of *Sovereign Heritage Crime: Security, Autocracy, and the Material Past* (Cambridge University Press, 2026) and chief co-editor of the *Oxford Handbook of Heritage and Security*, forthcoming from Oxford University Press. His public commentary on heritage and security, particularly as it relates to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, has appeared worldwide, including in interviews with the BBC and essays in *Time* magazine.

The lecture will be streamed via Zoom and YouTube. To register and learn more, visit <https://naasr.org/blogs/events-1/deconstructing-western-azerbaijan>.



Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan in the ruins of an Armenian church

Across the Waters of Lake Van, a Pilgrimage Reaches Its Sacred Heart

NEW YORK — The Eastern Diocese’s “Pilgrimage to Akhtamar: Retracing Our Armenian Roots” reached its spiritual high point this week, when Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the 10th-century Cathedral of the Holy Cross on Akhtamar Island.

Bishop Mesrop, accompanied by Fr. Mardiros Chevian, Fr. Armash Bagdasarian, and some 80 pilgrims from across the Eastern Diocese, began the journey in Istanbul before traveling eastward into the historic Armenian homeland.

Their first stops included Erzurum and Kars, where the group visited the medieval Armenian Church of the Holy Apostles. From there, they traveled to Ani, the magnificent former capital of the Bagratuni Armenian kingdom, once renowned as the “City of 1,001 Churches.” Walking among Ani’s cathedral, churches, city walls, and other ruins offered the pilgrims a vivid encounter with a place where Armenian Christian faith and culture flourished a millennium ago.



The ruins of a church in Ani

see PILGRIMAGE, page 11



The pilgrims in Western Armenia

ANCA-WR to Honor Filmmaker Jivan Avetisyan with ‘Advocacy in Cinema’ Award at 2026 Annual Gala Banquet

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian National Committee of America – Western Region (ANCA-WR) is proud to announce that internationally award-winning film director Jivan Avetisyan will be honored with the organization’s 2026 “Advocacy in Cinema” Award at its highly anticipated Gala Banquet taking place on Sunday, October 11, 2026, at the Taglyan Complex in Los Angeles. The ANCA-WR “Advocacy in Cinema” Award is presented to an artist whose work carries the memory, identity, and story of Artsakh and the Armenian people to audiences around the world.

“Through his films, Jivan Avetisyan has done what so few in our community have had the platform to do – carry the story of Artsakh to audiences who might otherwise never hear it,” stated Oshin Harootonian, Chairman of the ANCA-WR Board of Directors. “His work transcends



Film director Jivan Avetisyan

cinema – it is testimony, preserved and shared so that the truth and memory of Artsakh can never be erased. His recognition as this year’s Advocacy in Cinema honoree reflects the vital role that art plays in our advocacy.”

Avetisyan’s story began in Gyumri, Armenia, where he was born, and continued in Artsakh, where he was raised and, by his own account, lived through three wars. That experience of displacement and loss became the foundation of his life’s work: using cinema to preserve what war would take from his people but not erase from memory. He is now based in Yerevan, where he serves as co-founder and CEO of Fish Eye Art Cultural Foundation and founder and CEO of LifeTree Pictures, LLC.

“I make films because I do not want Artsakh to disappear from the world’s memory,” said Avetisyan. “I do not want my people to become merely a chapter in a history book. I want their faces remembered, their voices heard, and their stories carried forward. Cinema cannot change the past or rebuild the homes we have lost, but it can preserve what must never be forgotten. And as long as I have a voice and a camera, I will continue to tell the story of Artsakh.”

Avetisyan is an alumnus of Berlinale Talents 2020, a participant in see AVETISYAN, page 9

COMMUNITY NEWS

Ambassador Mkrtchyan Tells *The Hill* ‘Everything Is Discussable’ Regarding US Request to Isolate Iran

WASHINGTON — In a new interview with *The Hill*, NewsNation International Correspondent Robert Sherman spoke with Armenian Ambassador Narek Mkrtchyan to the United States to discuss trade relations, the future of Armenia, and the major peace deal brokered between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the one-year anniversary of the Washington Peace Declaration. (The interview, reproduced in full, is the transcript of a recorded interview and contains grammatical errors.)

On the first anniversary of one of the major peace deals brokered between Armenia and Azerbaijan:

“It’s my pleasure to speak about the first anniversary of the peace. You know, last year at the White House, President Trump broke a peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. And we call this historic because, you know, after three decades, now Armenia and Azerbaijan and region is in peace. And we live in a peaceful situation, which is very appreciated by both people of Armenia and Azerbaijan. And when we talk to our people saying that, you know, this piece is a very important precondition for a prosperity, now taking into consideration the projects, the bilateral project that we have with US, it like comes to prove that really this was precondition and still continuing to be precondition for a prosperity. Just after like Washington piece declaration, we signed a couple of documents and literally put three months after signing these documents we got approval for biggest tech projects in Armenia by NVIDIA for example the AI factory project which is a \$4-billion project in Armenia and now a lot of new prospects are opening after this peace deal. But also the piece that became important for bilateral relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Of course, peace cannot come overnight after signing one document; [it] is a process. And I can say that the process is really progressing. So we don’t have diplomatic relation with Azerbaijan. We don’t have like the established embassies etc., we don’t have final peace sign[ed] but we have peace. We have actual peace, we are doing trade. We are buying some stuff from Azerbaijan [and Azerbaijan] is considering to buy some stuff from Armenia, so this is actually something which will be leading to the ultimate peace and this is only thanks to Washington Declaration that we signed last year. I hope that in very near future we can make real progress and have final peace deal and to build future together in our region.”

On where he envisions Armenia sitting between the two major world powers, Moscow and Washington, in the years ahead:

“Of course, there is a movement, but that movement is about Armenian sovereignty, Armenia’s independence, more strong sovereignty and more strong independence. And this is also the movement about the diversification. After all, we announced that Armenia will be diversifying And so this process also should be considered [under] the lens of diversification. So we started the diversification of Armenia, so diversification of procurement, diversification of supply chain, diversification of economic partnerships, diversification of security partnership. And you know when Vice President JD Vance visited Armenia, key three deliverables, like the signing of the Declaration on Energy Partnership, partnership on AI, critical technologies, and also about the first procurement defense technologies, like sophisticated drone technologies that the Vice President brought with him to Armenia. These are about the



Armenian Ambassador to the US Narek Mkrtchyan

diversification. And you know, diversification is important for more strong sovereignty, because when you are dependent on one country, you are less independent, but when you are dependent on several actors, it means that your sovereignty and your independence are more strong. And you know, one of the uniqueness of President Trump’s brokered peace is that it respects the three principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and jurisdiction. These are guaranteed in the Washington Peace Declaration. That’s why we consider this is an important step towards the diversification of Armenia, and also towards more sovereign and more independent Armenia. And behind these discussions, there is a project called TRIPP, the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity, which is the main project behind peace, I would say, and the main project which will change all the geo-economy of the region and which will be playing a key role in bridging different regions like Central Asia, South Texas and Europe together with this 42 kilometer road passing to Armenia.”

On trade routes opening up from east to west that circumvent Russia and Iran, creating new avenues for trade and how that could change the South Caucasus’ role in regional trade:

“First of all, the TRIPP project is an organic part of Crossroads of Peace project. You may know that our Prime Minister [Nikol Pashinyan] put into circulation the concept, the project of Crossroads of Peace, like trying to turn our country into crossroads of peace, bringing different countries together, to work together, to trade together, to have more people-to-people contact, to use each other’s territories, infrastructures, but respect each other’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and jurisdiction. ... We are ready to partner with every country. But there are certain rule of the games. So we have this project not against third country. This is not against Iran. This is not against Russia. This is for cooperation. And if Russia and Iran want to cooperate, there are certain rules of the games. Of course, they also can cooperate with us on this project within the context of Crossroads of Peace. So we think that there is a huge potential. And that potential is to turn this project into global supply chain, a new supply chain. Indeed, US has more, let’s say, a role because the TRIPP development company has been created by Armenian government and the US government, 74 percent of the shares belongs to US government. But again, this is not against third countries.

