

Iran Signals Concerns
On ‘Trump Route’
Through Armenia

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi appears to have reiterated Tehran’s concerns over the planned opening of a US-run transit corridor through Armenia during talks with his visiting Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan held on Monday, October 5.



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi meets his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan, Tehran, October 5, 2026. (Photo by the Armenian Foreign Ministry)

Iran’s Tasnim news agency reported that Araghchi “stressed the importance of addressing the consequences and concerns arising from the presence and intervention of third parties” in regional affairs.

“Lasting peace and stability in the [South Caucasus] region depends on the countries of the region resolving their issues themselves and preventing the interference of extra-regional forces,” he was quoted as saying.

Iranian officials have repeatedly voiced such concerns with regard to the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) that would run along Armenia’s border with Iran and connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave as well as Turkey. Tehran fears that the transit arrangement could put Armenian control of the border at risk and lead to US security presence at Iran’s doorstep.

The Iranian ambassador to Armenia, Khalil Shirgholami, indicated in July that Yerevan has still not addressed his country’s “very legitimate and logical” concerns. He called for the creation of a “mechanism” to manage “potential risks of US presence and threats to Iran” emanating from the TRIPP.

According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, Mirzoyan briefed Araghchi on “the work being carried out to implement the TRIPP project and the new opportunities it offers to countries in the region.” The ministry’s readout of the talks made no mention of Tehran’s lingering concerns.

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Embracing Inclusion and Immigrants, Heritage
Park Supporters Celebrate in Style

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON —
Supporters of the
Armenian Heri-

tage Park came together for a gala reception on September 24 at the InterContinental Boston, to endow the fund for the care and maintenance of the parcel in the city’s Rose Kennedy Greenway.

Those attending expected to see the elegant, well-heeled members of the community mingling while sipping cocktails. What they may have been more surprised about was the emotional speeches of the two honorees citing their immigrant histories, as well as tributes to several organizations that help immigrants and refugees.

Funds Raised for Park’s Future

The Armenian Heritage Park officially opened in 2012; yet it is already an integral part of this community’s life. The park offers year-round programs, from concerts and talks to commemorations of the Armenian Genocide. Over the years, the park has embraced the heritage of its founders but



Members of the gala committee

also tied it to the greater community, for example hosting welcoming receptions for newly sworn-in US citizens.

The primary reason for the gala was to raise funds for the park’s maintenance in perpetuity. And the organizers did not fail. James Kalustian, president of the Armenian Heritage Foundation, the parent entity of the park, announced that the efforts had

raised a total of \$1.7 million — \$1.1 million for the park and \$650,000 for the newly created director of operations’ salary.

In his remarks, Kalustian paid tribute to the initial efforts that got the ball rolling and ended with paying tribute to perhaps the best-known champions of the park, Donald and Barbara Tellalian.

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Barbara and Don Tellalian

PM Pashinyan Describes Armenia as
‘Promised Land’ at Prayer Breakfast

By Ani Ghulinyan
Y E R E V A N
(OC-Media.org)

— Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told the second Prayer Breakfast on Saturday, October 3, that the country, within its internationally recognized borders, is a

land granted by God.

The remarks linked religion to Pashinyan’s ‘Real Armenia’ concept, which he has presented as a vision of a state defined by its current borders rather than historical claims.



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan delivers a speech at the Second Prayer Breakfast in Armenia

Archbishop Kevork Nourdoungian was the highest ranking official from the Armenian Apostolic Church to attend as strained relations between Pashinyan’s government and the Apostolic Church continue.

Catholicos Karekin II and six other senior church officials are standing trial on charges of deliberately obstructing the enforcement of a lawful court decision

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Azeri Soldier Indicted
After Arrest In Armenia

By Ruzanna Stepanian
and Shoghik Galstian

Y E R E V A N
(Azatutyun) —
Armenian in-

vestigators pressed multiple charges against an Azerbaijani soldier who was arrested after crossing into Armenia’s southeastern Syunik province and attacking members of a local family on Friday, October 2.

The soldier, identified as Nasimi Musayev, was captured the previous day in the Syunik village of Shaki, where he seriously injured a woman, Ani Avetisyan, and two of her children inside their house. Avetisyan’s sister, Arpi, recounted more details of the violent incident in an interview with RFE/RL’s Armenian Service.

She said the teenage children were the first to spot Musayev hiding in their house when they returned from school early in the afternoon. One of them was talking to her mother over the phone at that point and managed to alert her about the intrusion.

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YEREVAN
Trump Adviser
Meets with
Catholicos
Karekin II



VIETNAM
Armenian Students
Win Four Medals
at Astronomy and
Astrophysics Olympiad



LOS ANGELES
Women Take
Center Stage
At Arpa Film
Festival





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

New Satellite Launch In 2028-2029

YEREVAN (Pan.am) — The launch of Armenia's new satellite is scheduled for late 2028 or early 2029, Minister of High Technologies and Artificial Intelligence David Tadevosyan announced during a press conference of the Organizing Committee of the State Prize of Armenia for Global Contribution to High Technologies on October 6.

Tadevosyan also announced that this year's laureate of the award is Kamal Ghafaryan, an Iranian-American scientist and developer of space technologies. Taking this into account, it is considered possible to discuss future cooperation programs with him.

Parliament Majority Votes to Launch Inquiry into Church

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — A majority in the Armenian parliament on October 6 approved an 11-member inquiry commission to probe the activities of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Seven members of the commission will come from Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's ruling Civil Contract party, three from the opposition Strong Armenia faction and one from the opposition Hayastan faction.

The commission will examine the church's financial transparency, alleged ethical violations, internal governance and property matters, as well as cases of senior clergymen engaging in political activity, Yeghoyan said.

Birth and Mortality Rates Down in 2026

YEREVAN (Arka) — In Armenia, the birth rate fell by 2.6 percent and the mortality rate by 5.2 percent during the period of January–August 2026 compared to the same period in 2025, according to the Statistical Committee of Armenia (Armstat).

During the first eight months of 2026, 19,865 babies were born in the country, compared to 20,392 newborns during the same period in 2025. Meanwhile, 227 cases of stillbirth were recorded during the reporting period, a 13 percent decrease compared to the same period in 2025 (261 cases).

The population viability ratio — the ratio of births to deaths — stood at 121.2 percent in January–August 2026, up from 118 percent during the same period the previous year.

In January–August of this year, 16,391 people died in Armenia, compared to 17,288 during the same period last year.

More than half of the deaths were caused by diseases of the circulatory system. This figure is 7.9 percent lower than in January–August 2025.

Cancer ranked second among causes of death (22.3 percent, or 3,654 people; an increase of 7.6 percent). Other causes of death include respiratory diseases.



Catholicos Karekin II meets Paula White-Cain, a senior advisor to the White House Faith Office, Echmiadzin, Oct. 4, 2026

Trump Adviser Meets with Catholicos Karekin II

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A spiritual adviser to US President Donald Trump met with Catholicos Karekin II in Echmiadzin on Sunday, October 4, amid Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's renewed push to depose the supreme head of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Paula White-Cain, a senior advisor to the White House Faith Office, also attended an Armenian Mass with Karekin at the end of her visit to Armenia primarily aimed at participating in an international "prayer breakfast" meeting hosted by Pashinyan's government.

According to the church's Mother See, Karekin and White-Cain "emphasized the role of religion and spiritual values in building a safe, prosperous, and flourishing life for peoples."

"In this regard, they highlighted the importance of spiritual leaders working together to advance peace throughout the world and contribute to a brighter future for peoples," read a statement released by it.

The Catholicos was also reported to praise the American pastor for organizing a meeting between Trump and spiritual leaders of the Armenian community in the United

States at the White House on September 16. White-Cain, who held a separate meeting with Pashinyan on October 1, did not make public statements or comment on her visit to Armenia on social media.

It was not clear whether she discussed Pashinyan's more than year-long efforts to oust Karekin. The Armenian premier moved to reinvigorate his campaign, condemned by the church and the Armenian opposition as illegal, after his party's victory in disputed parliamentary elections held in June.

"Slowly, systematically, millimeter by millimeter, painfully, we are going to see this through to the end," he told reporters on Thursday. He reaffirmed his plans to enact "legislative amendments" for that purpose.

Pashinyan's Civil Contract party announced the next day its decision to set up an hoc commission of the Armenian parliament tasked with investigating "the church's failure to fulfill its unique mission." The parliament's two opposition groups have already made it clear that they will boycott the parliamentary inquiry they say violates the church's separation from the state guaranteed by Armenia's consti-

tution.

The commission is supposed to look into a report released late last month by a government agency regarded by Pashinyan's critics as one of his main propaganda mouthpieces. The report essentially repeats Pashinyan's allegations against the top clergy and Karekin in particular.

The report has been dismissed by not only opposition leaders but also Armenian human rights activists. The latter say it is not backed up by factual evidence.

Pashinyan began pressuring Karekin to resign in June 2025 shortly after the Catholicos accused Azerbaijan of committing ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh and illegally occupying Armenian border areas during an international conference in Switzerland. Three Armenian archbishops and one bishop were arrested in the following months on different charges strongly denied by them. Early this year, law-enforcement authorities also indicted but did not arrest Karekin himself as well as six other bishops.

The Trump administration has not criticized the crackdown. Trump endorsed Pashinyan ahead of the June 7 parliamentary elections.

Speaker Rubinyan Ruminates on Pros and Cons of Incursion Warnings

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Parliament Speaker Ruben Rubinyan (Civil Contract) cautioned on October 6 against drawing premature conclusions about whether Armenia's authorities should have warned residents in advance about the possible presence of an Azerbaijani serviceman after being notified of his possible border crossing, which subsequently resulted in a woman being shot in her home.

The National Security Service said on October 1 that it had been notified by Azerbaijani authorities earlier, on September 29, that an Azerbaijani serviceman had allegedly gone AWOL. The Azerbaijani side did not rule out that he could have crossed into Armenia. Armenia and Azerbaijan conducted a search operation. Later, on October 1, Armenian emergency services received a report that an Armenian citizen, a 39-year-old woman, had been shot in the leg at her home.

Speaking to journalists, Rubinyan said the actions of Armenia's authorities in connection with the incident, including the advisability of warning the population in

advance, can be discussed.

He said that when making such decisions, it is necessary to assess their potential benefits and harms.

"It is also possible to discuss the issue from a strategic and tactical perspective. Is warning the population in such cases useful or not? What causes more harm, and what is the benefit? For example, it may be that you know there is a chance that the serviceman is in your territory, but he may also not be in your territory. In that case, you might inform the population, and as a result, residents might accidentally shoot at each other because everyone thinks there is a serviceman in the area. And there are a thousand things like this that the competent authorities need to discuss and make a decision on. And I am sure that, looking back, there will be relevant processes, and they will understand whether it was done correctly or incorrectly, well or badly," Rubinyan said.

He also addressed the circumstances under which the serviceman appeared on Armenian territory.

"In this case as well, it still needs to be established under what circumstances this serviceman appeared on Armenian territory. I assume that he is a deserter. But it is obvious that we are not dealing with sabotage, because if we were dealing with sabotage, the Azerbaijani side would not have informed the Armenian side in advance," he said.

Addressing opposition criticism regarding the incident's impact on the peace process, he accused them of exploiting the incident to criticize the authorities' position on peace.

The authorities said that the victim was in a non-life-threatening condition and was receiving the required treatment. The Azerbaijani serviceman faces charges of illegally crossing Armenia's state border, smuggling military-use products, firearms and ammunition, illegally trafficking in firearms and ammunition, illegally entering another person's residence against their will, and causing grievous bodily harm under aggravating circumstances, including with a firearm.



ARMENIA

APRI Think Tank Hosts Forum on Armenia's Strategic Future and Regional Connectivity

YEREVAN — The Applied Policy Research Institute of Armenia (APRI Armenia), an independent think tank based in Yerevan, hosted its fifth annual forum September 23–25, centered on the theme “Sketching the Architecture of Change.”

The event brought together policymakers, diplomats, business people, the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises (UATE) community, civil society representatives, and journalists and offered in-depth and thought-provoking conversations to explore how Armenia can shift from reacting to a changing environment to actively shaping its future and strengthening its agency.

The forum featured 59 speakers — including 17 international experts — representing 12 countries, including Belgium, Estonia, Georgia, Iran, Ireland, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and there were virtual contributions from Turkey and Azerbaijan.

The forum opened with remarks from Sargis Khandanyan, chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations of the National Assembly of Armenia, who

discussed Armenia's foreign policy diversification in terms of access to foreign markets, energy, and certain forms of security cooperation, while stressing that the principle of balance should always be kept in mind. He also addressed Armenia's connectivity, mentioning that the TRIPP project is an opportunity for Armenia's broader unblocking if it opens up our connectivity infrastructure.

Grounded in APRI Armenia's research philosophy — a multidisciplinary approach combining geopolitical analysis with geoeconomic assessments — the forum addressed economic resilience in the face of geopolitical uncertainty through an address by Martin Galstyan, governor of the Central Bank of Armenia. Galstyan emphasized that amid ongoing geographical constraints, prudent macroeconomic governance is a core pillar sustaining Armenia's economic stability and growth.

Throughout the conference, panels examined Armenia's bilateral relationships with partners and neighbors — including the United States, the European Union, Iran, Russia, Turkey and Azerbaijan — as



From left, Sergei Melkonian of APRI, Alireza Khoda Gholipour, Director-General, Center for Political and International Studies (IPIS) and Ambassador Khalil Shirgholami, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Armenia

well as defense issues. Specialized sessions addressed critical emerging domains, including high-tech diplomacy, artificial intelligence, diaspora engagement, youth empowerment, and civil society reforms.

Beyond formal discussions, the APRI

Forum facilitated side-meetings and networking events connecting visiting foreign experts with strategic stakeholders from the country's public and private sectors, forging new cross-sector collaborations aimed at driving sustainable regional progress.

Azeri Soldier Indicted After Arrest In Armenia

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According to Arpi Avetisyan, Musayev held them at gunpoint when her sister rushed to the house and tried to pull away his assault rifle before being shot in the foot and hand. The wounded woman managed to grab a kitchen knife and stab Musayev, she said, adding that the Azerbaijani soldier then knocked her unconscious while wrestling with her and her 15-year-old son.

The bleeding intruder then fled the house. The village chief, Ruben Manucharian, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service that he was “exhausted from blood loss” when police and local residents caught him shortly afterwards.

Ani Avetisyan and her son were hospitalized with serious injuries. According to her sister, the 39-year-old woman lost three fingers while the boy suffered a broken wrist.

Azerbaijani authorities said later on October 1 that Musayev had deserted an Azerbaijani military base in the Lachin district sandwiched between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh on September 26. Armenia's National Security Service (NSS) claimed to have been notified by them about his disappearance on September 29. Critics decried the NSS's and other security agencies' failure to issue security alerts to residents of local Armenian communities.

Musayev was initially accused of serious



Azerbaijani soldier Nasimi Musayev

armed assault, trespassing and illegal arms trafficking. Armenian prosecutors also charged him with illegal border crossing on Friday following an uproar from opposition and public figures fearing that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan could free and repatriate the soldier. Musayev was formally remanded into custody later in the day.