On whether Armenia is comfortable with the United States having 74-percent ownership share in their country:

“Totally fine with these new kind of partners being in the region long term. Indeed, we are very happy because, first of all, such kinds of partnership also will support the comprehensive strategic partnership that we signed when Secretary [Marco] Rubio on May visited Armenia on May 26. And we signed a couple of documents, including a comprehensive strategic partnership charter, MOU [memorandum of understanding] on energy partnership, and of course, the initial intergovernmental agreement on TRIPP. And so, considering the fact that jurisdiction, the principle of jurisdiction of like Armenia, which means that everything will be decided by Armenian institutions. This is most important, like one of the most important principles that is respected by US and by Azerbaijan in the Washington Peace Declaration, which means that Armenia keeps all its sovereignty, all territorial integrity in its independence, and also sovereignty of the decisions. We are happy to have the US as a key partner in this project, because this project will also bring a lot of new projects from the US. These are all promising and untapped potential that we can use in upcoming years and really to turn not only Armenia, but also the region into a new prosperous place. And we say that all of these projects that we are working on with the US, we are happy also to share with our neighbors. I will bring one example when we got approval of export control licenses for AI data center for NVIDIA in Armenia. Literally after months, the same company, which got agreement with NVIDIA and approval from Department of Commerce, signed another agreement because another \$10 billion project. And the philosophy of TRIPP and the philosophy of Crossroads of Peace project is now manifested, like having Armenian-American project also present in Central Asia and bringing Central Asia, for example, data to Armenia through TRIPP and 10 sent to US because the final beneficiary of this data will be American companies. I think this is a beautiful project which can bring different societies together to work and create more long lasting cooperation between them.

On whether the United States has requested Armenia to isolate Iran or whether Armenia would consider doing it if the U.S. made such a request:

You know, I think there is no topic in the world that cannot be discussed. But I want to say that the main, the priority topic between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the region right now is implementation of TRIPP. And I would say that, you know, during this last year, we really advanced a lot from idea, from MOU, from documents into actual implementation. Right now we are in the stage of feasibility study by IECOM [International Industrial Engineering Competition] and I hope that in the end of October there will be the final assessment of feasibility study which means that we can start the first groundbreaking ceremony of TRIPP. And right now, between

US and Armenia, the number one topic is implementation of TRIPP. Actually, a day ago, the delegation of State Department visited Armenia, visited the south of Armenia, and even had a meeting with public hearings with local people to show the details of the TRIPP project and what kind of benefits the local people would have from the functionalizing the project in very near future. We also communicated about this project with our neighbor, Iran, because Iran is the ultimate neighbor, the immediate neighbor. And, you know, we have our Armenian community there. We need to have normal relations and we always had a normal relation with Iran and you know having a peaceful border with Iran is also very important for successful implementation of the TRIPP project and we communicated with our neighbors that.

On what the future of Armenia looks like on the long road to peace and prosperity in the South Caucasus:

Confidence building and trust building are important like precondition for long lasting peace. And of course, I agree that we need to bring our societies closer. But so far, I can say that we have really like interesting progress. So we don’t have again diplomatic relations. We don’t have like final peace treaty sign. But there are, on the ground, a lot of positive developments. I’m sure you know that there are reciprocal visits by civil society representatives, some high-level visits from Azerbaijan to Armenia and Warsaw. Of course, the trade is also very important. And when we again thinking about peace, you look at the European history. So no like peace treaty brought like real peace in one day, in one year. It’s a process. I can say that there’s a political view from both sides to continue this process. And to take care of this process in order, it brings our societies closer. It’s not easy because the pain is still fresh. But we need to break a lot of stereotypes. And the trade that we have right now, this is one of the cases that we keep people together to see each other’s interests while interacting, while doing trade. I think I can say that from both sides, there is interest. And I can say also that among the societies, there are like a lot of layers that are interested in peace. And we are working with Azerbaijan, there is like active working channels.

On whether he believes the current administration can broker peace around the globe, having seen what he has done with Armenia and Azerbaijan:

You know, first of all, I want to say that the Armenian nation will always remember President Trump. So he will enter into Armenian history as someone who really brokered a peace deal. ... This is something that we always appreciate. You know, it would be impossible if there was no will, for example, from Armenian side, Azerbaijani side. We did our homework and we agreed that we need to live in a peace. It’s not an easy process. It’s a new normal, I would say, because in the last three decades, we never lived in peace. And there are some sensitive issues.

James “Jack” Giragosian, CPC

Mark J. Giragosian

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COMMUNITY NEWS

ANCA-WR to Honor Filmmaker Jivan Avetisyan

AVETISYAN, from page 7
Cinelink Producers' Lab 2024, and a voting member of the European Film Academy. He has directed more than ten documentaries and shorts, along with three internationally award-winning feature films – “Tevanik” (2014), “The Last Inhabitant” (2016) and “Gate to Heaven” (2019) – each produced as an international co-production and featuring international talent. His films have screened in AMC theaters across the United States and at festivals throughout Europe, while also encountering considerable political pressure and censorship because of their portrayal of Artsakh.

Avetisyan’s next feature, “Revival,” brings his signature blend of international

co-production and urgent storytelling to a new frontier. “Revival” is billed as an epic exploration of war, memory and what happens when technology built to heal is turned into a weapon. Avetisyan and his team have several additional projects in development, including the feature films “Black List Angels 2020” and “5000 Years, 9 Months, 10 Days,” the animated “Baa’bel” and the television miniseries “The Stateless Diplomat.”

The 2026 ANCA-WR Gala Banquet will bring together hundreds of community leaders, public officials, and grassroots supporters for an evening celebrating advocacy and impact. For tickets, sponsorship opportunities, and additional event information, please visit www.ancawr.org/gala 2026



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

BAIKAR WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

SAVE *the* DATE

10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2026

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Tunik App Brings Armenian Bedtimes Stories to Diaspora Children

LOS ANGELES/YEREVAN — Tunik is an app that brings Armenian folklore to life for children; it is now available on Android, joining the iPhone and iPad app that launched earlier this year.

Built by a small Armenian team, Tunik narrates the stories generations of Armenian families grew up with. The narration is in Armenian, by native voices, and every tale is illustrated in the style of an animated

film, so that a child in Glendale, Paris or Moscow can fall asleep to the same stories as a child in Yerevan.

For most children of the diaspora, bedtime is the only Armenian-language moment of the day. Tunik was designed to make that moment count. The library holds more than ninety illustrated stories, from the epic of Sasuntsi Davit to Hovhannes Tumanyan’s fables and new originals such

as “September First,” a story about a boy’s first day of school that reached families this week.

Tunik’s newest feature shows the Armenian text word by word as the narrator speaks it, in the manner of karaoke, with an optional Latin transliteration for children and parents who understand Armenian but struggle with the alphabet. It was built for the family that wants their child to keep the language, not only to hear it.

Tunik carries no advertising, complies with COPPA, participates in Google Play’s Families program, and places nothing purchasable with-



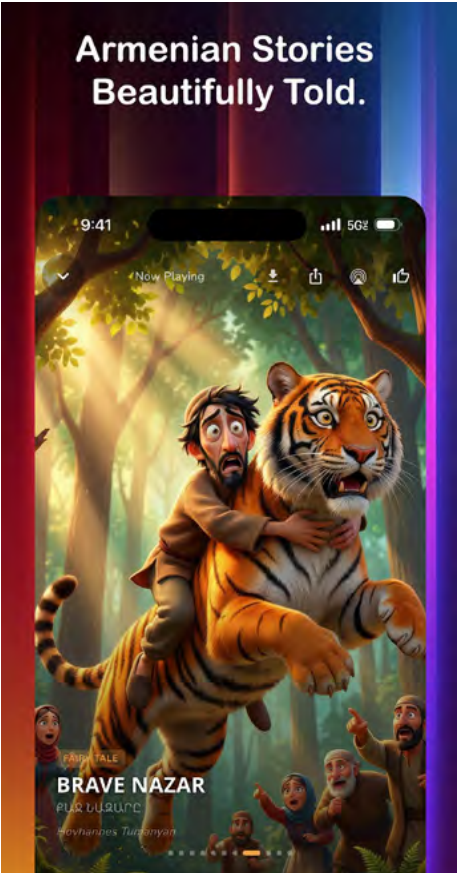
in a child’s reach. Stories can be downloaded for flights and road trips, and a bedtime timer lets the narration fade as the child falls asleep.

Tunik is partnering with Armenian day schools, Saturday schools and church communities in the United States and France. Teachers receive free classroom access and families a partner discount, with the aim of making Tunik the bridge between diaspora children and the language of their grandparents.

“Every Armenian parent living abroad knows the moment. Your child answers you in English, and you realize the language could end with you. We built Tunik for bedtime because bedtime is the one moment every family still has. If a five year old in Los Angeles asks for Kikos by name, we have done our job,” said Tunik founder Mesrop Ishkhanyan.

For more information, visit tunikstudios.com

A selection of stories is free. The full library is available by subscription with a free trial. Tunik is narrated in Armenian, with English, Armenian and Russian interfaces.



TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION BOSTON CHAPTER PRESENTS

Arshile Gorky

Between the Figural and Abstract

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

Friday September 18
7 p.m. sharp

Baikar Building, 755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. Use Norseman Ave. entrance. Free admission. For more info, email teadirector@aol.com.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Across the Waters of Lake Van, a Pilgrimage Reaches Its Sacred Heart

PILGRIMAGE, from page 7

The journey continued past Mount Ararat and onward to Van, with visits to the ancient fortress of Tushpa and the thousand-year-old ruins of Varagavank, traditionally associated with a relic of the True Cross.

On Sunday, the pilgrims crossed Lake Van to Akhtamar Island. There, with the blessing and presence of Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople Sahak II, Bishop Mesrop celebrated badarak, assisted by Fr. Armash, within the Cathedral of the Holy Cross.

Reflecting on the experience, Bishop Mesrop said: “We call ourselves a khachagir people, a people who carry the Cross. Yet standing at Akhtamar, I understood something deeper: through the centuries, the Cross has also carried us. When our ancestors had no words left, they carved a cross into stone. It became their prayer and their declaration that suffering would never have the final word.”

For the pilgrims, the ancient sanctuary was no longer simply a monument to Armenian history. Once again, its walls resounded with the prayers and hymns of the Armenian Church—an extraordinary moment in a journey devoted to encountering Armenian history on the very ground where generations lived, built, worshiped, and handed down their faith.

The pilgrims also visited Mush, Dikranagert, Aintab, Cilicia, Musa Dag, and other historic centers of Armenian life before returning to Istanbul.



The pilgrims and Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan in Ani

2026 HONOREES



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29TH ANNUAL

ARPA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Sep. 24-27, 2026 TCL CHINESE THEATRE
6801 Hollywood Blvd. 3rd floor, Hollywood CA 90028

Sept. 24 4:30pm - Etched in Memory (US Premiere)
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

The Arpa Foundation for Film, Music & Arts is a charitable, non-profit, tax-deductible organization registered as a 501(c)(3) corp.



Arts & Culture

Piano Child Prodigy Alec Van Releases Second Album, ‘6’

LOS ANGELES — At 5 years old, Los Angeles based pianist Alec Van Khajadourian, known for his extraordinary musical ability and perfect pitch, grabbed the attention of media around the world when he made history as the youngest musician to perform at Carnegie Hall. At 6, he became a composer.

On August 21, the now 6-year-old Alec enters a new musical chapter with the release of “6,” his sophomore album featuring the world debut of his first original composition. Titled *September Trees*, the



piece is inspired by Alec’s favorite composer, Johann Sebastian Bach, and follows the stylistic formations of the Baroque era modernized and blended into contemporary classical music. Put into perspective, Bach reportedly wrote his first composition at 15 years old. Beethoven was 12.

“I wanted this piece to make you feel the changes in the trees and their beautiful colors in September. The constant movement in the notes does that for me,” said Alec.

Alongside *September Trees*, and following the concept established by his debut album, “5,” “6” is a classical compilation of works the young artist has performed during the past year for crowds of thousands, and which his social media fan base (IG: @alecvanmusic) has watched him learn and perfect. These include Chopin’s *Waltz in A Minor*, CPE Bach’s *Solfeggietto*, and Maykapar’s *Raging Torrent*, among others.

The album will be available on all major streaming platforms. Sheet music for *September Trees* will soon be available at www.AlecVan.com, giving musicians an opportunity to play Alec’s first original work.

Alec’s remarkable musical journey has already taken him to some of the world’s most prestigious stages. In 2025, in addition to his Carnegie Hall debut, he also performed at Walt Disney Concert Hall and appeared on “The Today Show,” “The Jennifer Hudson Show,” “Good Day LA” and KT-LA’s “Morning Show.”



A thrilling opening featured a horse and rider.

‘Echoes of Our Ancestors’ Thrills with Packed Lineup For Second Year in a Row

LOS ANGELES — Following the overwhelming success of its world premiere at the Greek Theatre in 2025, People of AR Cultural Foundation embarked on “Echoes of Our Ancestors 2: Heroes & Saints,” a new musical and visual experience for a second year.

The 2026 show — again created by visionary director Arman Nshanian and produced by Asko Akopyan — on September 3 celebrated the enduring spirit, faith, courage and cultural legacy of the Armenian people, highlighting the defining moments, legendary figures, and spiritual foundations of the country’s history from Noah’s Ark to the participation of present-day diaspora in just a bit over two hours on one stage nestled in the hills of Los Feliz.

A world-class symphony orchestra under acclaimed conductor Sergey Smbatyan met celebrated international musical artists (including headliner Serj Tankian of System of a Down fame). An immersive video design set the stage and the storytelling behind a mix of modern and traditional dance and ballet. The entire combined production transported audiences across centuries of Armenian civilization from its start to today, honoring the heroes whose courage defended a nation, the saints whose faith shaped its soul, artists who curated its culture and over 20 modern organizations’ participation continuing many good causes currently.



Arto Tuncboyaciyan

see ECHOES, page 14



Singers Inga and Anush Arshakyan with dancers

MCMA Opens Second Season with ‘Crossroads’

LEXINGTON, Mass. — Massachusetts Chamber Music Artists (MCMA) opened its second season Saturday evening at the Follen Church with *Crossroads*, a concert that brought together three composers, three musical traditions, and three very different musical worlds.

Violinist and MCMA Founder and Artistic Director Haig Hovsepian was joined by cellist Ismael Guerrero and pianist Matias Cuevas for an ambitious program featuring Gayane Chebotaryan’s *Piano Trio*, Astor Piazzolla’s *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* arranged by José Bragato, and Johannes Brahms’s *Piano Trio No. 1 in B major, Op. 8*.

The evening opened with Chebotaryan’s rarely performed *Piano Trio*, giving the audience an opportunity to



Haig Hovsepian, Matias Cuevas and Ismael Guerrero (Jirair Hovsepian photo)

encounter a distinctive work that deserves renewed attention. The musicians brought its Armenian character vividly to the forefront, using finely judged timing, expressive character, and rhythmic vitality to illuminate the many nuances of Chebotaryan’s writing. Their interpretation gave the work a compelling presence from the outset and made a strong case for its place in the chamber repertoire.

The transition to Piazzolla could hardly have been more dramatic. The *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* filled the church with the energy, sensuality and intensity of tango. Hovsepian, Guerrero and Cuevas moved effortlessly between explosive passages and quieter, more atmospheric moments, embracing the work’s sharp contrasts with both virtuosity and spontaneity. Throughout, the three voices responded to one another with an immediacy that made the performance feel constantly alive.

Brahms’s *Piano Trio No. 1 in B major, Op. 8* brought the evening to its expansive conclusion. The musicians gave the work space to unfold with warmth and breadth, balancing its sweeping melodies with the close interplay between violin, cello, and piano. Building toward an exhilarating finale, the last movement brought the evening to a thrilling close.

Taken together, the three works revealed the remarkable range of the piano trio, moving from Chebotaryan’s lush Armenian sound world through Piazzolla’s tango-infused Buenos Aires to Brahms’s German Romanticism. The contrasts were striking, yet the musicians’ chemistry and close

see CROSSROADS, page 13



ARTS & CULTURE

Arpa Film Festival To Open on Sept. 24

HOLLYWOOD — The 29th Arpa International Film Festival (Arpa IFF) will open on Thursday, September 24, at 6 p.m. with a red carpet at TCL Chinese Theater, with “Other Side of Fame,” screening at 7:30 p.m., starring Italian star Sveva Alviti and German-Armenian actor Saro Emirze, and directed by Erik Bernard. The four-day festival will end on Sunday, September 27.

“My Armenian Phantoms” by Tamara Stepanyan will screen at noon on the first day. Stepanyan traveled to Armenia several times and conducted extensive research, digging into old footage to create this film. It’s a tribute to her late father’s acting career and her own path into filmmaking.

Arpa Foundation for Film, Music and Art (AFFMA) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1995 to provide a platform for filmmakers, musicians, and artists. In 1997, Sylvia Minassian launched Arpa IFF. In addition to films, the festival always includes music videos and animation.

“Arpa International Film Festival returns this September for its 29th year. As its founder, I’m proud to champion independent filmmakers worldwide and celebrate our role as Los Angeles’ oldest independent international film festival. We look forward to marking our 30th anniversary next year,” said Minassian.

The festival will screen several films made in Armenia or by Armenians living in the diaspora, such as “I Remember Your Voice” by Arayik Sargsyan and Nikolay Melikyan, “Beneath the Ashes, the Past Reimagined” by Hrag Yedalian, “Going Dark” by Tigran Tovmasian of Australia, “Heevand” by Adech Baghdasarian and Zholi Minasyan, and “In the Land of Arto” by Tamara Stepanyan. The latter is Armenia’s official submission to the 99th Academy Awards.

The international festival will screen movies from many countries, including Argentina, Armenia, Brazil, Canada, Japan, Mexico, Spain, Ukraine, the United States and many more. The result is a lineup that feels less like a single trend and more like a living map of cinematic imagination, each film a distinct language, each voice adding texture to the same shared medium.

Among the film will be “No Place Like Home” by Armenian director Diana Madison, about the people of Artsakh who were forced to abandon their homeland.

The festival will end with an award ceremony and red carpet. The public is cordially invited to the film festival. For more information, contact the email address on the website.

<https://www.arpafilmfestival.com/2026-arpa-international-film-festival-schedule-tcl-chinese-theatre/>



From left, Sonia Keshishian (Arpa IFF Jury Liaison), Ana Maxim (Arpa IFF award winner), Sylvia Minassian (Arpa IFF Founder) Maral Kazazian (Arpa IFF Director)

Author Dr. Abraham Terian to Speak about New Book at Fresno State

FRESNO — Dr. Abraham Terian will present his new book, *Phrasing the Arts*, on Friday, September 25, at 7 p.m., in the Grosse Industrial Technology Building,

nian Series, described the book as “a new approach to poetry and literature.”

Dr. Honora Howell Chapman, dean, College of Arts and Humanities at Fresno State stated, “Prof. Abraham Terian achieves Horace’s ideal of ‘the poem is like a picture’ by depicting exquisite quotidian details through the lens of his remarkable scholarship on ancient literature. Inviting the reader to ‘crawl out of Plato’s cave’ and discover that people and places are ‘more than they seem’, Terian embarks on an odyssey across ‘history’s landscape’ from the streets of New York City to Armenia, Finland, Venice, Jerusalem and Moscow, returning home to the magnificent ancient Sequoias, after dancing with ‘swift-footed nomads’ and seeking the ‘edge of the universe’. This collection inspires us all to look in the mirror once held by girls in Pompeii almost two

thousand years ago and see not only the ‘brief moments of vanished tenderness’ but also the subtle and lasting beauty of the arts around us today.”

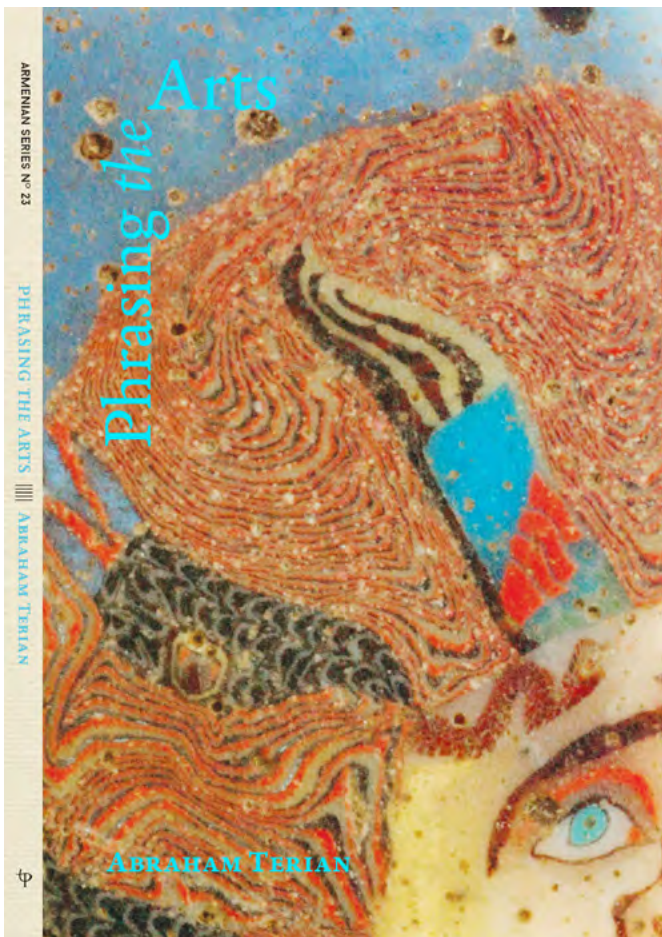
ancient literatures for decades, he is the author of more than twelve books and scores of articles on diverse subjects from classical through medieval times (his two books on the works St. Gregory of Narek have received multiple awards). As a Fulbright Scholar at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2006, he became the first recipient of the Fulbright Distinguished Chair in the Humanities award. In 2008 he was elected a diasporan Fellow of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, and in 2016 a Fellow of the Ambrosian Academy of Milan. In 2018 – 2019 he was Robert F. and Margaret S. Goheen Fellow in Classical Philosophy at the National Humanities Center, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. He lives in Fresno with his wife Sara, a native of Finland and retired Professor of Sociology.

Admission to the presentation is free and free parking is available.



Dr. Abraham Terian

For information about upcoming Armenian Studies Program presentations, visit <https://fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies>.



Room 101 (2255 E. Barstow Ave.) on the Fresno State campus. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Phrasing the Arts is Volume 23 in the Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno. Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian, general editor of the Arme-

thousand years ago and see not only the ‘brief moments of vanished tenderness’ but also the subtle and lasting beauty of the arts around us today.”

Terian is professor emeritus of theology and Armenian Patristics, Saint Nersess Armenian Seminary, Armonk, NY. Teacher of

MCMA Opens Second Season with ‘Crossroads’

CROSSROADS, from page 12
musical communication gave the program a strong sense of continuity.

The performance drew an enthusiastic response from the audience, culminating in a standing ovation and a second return to the stage for bows. The evening continued with a reception following the concert, giving audience members an opportunity to meet the artists.

With “Crossroads,” MCMA launched its 2026–27 season with a program that reflected the organization’s commitment to presenting chamber music that connects musical traditions and brings audiences closer to works they might not otherwise encounter.

The season continues December 5 with Tradition Unbound, featuring Hovsepien, cellist Sterling Elliott, and pianist Janice Lu in a program exploring the intersection of classical music and jazz.

For tickets and additional information go to <https://www.mcmartists.org/concert-season/tradition-unbound> or <https://www.haighovsepien.com/>.



ARTS & CULTURE

‘Echoes of Our Ancestors’ Thrills with Packed Lineup

ECHOS, from page ?

One guest (who brought her 11-year old daughter) following the show said: “I felt like this should be done again and again, to keep Armenian identity alive...especially for our youth, who could learn about our history and know where are we coming from. Thank you a thousand times for this opportunity.”

The show featured an extraordinary lineup of Armenian talent for one night only, on the same stage, with several unique collaborations, including: Serj Tankian (headliner), Arto Tunçboyacıyan, Sebu of Capital Cities, Inga & Anush Arshakyan, Isabel Bayrakdarian, Gevorg Hakobyan, Masha Mnjoyan, R-Mean, Katil Band, DJ



Serj Tankian



Sebu of Capital Cities



Conductor Sergey Smbatyan

Serjo & Vahagn M, Misho, Karnig Sarkissian, Arabo Ispiryan, Suren Arustamyan and Albert Armenakyan (Junior Eurovision 2025). In addition, the program featured choreography and dance by Ludvig Ispiryan, the Zvartnots Dance Ensemble, Haikian Choir, Arevik Children’s Choir and Sound of Children Choir.

Arman Nshanian, director, said, “Our ancestors survived, created, sacrificed and carried this world to us. Now it is our turn. One day we two will become the ancestors. The only question is what will our echo be?”

Asko Akopyan, Producer, added, “Echoes of Our Ancestors 2: Heroes & Saints at the Greek Theatre on September 3 was an extraordinary achievement and a tremendous success. The energy, emotion,

and connection we experienced that evening was truly mind-blowing. Seeing thousands of people come together to celebrate our Armenian history, faith, culture and resilience was deeply moving. As producer, I could not be more proud of our genius creative director Arman Nshanian, our core creative team, production crew, supporters and community for bringing this unforgettable vision to life.”

The People of Ar Cultural Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving, promoting, and celebrating Armenian culture through world-class artistic productions, educational initiatives and community engagement.

Their next show is “Sing Yerevan Sing (Armenia’s Golden Hits)” and will take place on November 22, 2026 at the Peacock Theatre.