Shaki is located about 20 kilometers from the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. Armenian opposition leaders challenged the authorities in Yerevan to explain how

the Azerbaijani soldier managed to cross the militarized border and advance deep into Armenian territory. They portrayed the incident as a serious security breach highlighting what they see as Pashinyan's continuing failure to secure the country's long border with Azerbaijan.

“If one person managed to cross the border, who says that an entire battalion can't do it?” Artur Khachatryan, a parliament deputy from the opposition Hayastan alliance, told reporters on Friday.

“This suggests that there are vulnerable sections along the border,” said Garnik Davtyan of the opposition strong Armenia bloc. “Perhaps that is precisely what the Azerbaijani soldier was trying to determine. I suspect he entered Armenia for the purpose of reconnaissance.”

Volodya Hakobyan, a senior lawmaker representing the ruling Civil Contract party, acknowledged security failures by Armenian authorities while dismissing the opposition's criticism as exaggerated. He insisted that it is “impossible to completely avoid violations of the border.”

“It is evident that relevant authorities failed to perform their duties properly, given that an Azerbaijani soldier ended up in the home of one of our citizens... But I do not want to express an expert opinion, which is what the opposition is doing right now,” said Hakobyan.

PM Pashinyan Describes Armenia as ‘Promised Land’ at Prayer Breakfast

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through abuse of power. Pashinyan has been open about his intention to topple the Catholicos; it was a part of his party's manifesto ahead of the June elections.

Armenia held its first Prayer Breakfast in 2025. This year, the event was attended by officials, diplomats, businesspeople and clergy, and senior adviser to the White House Faith Office Paula White-Cain, who was one of the keynote speakers together with Pashinyan. On Sunday, White-Cain was received by Catholicos Karekin II, attending the Divine and Immortal Liturgy at the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin.

Pashinyan began his speech by reciting the opening verse of the Book of Proverbs, the first text to be written in Armenian following the creation of the alphabet by Mesrop Mashtots. He then presented the concept of “Real Armenia” as both a spiritual and a political idea.

“Real Armenia” holds that the Republic of Armenia — within its internationally recognized territory — is the Promised Land, the Promised Land bestowed by God,” he said.

Pointing to the burial place of Mashtots in Oshakan, the monastery of Khor Virap in Vedi, and the cathedral of Echmiadzin in Vagharshapat, he stated that the country's main Christian sites indeed lie within the republic. He described the state as an expression of Armenia's Christian identity.

The Prayer Breakfast took place as the government discusses plans to tax the church. Under the plans the income raised would be used to finance programs and activities related to the church, Finance Minister Vahe Hovhannisyan has announced. He did not provide any further details of the program, but said “The church should pay taxes like everyone else.”

The Church currently benefits from specific tax exemptions in Armenia.

(This article originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on October 5.)

Security Official Sacked after Azeri Soldier Incident

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — A deputy head of the National Security Service (NSS) overseeing Armenian border guards was sacked on October 5 following the capture of an Azerbaijani soldier who crossed into Armenia and attacked members of a local family.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's office gave no reason for his decision to fire NSS Major-General Davit Sanamyan. The latter's primary area of responsibility was the coordination and oversight of the country's border guard troops subordinate to the NSS.

The border guards are deployed along some sections of Armenia's long border with Azerbaijan. One of those sections is not far from Shaki, a village in the south-eastern Syunik province where the Azerbaijani serviceman, Nasimi Musayev, was captured after seriously wounding a local resident. (See story on page 1.)

Armenian opposition leaders have decried the NSS's and other security agencies' failure to issue security alerts to residents of local Armenian communities. They have portrayed the incident as a serious security

breach highlighting what they call Pashinyan's continuing failure to secure the border with Azerbaijan.

Andranik Kocharyan, a senior lawmaker representing the ruling Civil Contract party, on October 5 also expressed concern at the incident while avoiding far-reaching conclusions.

“We have encountered a situation that must be prevented in the future,” he told journalists. “For two days, [the Azerbaijani soldier] was not merely within our territory but inside the home of one of our citizens.”



INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Two Azeris Killed after Cargo Ship Hit by Drone in Black Sea

BAKU (OC-Media.org) — Two people have been killed and 13 are missing after the Turkish-owned cargo vessel Royad Mammadov was hit by a drone in the Black Sea on Monday, October 5, Romanian authorities said. Among those on the ship were Azerbaijani nationals, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said.

Romanian rescuers have recovered 11 people from the vessel, which was carrying grain and sailing outside Romania’s territorial waters. Zelenskyy said Russia was responsible for the attack and claimed the vessel was carrying Azerbaijani and Indian citizens. Romanian authorities have not yet commented on the nationalities of the casualties. The ship is owned by a Turkish-registered company.

In a statement on X, Zelenskyy also said that the vessel was Turkish-owned and claimed its captain was killed in the attack.

Armenia, Turkey Discuss Gyumri-Kars Power Line

YEREVAN (Pan.am) — Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Davit Khudatyan on October 6 received a delegation led by Mustafa Pustu, general director of the Electricity Transmission Company of the Republic of Turkey.

On a Facebook post, Khudatyan wrote, “We have touched upon the work being carried out to restore and operate the Gyumri-Kars power transmission line within the framework of the Armenia-Turkey normalization process. We emphasized the importance of inter-connecting the power systems of Armenia and Turkey in the context of both bilateral and regional cooperation.”

On October 5, the Turkish delegation met with the management staff of the Electricity System Operator of Armenia CJSC and High Voltage Power Grids.

Pashinyan Meets New French Ambassador

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received newly appointed French Ambassador to Armenia Florian Escudier, on October 6, the Prime Minister’s Office said.

Pashinyan congratulated Escudier on assuming his post and wished him success in his diplomatic mission. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of continuing to develop and expand the strategic relations established between Armenia and France.

Escudier thanked Pashinyan for the warm welcome and said he would make every effort to further strengthen multifaceted cooperation between Armenia and France.

The two discussed issues related to bilateral relations, ongoing programs and upcoming projects.

Syrian Government Officials and Hezbollah Held Secret Talks in Turkey, Sources Say

By Feras Dalatey, Laila Bassam and Timour Azhari

ISTANBUL (Reuters) — Representatives of the Syrian government and Lebanese militant group Hezbollah held face-to-face talks in Turkey on October 1 to try to calm tensions between them, according to six sources briefed on the first known meeting between the longtime foes.

The Syrian officials and the Iran-aligned group met secretly at least once last month, the sources — who include two Syrian officials, a US official and a senior Lebanese security source close to Hezbollah — told Reuters.

After publication, The Turkish Presidency’s communications directorate denied Reuters’ report, saying that it was “entirely unfounded” that Syrian government officials and Hezbollah officials met in Turkey.

“The claims in these posts regarding the date, venue, content and contacts do not reflect any reality and are entirely fabricated and speculative,” it said in a statement on X.

The Syrian government’s English-language account on X also denied such a meeting had taken place, saying “these claims are false.”

Hezbollah for years dispatched fighters to Syria to support former President Bashar al-Assad’s government during the country’s civil war.

After Assad was ousted in late 2024 in a lightning rebel offensive, tensions rose between Syria’s new government and Hezbollah — with Damascus accusing the group of transferring arms through Syria, and the United States encouraging Syria’s military to send forces into Lebanon to

fight Hezbollah.

The six sources said Hezbollah representatives and Syrian intelligence and foreign ministry officials had taken part in the meeting last month at the invitation of Turkish security and intelligence agencies in an effort to de-escalate.

All the sources spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the meeting.

Syria’s foreign ministry, Turkey’s foreign and defense ministries and the US State Department did not respond to Reuters’ questions about the meeting. Hezbollah’s media office declined to comment.