(Photo credits Jake Hagopian, Som Ostrowski, and Juan Carlos Jorges)



Dancers at “Echoes of Our Ancestors”

Edmond Y. Azadian: Book of Remembrance

A bilingual Armenian and English commemorative volume dedicated to the writer, pundit and public figure Edmond Y. Azadian has been published by the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada. For copies, email tcadirector@aol.com or write to Tekeyan Cultural Association, 755 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown MA 02472.

ԹԷԿԵԱՆ ՄՇԱԿՈՒԹԱՅԻՆ ՄԻՈՒԹԵԱՆ ՄԵԾԱԳՈՅՆ ԼՈՍ ԱՆՃԵԼՏԻ ՄԱՍՆԱՃԻՂ
Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles Chapter

Գինեձօն

Յավերժական Հայաստան: Նորատուսի Խաչքարերը
Մուր Լշաններ, Մոռացված Ձայներ և Հավատքի Արձագանդներ
Eternal Armenia Khatchkars - The CrossStones of Noratus
Sacred Symbols, Forgotten Voices, and the Echoes of Faith

Գլխավոր բանախօս, հեղինակ և լուսանկարիչ
Դավիդ Քարամյան
DAVID KARAMIAN
Keynote speaker, author and photographer

David Karamian will present his newest book, *Eternal Armenia: Khatchkars – The CrossStones of Noratus*, a three-year project exploring the ancient cemetery of Noratus, home to the world’s largest surviving collection of Armenian khatchkars (cross-stones). Through photography, history, and cultural reflection, the presentation offers a journey into one of Armenia’s most extraordinary sacred landscapes and the enduring legacy of its Christian heritage.

Կիրակի, 4 Հոկտեմբեր 2026-ին,
կ.ե. ժամը 5:00-ին
Sunday, October 4, 2026, 5:00 PM
ԹՄՄ ՊԷՀԿԵՐԻՐԵԱՆ ԿԵՂՐՈՒՆԻ ՄԷջ:
Tekeyan Cultural Association Beshgeturian Center
1901 N. Allen Avenue, Altadena, CA 91001
info@tekeyanla.org



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Janice Dzovinar Okoomian's Great-Grandmother Khosrofouhi's Midia (Mussels) Pilav

PROVIDENCE, RI — “This photo is of my great-grandparents, Mgrdeech and Khosrofouhi Mardirosian with my grandmother, Goldie, in Everett, Massachusetts in the 1920s,” says Janice Dzovinar Okoomian, Ph.D., Associate Professor of English and Gender & Women's Studies at Rhode Island College in Providence, Rhode Island, as she is pointing to a picture.

“My grandmother, Voski Takouhi Victoria Nakashian (née Mardirosian), was named after Queen Victoria of England, whom her beloved mother, Khosrofouhi Arzoumanian admired. ‘Golden Queen Victoria’ is the translation of her name; she was known as Goldie, says Janice.

“I learned to cook at my grandmother's (Goldie's) elbow. We collected many rose petals from her garden and made rose syrup; she taught me to make ‘shekher lokhom’ (kourabia), paklava, and many other Armenian delights. My grandfather

Ludwig was creative and inventive; he often made the family's madzoon on the steam radiator in their kitchen, and we always put his madzoon on our pilav. When I cooked with my grandmother, she would measure her ingredients by eye and feel,” adds Janice.

Goldie was born in 1907 in Everett,, where she lived for her entire life. “Her mother, Khosrofouhi, was the niece of Bishop Drtad Balian, the Bishop of Gesarya. Her father Mgrdeech was from Kharpert. He was a cooper (a barrel maker) and performed with a touring wrestling team in the United States. Khosrofouhi believed in education for women, so she sent my grandmother Goldie to college, where she completed one year of study. Goldie later married Ludwig Nakashian in 1926, and they had two children, Phyllis (Janice's mother), and Martin,” says Janice.

Mgrdeech and Khosrofouhi Mardirosian

“Goldie was also an amateur oil painter and poet. I have many of her seascapes hanging in my house, and some of her poetry was published in magazines. She also developed a hobby of entering contests, and she got very good at winning them. On the way home from the hospital after the birth of her son, in 1931, she stopped by an airfield and won the prize for the youngest baby. The prize was a ride in an airplane. My childhood home was full of transistor radios, kitchen appliances, skateboards, and other objects that my grandmother had won in contests. Often, Goldie would have to write a jingle or poem for the contest. She also adapted her Armenian recipes for an American context. In the 1960s, when Jell-O ran a contest for recipes using Jell-O, Goldie was one of the winners, with a recipe she called ‘Mediterranean Jell-O Delight,’ which was basically a Jell-O mold version of jajek – madzoon, cucumbers, and mint.”

The Armenian Museum of America in Watertown features Goldie's Koulenje recipe from Gesaria (Kayseri) on its website. Koulenje is an Armenian quickbread which originated in the region of Gesaria in Armenia. Janice contributed the recipe to the museum in honor of her grandmother.

“This is my great grandmother Khosrofouhi's Midia (Mussels) Pilav. It is a delicious appetizer or mezze dish that our family always enjoyed. Khosrofouhi was born near Gesarya but the family relocated to Smyrna, so she spent much of her youth living on the coast of the Mediterranean, where seafood was plentiful. When

she came to Boston she continued to love the water and to be by the ocean. My mother Phyllis remembered going to Revere Beach with her grandmother Khosrofouhi, in the early 1930s when my mother was quite small. Khosrofouhi would pack sardines for lunch and they would ride the bus to go to the beach.”

INGREDIENTS:

2 lbs. mussels in the shell
2 1/2 pounds (about 5 cups) chopped onions
1/2 cup olive oil (Greek is best)
1 cup long-grain white rice (basmati is best) OR medium grind (#2) bulgur
1/2 cup pine nuts
1/2 cup currants
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 teaspoon allspice
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon paprika
1/4 teaspoon dill weed
1/4 cup chopped parsley
1/2 cup tomato sauce
1 1/2 cup water
Juice of 1/2 lemon, more to taste
Lemon wedges for garnish

PREPARATION:

Put the mussels in a bath of cold water. Discard any mussels that are open or cracked. Scrub the remaining mussels, removing any visible beard fibers. Put them in a clean bowl with fresh cold water until you are ready to use them.

Sauté the onions in olive oil until transparent. Add all other ingredients. Cover, and simmer on low for 20-30 minutes. Discard any mussel shells that did not open during cooking.

Chill the pilav. To serve, stuff each mussel shell with some pilav and arrange on a plate. Garnish with lemon wedges.

Goldie Nakashian's Koulenje from Gesaria

“This is an Armenian quickbread which originated in the region of Gesaria in Armenia. Koulenje is not well known among Armenians in the United States -- most Armenians are more familiar with choreg, which is a similar bread but made with yeast instead of baking powder. The seeds on the koulenje we called ‘sev dzandig,’ which translates literally to ‘little black seeds.’ This is the Western Armenian term for nigella seeds (also called black cumin or black caraway seeds). My grandmother measured ingredients by eye and feel; this version approximates her amounts,” says Janice.



INGREDIENTS:

All ingredients for this recipe should be at room temperature.
6 1/2 cups flour, or a little more
6 large eggs
6-7 heaping teaspoons baking powder
1 cup melted butter
1 tablespoon salt
1 to 1-1/3 cups milk
1 cup sugar
1 tablespoon ground mahleb
1 tablespoon sev dzandig (black seeds), if using

Glaze:

1 egg
About 1 additional tablespoon black seeds

PREPARATION:

Sift flour, baking powder, salt, and sugar together. In a separate bowl, beat 6 eggs, then blend in the butter and milk.

Sprinkle one tablespoon of black seeds and all the mahleb on top of the dry ingredients. Make a hole in the center of the dry ingredients and pour the wet ingredients in all at once, mixing with a few strokes until the dough can be turned out onto a floured board. Add more flour if necessary; it shouldn't be too sticky.

Knead the mixture gently, just a few times, and then roll it out until it is 1/2-inch thick. Cut it into diamond shapes, circles, or long strips which can be rolled and braided into loaves. Prick each piece several times with a fork.

Glaze: Beat the egg with additional black seeds. Brush each piece of koulenje with this glaze and place on cookie sheet covered with baking parchment.

Bake at 400°F for 12-15 minutes until slightly golden. Cool on a rack. These are

ARTS & CULTURE

Ric Gazarian

Discovering the World Through Travel

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/ BANGKOK — Ric Gazarian (born in 1969 in Boston) is an American professional photographer, travel writer,

author, podcaster, documentary producer, blogger, drone pilot and travel-industry speaker. A graduate of Boston College, he has traveled to more than 190 countries across all seven continents and is on a quest to visit every country in the world. Through his blog “GlobalGaz,” he shares experiences from off-the-beaten-path destinations, unusual journeys and places often overlooked by conventional tourism.