The meeting focused on resolving points of tension between the two parties and went well, according to the US official, the Syrian officials and the Lebanese source.

One of the Syrian officials said both sides agreed they held no hostility towards one another, and that Syria assured Hezbollah that it would not intervene militarily in Lebanon to disarm the group.

In turn, Syrian officials asked Hezbollah to help stop cross-border smuggling attempts and dismantle its remaining sleeper cells, particularly in southern Syria, the official said.

The Lebanese source, who has direct knowledge of the meeting and its outcomes, said the two sides “made a lot of progress on security issues.”

“Hezbollah wants to protect its flank,” the source said, referring to concerns about a Syrian attack on the group within Lebanon.

Both the Syrian official and the Lebanese source said no final agreement had been reached and that no announcement had been planned.

The Lebanese source told Reuters that

contact between the two parties via Turkey had begun about two months ago.

Reuters could not confirm where in Turkey the September meeting was held, how long it lasted and whether other meetings had been held before or since.

Both Hezbollah and Syria’s government had signaled they would be open to speaking to one another.

In July, Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani said Damascus was open to meeting the group. A month later, Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem said in a televised address that the group had no objection to meeting Syria’s leadership.

Ankara portrays itself as a key regional stakeholder in rebuilding and stabilizing Syria. Under President Tayyip Erdogan, it has also sought to position itself as a facilitator of regional dialogue and is keen to boost stability in the region.

Three of the sources said it was Turkey, a key ally of Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa, that pushed for the meeting as it was keen to be directly involved in those efforts.

Absent from the meetings, however, was Hezbollah’s main sponsor, Iran.

The Lebanese security source said Hezbollah attended the meeting with Iran’s knowledge, but that Tehran was disappointed that it was not a direct participant and that Sharaa had rebuffed any notion of direct ties to Iran for now.

That disappointment was the main reason that no final agreement was reached and no announcement about the meeting was made, the source said.

There was no immediate comment from Iran’s permanent mission in Geneva.

25 French Political Figures Call for the Immediate Release of Armenian Prisoners

PARIS — On October 2, *Le Figaro* published a collective appeal signed by 25 French political figures from across the political spectrum, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan.

The appeal drew attention to the prisoners’ prolonged detention and isolation and stresses that lasting peace cannot be achieved without justice, freedom, and dignity.

Free Armenian Prisoners, which republished the commentary, said that the commentary, with the headline “Free the Armenian Prisoners Held in Azerbaijan” was signed by political figures from across the political spectrum, including Bruno Retailleau, Marine Tondelier and Édouard Philippe, are calling for the unconditional release of all Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan since the war that began in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020.

“Most of them were arrested as they accompanied the exodus of their people during the ethnic cleansing that emptied Nagorno-Karabakh of its Armenian population in 2023. Twenty Armenians have been sentenced by the Azerbaijani regime to lengthy prison terms, with some receiving life sentences.

“The fate of these prisoners, completely cut off from the outside world and left at the mercy of their jailers, has long been a source of profound concern. Some have been detained for three years, others for nearly six years, after being captured during the war launched by Azerbaijan

against the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh in the autumn of 2020.

“The European Parliament and, less than two months ago, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives called for their release. In France, the Senate, the National Assembly, the Council of Paris, and numerous local and regional authorities have also adopted resolutions to this effect, often unanimously.

“As part of this mobilization, an exhibition featuring portraits of the Armenian prisoners, organized during the first week of September by the City of Paris and the CCAF (Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France), helped draw attention to their plight and put faces to their names.

“Deprived of their freedom, separated from their families, and kept out of the world’s sight, they are at the mercy of a prison system whose practices have long raised serious concerns. Their situation is all the more troubling because no independent international organization is currently able to visit them regularly and report freely on their conditions of detention.

“There are also serious reasons to fear that their continued detention is being used as a means of exerting pressure on Armenia in order to obtain further concessions as part of the difficult peace process currently underway. If that is the case, these prisoners are also, in effect, hostages.

“Faced with this unacceptable situation, we, the signatories of this appeal, echo the

calls made by French and European institutions and demand the immediate and unconditional release of all Armenian prisoners held in Azerbaijan.

“Finally, we reaffirm a simple conviction: in the Caucasus, as elsewhere, the peace we all hope for cannot be lasting if it is built at the cost of arbitrariness, humiliation, and oblivion. There can be no genuine peace without justice, freedom, and dignity.”

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It said instead that both ministers stressed “the strategic character” of relations between their nations and discussed plans to expand bilateral commerce, including through the construction of a second bridge over the Arax river marking the Armenian-Iranian border.

According to Tasnim, Araghchi also spoke about Iran’s conflict with the United States, blaming Washington for continuing disruptions in commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. Mirzoyan was cited by his office as reiterating that Armenia hopes for a negotiated solution to the crisis.



Armenian Students Win Four Medals at Astronomy and Astrophysics Olympiad

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenian students have won one silver and three bronze medals at the 19th International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics (IOAA), held in Hanoi, Vietnam, from September 25 to October 5.

The competition brought together 320 students from 64 countries. Each participating country could be represented by a maximum of five students.

Armenia’s team consisted of students from several leading educational institutions: Ruzanna Shiroyan, Natalie Margaryan and Bagrat Bagratyan from the A. Shahinyan Specialized School of Physics and Mathematics; Emil Harutyunyan from the senior school of the National Polytechnic University of Armenia; and Davit Badalyan from the Shirakatsy Lyceum Scientific-Educational Complex.

Ruzanna Shiroyan won a silver medal, while Natalie Margaryan, Bagrat Bagratyan and Emil Harutyunyan were awarded bronze medals.

The Olympiad consisted of four stages: theoretical, observational, data analysis and planetarium.

The Armenian team was led by Artashes Mkrtchyan of Yerevan State University and the Yerevan Scientific-Educational Foundation, and Artavazd Harutyunyan of Yerevan State University and the A. Shahinyan Specialized School of Physics and Mathematics.

At the 18th International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics, held in Mumbai, India, in 2025, the Armenian team had won two silver and one bronze medal.



The Armenian team participating in the International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics in Hanoi

Pashinyan to Continue ‘Dialogue’ on Russian Sanctions Relief

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Friday, October 2, pledged to continue a “constructive dialogue” with Russia over the lifting of its trade restrictions imposed on Armenia earlier this year.

Moscow banned multimillion-dollar imports of Armenian agricultural products and beverages as it pressed Yerevan to quickly choose „ seeking to join the European Union and remaining part of the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

In a July 27 phone call, Russian President Vladimir Putin again told Pashinyan to hold a referendum on the issue “as soon as possible.” Two days later, Pashinyan declared that the Russian sanctions mean the EEU is “paralyzed” and herald “the beginning of the end” of the Russian-led trade. But he toned down the criticism during a meeting of the prime ministers of EEU member states in Kyrgyzstan on August 7.

Pashinyan remained careful not to lambaste Moscow when he addressed via video link another meeting of EEU premiers

held in Minsk. Without mentioning Russia by name, he pointed to lingering “restrictions and administrative barriers” to the movement of goods in the common market of five ex-Soviet states.

“In this regard, we consider it important to continue a constructive dialogue aimed at removing existing obstacles to the export and transit of Armenian products in accordance with EEU law,” he said. “I believe that consistent progress in this direction serves the interests of all EEU member states.”

Putin and Pashinyan publicly sparred on the referendum issue during their September 1 talks held in Kyrgyzstan. The two leaders are expected to meet again in Moscow soon.

“We, of course, very much hope that Armenia will continue to work constructively with the other member states of the Eurasian Economic Union,” Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk told Vesti.ru on Friday.