Gazarian is the host of “Counting Countries,” a popular long-form podcast in which he interviews some of the world’s most traveled people. The podcast ranks among the top 2.5-percent of podcasts globally, and he has hosted more than 150 guests.



He is also a documentary producer and has produced and appeared in “Hit The Road: India” and “Hit The Road: Cambodia,” adventure-travel films. The first one became a top-selling film on iTunes, while the second received the Mekong Minnies Award. He is also the author of three books, including Hit The Road: India; 7000 KM To Go; and Photos From Chernobyl.

Gazarian is deeply involved in the international travel community. He is the Bangkok Chapter Leader and Asia Coordinator of Travel Massive. He is also the co-founder and organizer of the Extraordinary Travel Festival, whose first edition took place in Yerevan, Armenia, in 2022; the third edition is scheduled to take place in Bangkok in October 2026. Gazarian also speaks at travel industry events.

Dear Ric, you have transformed your passion for travel into photography, books, films, podcasts, and a global travel community. Looking back at your journey — from simply visiting countries to documenting your experiences and connecting travelers around the world — which experience has changed the way you see the world most fundamentally?

It goes back to a single trip in 2003, when I first visited Armenia with my father. That trip planted something I didn’t fully grasp at the time — the idea of moving to Armenia and somehow giving back to the

country. Shortly after my return, I connected with Jason Demerjian, the founder of the Armenian Volunteer Corps. Soon after I then moved to Yerevan, renting a studio on Sayat-Nova Street, and volunteering with the Armenian Volunteer Corps. AVC placed me at Zatik Orphanage, where I ended up teaching English to 120 kids, as well as teaching English at Manana, an after-school program.

What I did not expect was how completely the direction of that arrangement would reverse itself. I went in thinking I was the one giving something — my time, my English lessons, whatever structure I could bring to a couple of after-school hours. But the kids at Zatik and Manana were the ones who actually did the giving. They handed me a sense of purpose I hadn’t had sitting behind a desk in financial services. They taught me patience, and they showed me what resilience looks like in people who’d had far less handed to them than I had. You go into volunteer work assuming you’re the helper. What nobody tells you is that the people you’re “supposed” to be helping end up helping you more — they’re the ones who change you.

That’s the experience everything else is built on. The country counting, the podcast, the festival — none of it exists without that first year in Yerevan teaching me that the exchange runs both ways.

You have traveled to 190 countries, and your Counting Countries podcast features people who have visited all 193 countries. After hearing so many extraordinary travel stories, has your own definition of what constitutes “a country” changed?

I think the 193 UN member states is a legitimate and useful benchmark — it gives everyone a shared, objective finish line, and it’s the number I use myself when I talk about my own progress. But the deeper I get into this world, the more obvious it becomes that the UN list is only one version of “country,” and the planet is full of others that are just as real to the people living them.

I’ve spent time in a lot of these in-between places. Somaliland functions as a fully self-governing state with its own currency, passport, and elections, yet only one country recognizes it. Transnistria has its own army, its own money, and a Soviet-era identity frozen in place, despite sitting entirely inside Moldova on paper.

Then there are the micronations, which are their own fascinating category entirely — sovereignty as an idea, an art project, or a joke taken just seriously enough. The most famous is the Principality of Sealand: a former WWII anti-aircraft platform in the North Sea, off the coast of Suffolk, England, seized in 1967 by Paddy Roy Bates, originally to broadcast pirate radio outside UK jurisdiction. Sealand has since issued its own passports, currency and stamps, survived armed coups and functions today as a real, if tiny, self-declared state. I’ve visited, and there’s something genuinely unique and surreal about standing on a rusted platform in the middle of the ocean that has more institutional trappings of nationhood — flag, anthem, currency. I also shared tea with 4th generation royals — Prince James and Liam. Talk about memorable experiences.

Another example of what is a country or not is the Principality of Islandia, a micronation founded in 2018 by Gareth Johnson and Marshall Mayer that claims Coffee Caye, a small mangrove-covered island off the coast of Belize. I am one of the founding citizens. This is the world first crowd funded country as nearly 100 people financially teamed together to will this country into existence. These places make you realize that the definition of a country is a bit see GAZARIAN, page 20

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ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR
OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

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 Tjeknavorian, Komitas, George Gurdjieff, Diane Goolkasian Rahbee, Aram Khachaturian,

an, 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

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.

Adam Torcomian Depicts What Remains: The Julfa Series in New York

NEW YORK — Adam Torcomian is a conceptual artist working across painting, performance, photography and self-publication, whose practice examines diaspora, erasure, and the inherited weight of history. In May 2026, paintings from Julfa, his four-year series in Armenian pigment, oils, wax, and charcoal, were shown in AGBU's "Roots & Vines" art exhibition

at Ethan Cohen Gallery in Chelsea, New York. Julfa takes its name from the medieval Armenian city in Nakhchivan, where thousands of intricately carved khachkars were erected in the cemetery, and then were systematically destroyed by the Azerbaijani government in the 20th century. Torcomian, 28, treats that loss as a pat-

tern rather than an isolated event, placing it beside the devastation of heritage sites in wartime and the disappearance of Indigenous landscapes under colonization; acts that share a purpose in erasing evidence of a people's existence. Each canvas begins with archival photographs, folk imagery and sheet music gathered from Armenian books, buried under paint as the studio moves around them. The imagery is never fully legible; it works as a symbolic record, and its partial visibility becomes the paintings' argument for resilience.

The materials carry their own provenance: pigment sourced from Armenian provinces, oil, wax, and charcoal, worked over mid-20th-century photography books and 19th-century texts on paper. The paintings are discovered as other works develop nearby, these surfaces collect the incidental marks of a fast studio process and what remains is brought forward as a standalone piece.

Torcomian, a third-generation Armenian-American, trained in painting under Armen Arutunian, a graduate of the Yerevan Academy of Fine Arts, and holds a B.S. from Drexel University. His work has appeared at the Embassy of Armenia in Washington, D.C. (2024); with AGBU at Ethan Cohen Gallery (2025, 2026) and Sedef Gali Gallery (2025); and in a solo exhibition at Masterpieces Fine Art



Adam Torcomian in studio, photographed by P. Kasparian.

(2024). He contributes to Armenian relief and education organizations and has self-published three books, most recently Torcomian: Armenian Roots (2025). He lives and works in New York.

His recent installations include a ten-part painting commission at Apricot Stone (Armenian restaurant) in Philadelphia as well as a two-part painting installation at Cafe Pom, Paoli, Penn.



"Untitled (2025)" - Book cover featuring William Saroyan and other prolific writers. Sold during Hovnanian School's Art in Fall (13th Annual) (2025); profits were donated to support the Armenian New Jersey school.



"Untitled (2026)" - Book cover by Arakel Grigori Babakhanian obscured by hand-made paint using Armenian pigment and oil. Sold during AGBU Roots & Vines art exhibition (2026); profits were donated to support Armenia.



COMMENTARY

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



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Managing External Pressures: Armenia's Geopolitical Challenge

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The political landscape surrounding Armenia presents a complex picture. Armenian-Russian relations are evolving in a way that is neither hostile nor friendly. Relations with the European Union are progressing slowly, with visa liberalization — a long-awaited issue for the Armenian public — still a distant prospect, according to recent statements from the EU. Iran is clearly signaling that it does not trust Armenia or the Armenian authorities when it comes to the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) and its future. Meanwhile, the United States is still waiting to see what happens in the war with Iran or in the negotiations before moving forward with the TRIPP project.

It is generally accepted that foreign policy is a continuation of domestic policy, and vice versa. In other words, these two processes are closely interconnected. In most countries, foreign policy processes tend to have a more significant impact on domestic political developments than the reverse. The United States can be considered an exception, as its domestic political dynamics can, to a considerable extent, shape and even dictate

The political landscape surrounding Armenia presents a complex picture.

to prevent these external tensions from spilling over into the country. Tensions that originate in the broader foreign policy environment are being directly transferred into Armenia, while the Armenian government is failing to take sufficient steps to ensure that Armenia does not become entangled in areas of confrontation among major international actors. Armenia should avoid becoming directly involved in these points of tension or playing a role in escalating or exacerbating existing geopolitical rivalries. The responsibility of any government should be precisely this: to minimize the spillover of external tensions into the country, as such tensions can undermine economic development, weaken the national security environment, erode national unity, and adversely affect other vital national interests.

Armenia's situation, of course, is not quite the same. For example, Armenia currently has strained relations with Russia. Although Russia has not taken any steps that directly target Armenia's vital interests, tensions between Armenia and Russia have repercussions within Armenia and are reflected in both domestic and foreign policy agendas. This tension is not rooted in fundamental disagreements between Armenia and Russia, but

rather in Armenia's relations with the EU. The same can be said of the EU's approach. The EU wants Armenia to end its membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and, more broadly, views Armenia within the context of its broader strategic competition with Russia.

The same applies to the strained relations between Iran and the United States, which also have direct repercussions in Armenia. The broader geopolitical tensions surrounding Armenia find a mirror reflection in the country's own political environment. It should be emphasized once again that external influence on countries like Armenia is extremely significant, but this does not mean that tensions among external players should be brought into Armenia's domestic political agenda, turning Armenia itself into a party to those tensions. Doing this is extremely difficult, and not every country

has been successful in managing it. Georgia, for example, faces considerable difficulties in this regard. Azerbaijan, by contrast, has been more cautious in this respect and has sought to avoid bringing conflicts among global players into its domestic political agenda.

When a political force comes to power, particularly through revolutionary means, it must possess the experience and knowledge necessary to shield the country from such challenges or, at the very least, minimize their impact on domestic affairs. Power is, first and foremost, a responsibility, and those who assume it must realistically assess their own capabilities. Taking power is a responsibility, not an end in itself. Therefore, while the complex international environment in which the international community finds itself is undoubtedly highly challenging, there are certainly areas in which Armenia can avoid becoming entangled in global competition and take steps to mitigate or avoid some of these challenges.

(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.)



foreign policy. For example, the president may make certain foreign policy decisions with the aim of strengthening his standing domestically or addressing the domestic political agenda. Similarly, taking domestic political developments into account, the US Congress may restrict or suspend certain presidential powers related to the foreign policy agenda or to a specific area of foreign policy.

Armenia, unlike the US, is a small country, and virtually all major developments in international and foreign policy have a direct impact on it. Its domestic political processes are therefore closely connected to its ability to address external policy challenges. This is a characteristic feature of small and less powerful states, which are generally more vulnerable to developments in the international environment. To face these kinds of challenges, Armenia needs to be able to accurately assess and analyze foreign policy processes, anticipate potential developments, and formulate and implement a coherent sequence of actions that would minimize the impact of external challenges on the country. Unfortunately, this is not happening. We are witnessing significant tensions in the international system, and these tensions have also created a highly volatile environment around Armenia.

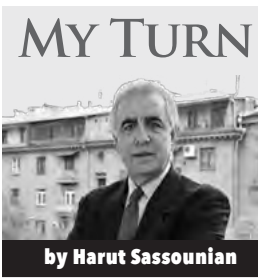
This suggests that the Armenian leadership has been unable

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.



COMMENTARY



Pashinyan Discourages Diaspora Armenians From Becoming Citizens) Of Armenia

Armenia’s Ministry of Internal Affairs is proposing to increase fivefold the fee for obtaining Armenian citizenship and tenfold the fee for renouncing it. As of January 1, 2028, the fee to acquire citizenship would increase from \$138 to \$689, while the fee to terminate it would increase from \$413 to \$4,132. The proposal also imposes a stricter residency requirement. These changes will go into effect if approved by Parliament.

According to this proposal, applicants seeking citizenship would be required to have held legal residency in Armenia during the previous five years and to have been physically present in the country for at least 915 days during that period. They would also be required to demonstrate proficiency in the Armenian language and knowledge of the Constitution. The oath-taking ceremony would be held in Armenia.

Those who have been legally married to an Armenian citizen for at least two years, as well as applicants who have an Armenian citizen child or parent and refugees, would be required to have three years of legal residency and at least 549 days of physical presence in Armenia.

Ethnic Armenians would be eligible for citizenship after establishing legal residence in Armenia during the previous two years and being physically present in the country for at least 366 days. Armenian ethnicity would be verified by a special commission of the Ministry of Internal Affairs based on documents, archival records, and certificates issued by churches or community organizations.

Individuals who previously renounced Armenian citizenship would be permitted to reapply for it only after five years, provided they had resided in Armenia for at least 366 days during the previous two years.

A citizenship application may be rejected if the individual’s activities harm, or there is reasonable suspicion that they could cause harm to, state and public security, public order, public health and morals, or the rights and freedoms of others. Under the new proposal, a presidential decision rejecting an application on national security or public-order grounds would not be subject to administrative or judicial review.

These costly and stricter requirements to obtain citizenship contradict the Armenian government’s announced desire to boost the country’s population. One would think that the government would make it easier and less costly to become a citizen.

In my opinion, there are two unjustified reasons for making these changes. The increased fees would:

1) Generate more revenue for the country’s budget.

This, however, is completely unnecessary. Instead, the government should stop wasting budget funds on large, undeserved bonuses to all police officers and government employees and on festivals and concerts. The authorities should also stop increasing the national debt by borrowing billions of dollars from international financial institutions. From 1991 to 2018, Armenia’s national debt was \$7 billion. It has doubled to \$14 billion in the last eight years since Pashinyan came to power.

2) Limit the number of foreigners — Armenians and non-Armenians alike — who may want to immigrate to Armenia.

One would have expected the Armenian government to adopt the opposite policy, encouraging Diaspora Armenians to immigrate to the homeland by reducing the citizenship fee or making it completely free of charge.

The latter point is very concerning because the Armenian government wants to keep Diaspora Armenians out of the country, since many of them disagree with Pashinyan’s anti-Armenian policies.

Given that a lot of people today are highly mobile either for business or personal reasons, it makes little sense to require them to reside in Armenia for several years before applying for citizenship. Already, on the eve of the June 7, 2026, parliamentary elections, the Armenian government tried to restrict the voting rights of Armenian citizens who live overseas. The obvious intent was to prevent those who were flying to Armenia from participating in the elections, because officials suspected they would vote for opposition parties.

The most nonsensical part of the proposed new citizenship rules is charging Armenian citizens roughly \$4,000 if they want to renounce their citizenship. Why would anyone pay \$4,000 to terminate their citizenship if they no longer wish to be a citizen? While it is highly regrettable that some Armenian citizens, who reside in foreign countries, want to sever their ties with the homeland, all they have to do is not use their Armenian passports, instead of paying \$4,000 to renounce their citizenship.

The only exception would be if the foreign country in which they reside requires that they officially renounce their second citizenship. In that case, those dual citizens have no choice but to pay \$4,000 each and officially terminate their Armenian citizenship to avoid getting into legal trouble with the United States or some other country in which they reside. My suggestion to the Armenian government is to abandon the proposed revised citizenship rules and eliminate the fee along with the residency requirement. Instead, the Armenian government through its embassies and consulates should initiate a worldwide campaign to encourage Diaspora Armenians to become dual citizens which in some cases may lead to their permanent immigration to Armenia. Having an Armenian passport creates a highly emotional link to the homeland for Diaspora Armenians, encouraging them to visit Armenia more often, possibly invest in the country, and eventually consider moving there. This would be a much more sensible option than charging higher fees for citizenship and mandating a residency requirement.

‘Vae Victis’ Is Not a Strategy

Why Lasting Peace Cannot Rest on Forced Realities

By Johnny Melikyan

Standing before the silent graves at the Srebrenica Genocide Memorial in Bosnia leaves an indelible truth on the human conscience: war, with all its tragedy, has boundaries governed by international law. But the deliberate execution of disarmed captives, the systematic erasure of an indigenous population, and the silent acquiescence of onlookers cross directly into the realm of absolute crimes against humanity.

Today, as a grim convergence of anniversaries passes — six years since the 2020 44-Day War that claimed up to 4,000 lives, four years since Azerbaijan’s September 2022 aggression that cost over 190 Armenian lives while occupying nearly 200 square kilometers of sovereign Armenian territory, and three years since the complete ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023 that forcibly displaced over 115,000 indigenous residents — international engagement faces a critical test. Insulating formal peace negotiations from human rights, heritage preservation and legal accountability risks establishing a fragile, unsustainable equilibrium rather than a lasting settlement.

Events in Nagorno-Karabakh reflect the mechanics of structural erasure — the physical displacement of a community followed by the imposition of the conqueror’s identity upon a depopulated territory. In Nagorno-Karabakh, that second phase is fully underway. Whole historic residential quarters in Stepanakert are being systematically bulldozed, centuries-old Armenian villages leveled,

cemeteries desecrated, and historical sites subjected to state-sponsored revisionism. Reports of the demolition, alteration, and historical revisionism of monuments, churches, and civilian neighborhoods closely align with Lemkin’s framework on cultural destruction: the physical removal of a population is followed by the systematic erasure of its historical footprint.