Other Russian officials have warned in



Russia’s President Vladimir Putin and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan meet on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Bishkek, September 1, 2026 (AFP photo)

recent weeks of further economic sanctions against Yerevan, notably the end of a sig-

nificant discount on the price of Russian natural gas supplied to Armenia.

U.S. Official, Azerbaijani FM Discuss TRIPP

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Azerbaijani Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeyhun Bayramov held a meeting with Aryeh Lightstone, Senior Adviser to the US Special Envoy for Peace Missions on October 6.

The Azerbaijani APA news agency, citing a ministry readout, reported that during the meeting, the sides exchanged views on the current state and development prospects of Azerbaijan-US bilateral relations, as well as regional issues.

Minister Jeyhun Bayramov “noted the importance of the historic Summit held in Washington on August 8, 2025, in elevating Azerbaijan-US relations to the level of strategic partnership. Satisfaction was expressed with the rapid development of bilateral ties in various areas following the agreements reached in Washington,” according to the report.

In this context, the importance of the Charter on Strategic Partnership between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United

States of America, signed on February 10, 2026, was emphasized in terms of “further strengthening the institutional foundations of bilateral relations and identifying new areas of cooperation.”

The activities of the working groups established as part of the implementation of the Charter and the work carried out to identify concrete projects and roadmaps for the coming period were reviewed.

The sides also discussed the expansion of Azerbaijan-US economic and energy cooperation. In this context, it was noted that the agreements reached in the fields of energy, investment, high technologies and other areas within the framework of Baku Energy Week and the 2nd Azerbaijan International Investment Forum “contribute to strengthening the economic foundations of the bilateral strategic partnership.”

According to APA, information was provided on infrastructure projects implemented by Azerbaijan to “develop the region’s

energy, transport and logistics potential, expand the Middle Corridor, promote investment and strengthen regional connectivity.”

It was emphasized that the TRIPP project “would make an important contribution to the development of transport and economic connectivity in the region, ensuring unimpeded connectivity through Azerbaijani territory to its Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, and creating broader regional transit opportunities,” according to the report.

The meeting also included an exchange of views on the normalization process between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Bayramov “informed the other side about the steps taken by Azerbaijan to advance the peace agenda, implement the agreements reached, open regional communications and strengthen lasting peace and stability in the region, and conveyed Azerbaijan’s position.”

The sides emphasized the importance of continuing efforts to further develop the



Azerbaijani Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeyhun Bayramov

Azerbaijan-US strategic partnership in all areas of mutual interest and to enrich the agreements reached with practical results.



Community News

Pastor Faces Ministry Disruption after Homeland Security Terminates Syria's Protected Status

By Layton Williams Berkes

BOSTON (Presbyterian News Service) — When Syria's Temporary Protected Status (TPS) was terminated by the Trump administration this summer, it affected approximately 6,000 Syrians living and working in the United States. Thousands of families. Hundreds of communities across the United States. Countless people who know and love their Syrian neighbors, coworkers, and friends. Six thousand Syrian lives. One of them is a Presbyterian Church (USA) pastor, the Rev. Dr. Tamar Wasoian.

"We were one of the most vetted immigrant categories, and suddenly, we were given two months to adjust our status or self-deport," Wasoian said.



The Rev. Dr. Tamar Wasoian. (Photo courtesy of common cathedral)

That news came in September 2025. A Supreme Court case delayed the termination, but it went into effect this past July.

For nearly 20 years, the United States has not only been the place Wasoian lived, but where she has studied, discerned her calling, and pursued her vocation as both teacher and pastor. She is was born in Aleppo, Syria — the descendant of Armenian genocide survivors — and first came to the United States under a student visa, pursuing graduate and doctoral degrees in religion.

In 2012, Syria was designated with Temporary Protected Status due to an ongoing violent civil war that put anyone returning to Syria in danger. TPS gave Wasoian both legal residence and authorization to work in the United States.

Wasoian has spent the years since teaching and doing ministry, helping seminarians and others pursue their own calls to ministry. She was ordained by the Presbytery of New Covenant in Houston, and currently serves as an associate pastor at Boston's common cathedral, a church for the unhoused that gathers in the Boston Common.

Meanwhile, Wasoian has dutifully kept up with the legal process necessary for someone in the U.S. under TPS. That includes reapplying every time the TPS designation is see PASTOR, page 9



Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian, Rev. Fr. Arakel Aljalian, and Deacon Hagop Ketchedjian cutting the ribbon, after blessing the walkers prior to the start of the walkathon

ABMDR New England Holds 15th Annual Walkathon

WATERTOWN — Supporters from throughout New England gathered in Watertown on September 19 to participate in the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry's (ABMDR) 15th Annual Walk of Life. The pan-Armenian event drew numerous students from area schools and colleges, and received support from local organizations, businesses and community leaders.

Since its inception, the New England Walk of Life has received support and sponsorship from numerous businesses and organizations, including PROMETRIKA, LLC, of Cambridge; the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute; Armenian Women's Welfare Association; Watertown Savings Bank; Armenian American Pharmacists' Association; ThermOil, Inc.; Suphi Furs; anoush'ella; and the Varjabedian, Yeramian and Bedrosian families. The walkathon has also received support from the St. James Armenian Apostolic Church's Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center, Armenia Tree Project, Amaras Art Alliance, Boston Red Sox, Northeastern University Athletics, Waverly Oaks Athletic Club, and Armenian Museum of America.

During the walkathon's opening ceremony at the Charles Mosesian Center, Ojeni Kavlakian of the Walkathon Organizing Committee welcomed the participants.

"Today, we are gathered as one big team," Kavlakian said. "Some of us walk, some cheer, some organize, and some quietly register as potential stem-cell donors. Different roles, one goal. Many of you have supported us since the very beginning, and we are deeply grateful. Thank you to everyone who helped spread the word among friends, families, and colleagues. Your support makes this event possible."

Kavlakian also expressed the organizing committee's gratitude to St. James Armenian Apostolic Church's Rev. Arakel Aljalian, and Yn. Natasha for hosting the commencement of this year's walkathon.

Kavlakian invited guest speaker Aram Havan, a teacher and community organizer, to share a few words with the walkers. Havan, who has been organizing a Boston athletics team to take part, for the first time, in the 2027 Pan-Armenian Games in Yerevan, spoke of the excitement around forming the team.

see WALKATHON, page 8



Sisters Telo and Rubina Ghazarians received the Gold Award

Armenian Genealogy Conference Returns To Watertown for 10th Anniversary

WATERTOWN — Ten years ago, hundreds of Armenians gathered in Watertown with questions that had often lingered in their families for generations: Where, exactly, did our grandparents come from? What happened to relatives separated by genocide, migration and upheaval? Where can we find records that survived? And can DNA, photographs, immigration documents and newly accessible archives help reconnect branches of families scattered across the world?

On Saturday, November 21, the Armenian Genealogy Conference will return to the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (ACEC), 47 Nichols Avenue in Watertown, to celebrate its 10th anniversary—returning to the very place where the first conference was held in 2016.

Sponsored by the Armenian Cultural Association of America (ACAA), this year's conference will bring together researchers, historians, genealogists and individuals simply curious about their own family stories for a full day devoted to discovering, documenting and preserving Armenian family history.

And no previous genealogy experience is necessary.

Whether someone has already traced a family tree back several centuries or has little more than the names of four grandparents and the villages they supposedly came from, the conference is designed to offer practical tools, new sources and, perhaps most importantly, new avenues of discovery.

Registration and additional information are available at ArmenianGenealogyConference.com.

A Movement that Began in Watertown

The Armenian Genealogy Conference traces its origins to an online community created in 2013, when Tracy Rivest Keeney founded the Armenian Genealogy Facebook group. The group connected Armenians around the world who were trying to locate records, decipher documents, translate family material and identify long-lost relatives.