This cultural destruction is exacerbated when international engagement remains selective. Recent diplomatic visits to Nagorno-Karabakh — where international representatives were hosted at sites positioned near damaged Armenian cultural monuments while bypassing destroyed historical structures in the immediate vicinity

The ancient logic of *vae victis* — “woe to the vanquished” — cannot serve as the foundation of a stable regional order. A sustainable settlement cannot be constructed on erased history, unpunished war crimes, destroyed heritage, and forced peace. Genuine regional stability requires a dignified peace: one grounded in uncompromised state sovereignty, territorial integrity, cultural protection, and strict accountability under international humanitarian law. Those who genuinely seek peace in the South Caucasus must recognize that legitimizing forced realities does not prevent another aggression; it merely guarantees it.

While state policy in Baku shows little inclination to

A SUSTAINABLE SETTLEMENT CANNOT BE CONSTRUCTED ON ERASED HISTORY, UNPUNISHED WAR CRIMES, DESTROYED HERITAGE, AND FORCED PEACE.

— highlight the danger of uncritical engagement. Furthermore, allowing state-sponsored revisionist Armenophobic narratives, such as the pseudo-historical “Albanization” of well-known Armenian ancient monasteries like Gandzasar and Dadivank, undermines fundamental principles of cultural preservation. International diplomacy must avoid transactional compromises, where short-term economic interests obscure long-term human rights commitments.

This physical and cultural erasure rests upon an unpunished foundation of grave human rights violations. The extrajudicial execution of unarmed Armenian prisoners of war on the Ishkhanasar heights in September 2022 — authenticated by Human Rights Watch, Bellingcat, and major international media — constitutes a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions. Today, systemic hostility continues to impact detainees. As documented by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and other international institutions, Armenian hostages face documented religious persecution, including physical abuse targeting faith-based symbols and explicit bans on receiving religious texts.

ward genuine reciprocity or reversing the realities imposed by force, a limited role may still exist for broader, long-term societal engagement. Initiatives supported by diverse multilateral organizations, independent human rights monitors, and international civil-society bodies — ranging from independent academic research to grassroots, people-to-people dialogue — can play a part in mitigating deep-seated enmity over generations. However, even the most active involvement of independent international actors cannot serve as a substitute for formal state accountability, nor can it cure the structural flaws of a peace constructed on destruction and displacement. Without independent legal oversight, impartial fact-finding mechanisms, and genuine protection for cultural heritage, any diplomatic promise of a “new page” in regional relations remains written in disappearing ink.

(Johnny Melikyan is a political scientist and founder of the Center for Political and Legal Studies in Yerevan. The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not represent the official position of any institution or government body.)

Ric Gazarian

Discovering the World Through Travel

GAZARIAN, from page 16

more gray than you might initially think. I’ve actually leaned into that question as I will be speaking at MicroCon 2027, the biennial gathering of micronationalists from around the world — a room full of people who take this exact ambiguity seriously, half as politics and half as art. My own answer, after all these years: the UN’s 193 is the right number to count toward, but the real map of the world has a lot more borders drawn on it than that.

When I asked Argentine-Armenian photographer and avid traveler Araz Hajian which three parts of the world she would choose to separate from the rest, she named Antarctica, Armenia, and Iran. If you had to choose your own three, which would they be — and why?

Bhutan, Tuvalu, and Madagascar — three places I don’t think have any real equivalent anywhere else. Bhutan is simply unique. There’s no other country in the world quite like it — a nation that has deliberately built its entire identity around

Gross National Happiness rather than GDP, that limits tourism by design rather than by accident, and that still feels like it’s operating on its own terms rather than the world’s. Expect to see locals dress in their traditional costume, a lack of development, and a country without a single traffic light.

Tuvalu is unique in a completely different way — a UN member country just north of 10,000 people, sitting in the middle of the Pacific, connected to the rest of the world by just three flights a week from Fiji. It’s one of the starkest reminders I’ve encountered that a “country” can be almost impossibly small and remote and still be entirely its own place.

And Madagascar, for the sheer strangeness of its biology and the richness of its people. It split off from the rest of the world so long ago evolutionarily that something like 90% of its wildlife exists nowhere else on Earth, and on top of that, it’s a genuine blend of African and Southeast Asian cultures and peoples that you don’t quite find anywhere else either.

Every country has something interesting to offer. But let’s be a little politically incorrect for a moment: which country you have visited did you find the least interesting, and why?

I want to caveat this before I answer, because I think “least interesting” is partly a

factor of circumstance rather than a fair verdict on a place itself. Sometimes you don’t have enough time or money to see a country properly. Bad weather, a security situation, or a mediocre guide can color an entire visit and leave you with an impression that isn’t really the country’s fault — it’s the trip’s fault. With that caveat, I’ll pick on Cabo Verde, the small island chain off the coast of Senegal in the Atlantic. I spent time in the capital and visited two other islands, and came away finding it bland and uninteresting. Nothing I encountered there really stood out — no monuments on the order of Angkor Wat or Petra, no landscapes that stopped me in my tracks the way the Danakil Depression or the fjords of Norway have. It’s entirely possible a different route, a different season, or more time would have shown me a different Cabo Verde. But going purely off my own visit, it’s the country that left a faint impression on me.

It would be fascinating to learn more about the odyssey of your Armenian ancestors. What do you know about your family’s roots, and how, if at all, have they influenced your passion for travel?

Three of my grandparents survived the Armenian Genocide and eventually made their way to Boston, where I grew up. My fourth grandparent, also Armenian, was born in the US. My forefathers hailed from

Maden, Marash, and Kharpert.

Growing up, I was very aware of my Armenian identity, but it didn’t shape me in any deep way — it was more a fact about myself than a lived experience. That changed with my first visit with my father in 2003, and even more so during my four-month stint as a volunteer in 2004. Growing up, I knew maybe 25 words of Armenian. During that stay, I picked up a basic working level of the language, interacted daily with Armenians from every corner of the diaspora, and traveled through multiple regions of the country as well as Artsakh. That trip was my real Armenian education — the one no amount of holiday dinners or family stories back in Boston could have given me.

That volunteer trip ended up shaping every trip I’ve taken since, in a way that had nothing to do with Armenian identity specifically. Before it, I only thought of traveling in one-week increments — the standard American vacation. Living in Yerevan for four months was the first time I understood that travel could be slower, deeper, and open-ended. It’s the template I’ve used for the rest of my life.

You have described both Yerevan and Bangkok as places you particularly enjoy. What did Armenia reveal to you as a traveler that you had not expected to find there?

I’ve had nearly a 25-year window visiting Yerevan since 2003, and the changes I’ve witnessed are dramatic. Walking the streets back then, the city had a gloomy, Soviet feel to it and was economically depressed. It felt like there were no foreigners there at all, except for other Armenians visiting from the diaspora.

Today I find it to be the polar opposite. Money is pouring into Yerevan, and the development seems endless. There are infinite options now — restaurants, cafés, bars, live music, and so much more. The city is eminently walkable. And Yerevan today feels like a genuinely international, cosmopolitan city — not a place defined by its past, but one that’s confidently building its own present.

Do you have any plans to return to Armenia, either with the Extraordinary Travel Festival or as part of a new travel or creative project?

I was incredibly enthused about bringing the Extraordinary Travel Festival — the largest gathering of the world’s top traveled people — to Yerevan. It was my small gesture: bringing 130 mega-travelers and content creators to Armenia and making a small contribution toward promoting the country to an audience that could genuinely spread the word. It would be my personal opportunity to develop deeper roots in the country.

While the event itself was a huge success, the experience behind the scenes unfortunately was not. I booked a restaurant on Abovian Street for 130 participants, agreement in hand, and still caught them twice trying to financially cheat the event. When I shared that experience online to warn other organizers, the restaurant turned around and sued me — a case the courts ultimately dismissed. On top of that, another large and prominent restaurant group reneged on our agreement shortly before the event, leaving me scrambling to secure two replacement venues for my guests on quick notice. And while many governments make a concerted effort to support events like this, precisely because of the exposure and tourism they generate, the Armenian government chose not to lend any direct support to the festival.

So, as you might imagine, I don’t have plans to promote or work with Armenia in any serious capacity going forward. It’s a strange thing to say about a country I feel so personally connected to, but running an event there taught me that love for a place and confidence and ease in doing business are two very different things.

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