Three years later, George Aghajayan, Tracy Rivest Keeney and Mark Arslan organized the first Armenian Genealogy Conference in Watertown.

The response demonstrated just how deep the desire was within the Armenian community to recover family histories that many had assumed were permanently lost. More than 300 people attended the inaugural conference at the ACEC in April 2016, with participants traveling from across the United States and as far away as Canada and Great Britain.

That first gathering introduced participants to American genealogical sources, immigration records, DNA testing, compatriotic union records and other resources that could help reconstruct Armenian families.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Genealogy Conference Returns to Watertown for 10th Anniversary

from previous page

But Watertown proved to be only the beginning.

The conference traveled to the University of Michigan-Dearborn in Detroit in 2017, followed by Ramapo College in Mahwah, New Jersey, in June 2018 and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in November 2018. In November 2019, the conference reached the West Coast with a gathering at the Mesrobian School in Pico Rivera, California. After the interruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference achieved another milestone in September 2022 when it was held for the first time in Yerevan, Armenia, at the American University of Armenia.

Now, a decade after that first Watertown gathering, the conference is coming home.

From Immigration Records to Ottoman Photographs

The November 21 program will reflect how dramatically Armenian genealogical research has expanded during the past decade.

Mark Arslan, one of the pioneers of Armenian genealogy in the United States and creator of both the Armenian DNA Project and Armenian Immigration Project, will focus on immigration and naturalization records.

Arslan began researching his own Armenian ancestry in 1971 and has since assembled an extraordinary database of primary-source information relating to Armenian immigration to North America before 1930. His work demonstrates how passenger manifests, naturalization files and other seemingly ordinary government records can reveal places of origin, relatives, migration patterns and connections that disappeared from family memory generations ago.



At the 2016 conference

One of the conference's most unusual presentations will come from Zeynep Devrim Gürsel, Associate Professor of Anthropology at Rutgers University and author of *Portraits of Unbelonging: Photographic Journeys Across Borders*.

Gürsel's research uncovered an extraordinary collection of photographs in the Ottoman archives documenting Armenian emigration around the turn of the 20th century. Beginning in 1896, Armenians

unidentified photograph of a great-grandparent and wondered what story it might contain, Gürsel's work illustrates the remarkable possibilities created when photographs and archival records are brought together.

Armenian Genealogy in France

The conference will also expand its geographic reach through a presentation by Boghos Tchitchekdjian on Armenian genealogy in France and the work of RIGA —

Relais International de Généalogie Arménienne, or the International Relay of Armenian Genealogy.

Founded in France in 2020, RIGA has sought to overcome some of the particular obstacles confronting Armenian genealogists: records scattered among different archives and countries, multiple migration routes, changing surnames and the adaptation or Frenchification of Armenian family names. Its broader goal is to identify, compile and make Armenian genealogical resources more accessible.

The presentation will be particularly valuable for families whose relatives passed through or settled in France, but it will also demonstrate the increasingly international nature of Armenian genealogical research.

DNA and the Expanding Universe of Armenian Records

Other presentations will explore DNA testing and the growing array of resources available to Armenians researching their family histories.

For Armenian genealogists, DNA can be especially powerful. The Armenian Genocide, forced conversion, deportation, orphaning, adoption and migration frequently severed the documentary trail between generations. DNA testing can sometimes bridge those gaps, identify previously un-

known relatives and provide evidence supporting relationships that cannot be established through surviving documents alone.

The conference will examine how genealogists can use DNA effectively while also exploring archival and online resources that have become increasingly available.

The changes since the first conference in 2016 have been remarkable. Records once accessible only by traveling to an archive may now be digitized. Databases can connect names appearing in immigration manifests, census documents, church registers and naturalization petitions. Online collections can reconstruct the life of an Armenian village or diaspora community. Photographs once hidden in government archives can identify emigrating families. DNA matches can connect descendants living on different continents.

Yet technology alone cannot reconstruct a family.

Successful genealogy still begins with people—with grandparents' stories, the inscription on the back of a photograph, an unfamiliar village name written on a naturalization form, the maiden name that everyone almost forgot, or the distant cousin who remembers one detail that unlocks everything else.

That is why gathering genealogists together remains so important.

More than a Conference

The conference is intended not simply as a day of lectures, but as an opportunity for participants to meet others engaged in the same search.

Some of the most valuable discoveries at earlier conferences have come through conversations between presentations: discovering that another attendee's family came from the same village, meeting someone researching the same surname, learning about an archive one did not know existed, or finding someone who can read a document that has sat untranslated in a family collection for decades.

That opportunity will continue after the formal program with a dinner featuring Armenian music, giving participants, speakers and researchers additional time to meet, exchange information and build connections.

The cost is: Conference, including lunch: \$25; Dinner with Armenian music: \$40; Conference, lunch and dinner: \$65.



At the 2016 conference

Greg Jundanian and Lisa Misakian will introduce participants to the Armenians of Whitinsville Project, an ambitious effort to preserve the history of one of Massachusetts' most significant historic Armenian communities.

The project brings together photographs, documents, oral histories, recipes, recordings and family stories to reconstruct not merely individual genealogies, but the life of an entire Armenian-American community. Its approach offers a model that could be duplicated in Armenian communities throughout the diaspora—transforming genealogy from a collection of names and dates into a record of how families actually lived.

who received permission to leave the Ottoman Empire were required under certain circumstances to renounce their Ottoman nationality and agree never to return. Photography became part of that process.

Thousands of Armenian emigrants were photographed, leaving behind images that today represent an extraordinary genealogical and historical resource. Gürsel's research follows these photographs beyond the Ottoman archives, connecting the faces captured more than a century ago with immigration documents, American records and, in some instances, the descendants of the people pictured.

For anyone who has ever stared at an



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenia Fest 2026 Brings Armenian Culture, Community and Tradition to Royal Oak

Music, dance, food and Armenian hospitality fill the Royal Oak Farmers Market

By Corinne Khederian

ROYAL OAK, Mich. — Armenia Fest 2026 filled the Royal Oak Farmers Market with Armenian music, dancing, food and tradition on Saturday, August 22, bringing families, friends and visitors together for the annual Metro Detroit celebration.

The market stayed busy throughout the evening as guests enjoyed traditional Armenian food, visited with friends and gathered around the stage and dance floor.

The Hamazkayin Arax Dance Troupe, directed by choreographer Nayiri Karapetian, drew an enthusiastic crowd as young dancers in traditional costumes performed Armenian folk dances. The performance also underscored one of the festival’s long-time goals: passing Armenian traditions on to the next generation.

Live music from the Armenia Fest All-Star Band, led by Fest Co-Chair Vaughn Masropian, kept the celebration moving throughout the evening and drew guests onto the dance floor for Armenian favorites.

Food was a major part of the evening, with traditional Armenian dinners and

pastries. The Beer and Wine Garden and Outdoor Cigar Bar gave guests additional places to gather.

The Great Choreg Bake-Off, chaired by Noreen Masropian, returned as one of the festival’s most lighthearted traditions. Homemade versions of the Armenian sweet bread were judged by area Armenian clergy, with the winning choreg earning a trophy and plenty of bragging rights. The bread was then shared with festival guests to enjoy.

The Silent Auction, chaired by Angela Hagopian Snow and Elise Papazian, featured works by Michael Aram, gifts from Hagopian World of Rugs, a Detroit Tigers package including game tickets, raffle tickets and other donated items.

Inside the Farmers Market, artisan and community vendors offered Armenian-themed merchandise, specialty items and cultural displays, giving visitors another way to learn about and support the Armenian community.

Beyond the scheduled performances and activities, much of the evening centered on simply being together. Families shared dinner, longtime friends caught up and



Baked goods at the Manoogian Manor Booth

newcomers were welcomed into the celebration.

Fest Co-Chairs Greg Mamassian and Vaughn Masropian described the festival as a place that brings Armenians together “under one big tent,” and this year’s gathering once again reflected that spirit.

Organized by the Metro Detroit Armenia

Fest Committee and the Detroit Knights of Vartan, Armenia Fest continues to celebrate Armenian heritage through food, music, dance, faith, family and hospitality while sharing those traditions with the greater Metro Detroit community. Festival proceeds support the Knights of Vartan Economic Sustainability Program in Armenia.



Great Choreg Bake-Off with local clergy



Hamazkayin Arax Dance Troupe members perform

ABMDR New England Holds 15th Annual Walkathon

WALKATHON, from page 6

The walk concluded at Saltonstall Park, where participants enjoyed music, dancing and food alongside visitors attending the annual Watertown Faire on the Square. Dana-Farber Cancer Institute representative Kidest Mequanen joined ABMDR volunteers at the Faire to answer questions and educate attendees about the shared goals and missions of the two organizations.

During the closing ceremony, Manneh Ghazarians and Narini Badalian of the Walkathon Organizing Committee expressed their appreciation to the event’s sponsors for their continued support throughout the years. They also highlighted the many sponsor logos and names featured on participants’ T-shirts before presenting awards to the top fundraisers.

Telo Ghazarians, Alec Der Sirakian and the Armenian-American Pharmacists’ As-

sociation team, the latter led by Sossy Yoghurtian, received the gold, silver and bronze top-fundraiser awards, respectively. For the 14th consecutive year, the Armenia Tree Project will plant commemorative trees in Armenia in honor of the walkathon’s top fundraisers, as part of its #LivingCentury Initiative.

The event concluded with a raffle drawing, led by ABMDR volunteer Anelga Hajjar, and with the help of several young participants. Among the many prizes were ticket packages for Northeastern University basketball games and a special VIP package of five tickets to 2027 Boston Red Sox games.

In an interview with Watertown Local Access TV covering the Faire, Shant Der Torossian and Narini Badalian spoke about the vital importance of Walk of Life in raising public awareness of ABMDR’s



Supporters from throughout New England participated in the walkathon.

life-saving mission.

Established in 1999, ABMDR, a non-profit organization, helps Armenians and non-Armenians worldwide survive life-threatening blood-related illnesses by recruiting and matching donors to those re-

quiring bone marrow stem cell transplants. To date, the registry has recruited over 33,500 donors in 32 countries across four continents, identified over 9,000 patients, and facilitated 45 bone marrow transplants. For more information, visit abmdr.am.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Pastor Faces Ministry Disruption after Homeland Security Terminates Syria’s Protected Status

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extended, generally every 18 months — a laborious process that includes mountains of paperwork, months of uncertainty and significant financial cost.

An American Life, Upended

When Syria’s TPS was terminated, Wasoian, like thousands of others, suddenly faced the terrifying possibility of being forced to give up the communities she serves in the U.S. and return to a country where she would be at significant risk.

“None of the Syria I knew is left to return to,” Wasoian said. “The overall situation is not safe for anyone to return.”

The Department of Homeland Security claims that the conditions that originally led to Syria’s TPS designation no longer apply. However, the United Nations and other organizations report that the country is still in a major state of crisis with more than 70% of the population in need of humanitarian aid. Seven million Syrians are internally displaced, with another 4 million currently residing as refugees in neighboring countries.

For Wasoian, there are additional layers. “As an ordained woman minister, I will not be able to live my calling to ministry if I return. I built a life here and found a home at PC (USA). I have a ministry here that I am called to. How can I leave everything behind and just leave? How can I leave my church?”

Wasoian has not faced the uncertainty alone. She’s had ongoing support from various PC (USA) denominational ministries, and the congregation she serves has also stepped up to help with the legal process and cover the significant financial cost. The board and executive director of common cathedral applied for an R1 Religious Worker visa on her behalf, and it was ultimately granted, but not without complications. Initially, the change in status was not approved.

“A lesser-known truth about TPS status is that it locks the holder in a non-immigrant status and the only way to change status is to leave the U.S., travel to their birth country, have an interview at the U.S. embassy there, and re-enter U.S. with approved status,” Wasoian explained. “In my case, this meant traveling to Syria, but there is no U.S. embassy in Syria, and the designated embassy is in Jordan. Jordan didn’t grant me the visa.”

In the midst of all of this, a travel ban was enacted for Syria, among other countries, and Wasoian was unable to leave the U.S.

“Thanks to the insightful knowledge of my legal team, and the mercy of a judge, I was able to obtain an active R1 visa and change of status with no requirement of traveling to Syria or Jordan,” Wasoian said.

She’s relieved to have an R1 visa now, but the process came at a staggering cost. Her legal fees have amounted to tens of thousands of dollars, so far. She emphasized that an R1 visa also has significant limitations: It is only valid for five years and confines her employment to the organization that petitioned for her visa. That has forced Wasoian to give up the teaching portfolio she has spent years building.

A Historic Connection Made Personal

Wasoian sees her place in the PC (USA) and the denomination’s support for her as an echo of a relationship between the denomination and Christians in Syria that stretches back more than a century.

The PC (USA)’s partner church in Lebanon and Syria, the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, was founded in the mid-1800s by Presbyterian missionaries from the United States. After the Armenian genocide, which led to the displacement of Armenians throughout the Middle

East and beyond, the PC(USA) helped establish the Jinishian Memorial Program in the 1960s. Its efforts initially focused on Armenians in Aleppo, Syria, and Beirut, Lebanon, but it has expanded to support Armenians throughout the Middle East and Europe. Meanwhile, the PC(USA) maintains a close relationship with the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon and several seminaries in the region, including the Near East School of Theology (NEST) and Lebanese American University (LAU).

In the past year, the National Middle Eastern Presbyterian Caucus has published multiple letters urging the denomination to continue its support of Christians in Syria and Lebanon, and at the 227th General Assembly this past June, the General Assembly approved an overture from the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee calling for continued denominational support for religious minorities in Syria.

Wasoian said she’s grateful for the invaluable support she’s received from her congregation and from the denomination to which she is ordained. However, she lamented the “lost time, resources, and energy that would have been better invested in ministry to those who needed hope.”

Facing a Fraught Future

Even with support, and especially for the many Syrians in the U.S. without it, the path ahead without TPS is fraught. Those affected are being asked to “self-deport” and return to their country of citizenship on their own terms. In the meantime, they’re fitted with ankle monitors to track their movements. They are not provided with instructions or guidance on how to move forward, which Wasoian says has been a major issue from the beginning.

“There is no plan and DHS is figuring out things as it comes, and meanwhile, lives are uprooted in such a haphazard manner, with no consideration to human dignity,” Wasoian said.

A particular challenge they face is that TPS was not designed to lead to permanent residence or citizenship. When a country’s TPS is terminated, its citizens who are living in the U.S. revert to whatever status they would have had without the TPS designation. Wasoian said the irony is that lawyers she consulted in the past always told her that TPS is “one of the most reliable categories” to stay and work “without concern.”

The termination of TPS for Syria as well as Haiti is part of the Trump administration’s ongoing “immigration crackdown,” which has also included imposing major limitations on asylum claims and the rescission of sensitive locations policy that protected people from deportation efforts while at churches, schools, hospitals and other essential social services.

Immigration Justice

The PC (USA) has a decades-long history of supporting immigrants and refugees through its ministries and General Assembly policies. This year, the Presbyterian Hunger Program and other PC(USA) ministries have advocated for the extension of TPS. This past spring, the Rev. Jihyun Oh, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and Executive Director of Presbyterian Life & Witness, joined other faith leaders to sign

an amicus brief in support of asylum-seekers as the U.S. Supreme Court considered a case concerning “turnback policy” at the U.S. border.

“For me, the journey of permanent residency is still to unfold. I am thankful for

complicated,” she said. “Every day there is a new regulation and new twist to the plot that requires legal guidance. Millions are left to navigate these demands by themselves.”

She urges the church to continue uphold-



The Rev. Dr. Tamar Wasoian presides at communion in the Boston Common. (Photo courtesy of common cathedral)

the legal and relational support I have from PC(USA), the prayers and support of the Presbytery of Boston and my congregation,” Wasoian said.

She added that she worries for those who don’t have the same privileges and resources.

“U.S. immigration laws were never straightforward, and now it is even more

ing its values and reflecting its own history by proactively providing support to those who need it, like Syrians reeling from TPS termination.

“We need to remember that we as denomination and churches are called to do God’s work in the world,” Wasoian said. “This is a time that calls for solidarity, and for us to work for justice for all.”



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.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Embracing Inclusion and Immigrants

Heritage Park Supporters Celebrate in Style

GALA, from page 1

Haig Deranian and Charlie Guleserian, he said, were instrumental in convincing him to join their efforts to nab a parcel for the Armenian community when the Greenway was being created as a result of the Big Dig. The Big Dig, which got underway in 1991, demolished a series of hulking, rusty bridges that crisscrossed the space over downtown. With the bridges gone, the city created a 1.5 mile-long green corridor consisting of 13 parcels wending through the city.

“Without the vision, compassion and perseverance of Charlie and Haig, none of this would have been possible,” Kalustian said. “I am most proud of what we have accomplished together. The success that is the Armenian Heritage Park is not about me or you or any one individual. It is about all of us. ... It is unifying our entire community.”

He added that the community has left “an indelible mark on the history of our great city and Commonwealth,” adding the Armenian community has “established ourselves as that unique example of community in America and the rest of the diaspora of what could be achieved when we



James Kalustian



Nicole Babikian Hajjar

speak and act with one voice and one single purpose.”

Again and again, the comments veered between celebrating the Armenian heritage of the founders and the immigrant experience in general.

The park, Kalustian said, was about “honoring and remembering those who made the ultimate sacrifice so that we could have better education and a better life. It is about remembering and celebrating Armenian culture and way of life. It is about bringing together and celebrating all ethnic communities that have come together in Boston.”

He added, “It is not just a plot of land. ... It is for a cause as former [Massachusetts] Gov. Deval Patrick said so eloquently, to celebrate that indefatigable human spirit ... to begin a new life.”

He paid tribute to Donald and Barbara Tellalian, the former the architect of the plot and designer of the Abstract Sculpture, the labyrinth and water fountain, and the latter, a tireless cheerleader and fundraiser for the park.

Barbara Tellalian until recently had led various efforts for the park on a volunteer basis, a position she had held since the park was opened. Kalustian said that she had told him a year ago that she would like to take a step back. He praised the many aspects of her efforts, including “programming, development, communications, city and neighborhood relations,” to name just a few.

He presented an award to her in honor of her many years of service to the park.

In brief comments, Tellalian thanked the committee for the honor and expressed her pride in what the park has come to mean in the Boston community.



Supporters of the Armenian Heritage Park

The event also served as the public debut for the park’s new director of programming, Vahan Dilanyan.

“It’s our responsibility to preserve the legacy entrusted to us,” he said.

He praised the efforts that led to its creation, adding, “The Armenian Heritage Park is a testament to what that shared commitment can achieve. It reflects the imagination of a community that found unity in the ability to create something both distinctly Armenian and one that opens the dialogue. It honors our history, our culture, our faith, and celebrates our achievements and dignifies the memory of those who suffered while taking its place in the landscape of one of America’s greatest cities,” he said.

He called for new strategic partnerships to enhance the mission of the park, and stressed efforts to increase the involvement of youth.

“My vision is to help build an Armenian institution secure enough in its identity to speak beyond itself,” he said. He added he wanted the organization in the next generations to serve as “a center of gravity” for the Armenian community.

Comments were also offered by Bruce Bagdasarian, vice president of the Armenian Heritage Foundation, who singled out the representatives of the five immigrant assistance organizations present. They were the City of Boston office of Immigrant Advancement, International Institute of New England, RIAN immigrant Center, Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition and Refugepoint.

Honoring Raffi and Nina Festekjian

The gala’s honorees Raffi and Nina Festekjian were introduced by longtime friend Dr. Viken Levon Babikian. He listed the couple’s many financial achievements and benevolent activities.

As a fellow native of Lebanon, Babikian quipped, “Some good people come from Beirut.”

“They have built American companies, created opportunities for others, supported artists and young people and helped Armenians in distress,” he said. “Their accomplishments remind us that success is not only about what we do for ourselves, but what we do for others and future generations.”

Nina Metrebian Festekjian spoke first. After her three sons left for college, she founded Unique Concepts LLC, through which she launched several restaurants, including anoush’ella, Nuburger by Nina, Humoveh and Kutzu

Asian Fusion Lab.

She also co-founded the Armenian Art Fair Foundation in Yerevan in 2019, focusing on contemporary art. She chairs YerazArt, a Boston nonprofit that supports young classical musicians from Armenia.

“We are so grateful for all of you. Tonight is especially meaningful because the Armenian Heritage Park tells a story that many of us carry in our lives,” she said.

She recalled how she moved to Boston from Beirut the day after marrying Raffi Festekjian, knowing no one.

“Everything was new. The language, the culture, the



Nina and Raffi Festekjian

streets, the schools, even the pace of daily life, but little by little, Boston became home,” she said.

Over the years, with her growing family of five, she said, she became enmeshed in a friend group that became a second family.

“Our home became a place for gatherings, conversations, laughter and many long meals,” she said.

“I learned something important. Food is never just food. Food is memory, hospitality and culture. Food is how we Armenians say ‘we love you. You belong here,’” she added.

When her boys left home, she decided to turn her hobby of cooking into a business, and thus, anoush’ella was born. She wanted to keep the food fine yet casual, healthy yet comforting. She added that she was delighted to see people from every background enjoying the Armenian food.

“That is what Armenian Heritage Park represents to me. It is a place of memory but a place of welcome,” she said.

Getting more personal and emotional, she continued, “My own experience started as a young woman in a new place, unsure of where I belonged but this community

continued on next page



OBITUARY

Benon Sevan

Former Deputy UN Secretary General

By Agnieszka Rakoczy, Jean Christou and Rebekah Gregoriades

NICOSIA (*Cyprus Mail*) — Benon Sevan, a diplomat and former UN assistant secretary general, who dedicated his life to promoting the Armenian heritage and served as a representative of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) died aged 88, on Monday.

AGBU described Benon Sevan as a beacon of guidance, a mentor, a tireless defender of Armenian cultural heritage and a “family” for many generations of Armenians in Cyprus.

“His warm personality, keen intellect, passion and selfless generosity earned him the love and respect of all those who had the blessing of knowing him,” the AGBU said.

Born in Nicosia, he graduated from the capital’s AGBU Melkonian Educational Institute, obtained a bachelor of arts degree in history and philosophy at Columbia College in New York and a graduate degree from the School of International and Public Affairs of Columbia University.

Joining the UN secretariat in 1965, Sevan served as a UN observer with the special representative of the secretary-general for the act of free choice in West Irian in Indonesia, Assistant Resident Representative with the Fund of the UN for the Development of West Irian, and as the senior secretariat official with the mission to inquire on the situation of prisoners of war in the Iran and Iraq conflict.

Between 1982 and March 1988, Sevan was secretary of the UN’s Economic and Social Council and served as secretary of a number of intergovernmental bodies and special UN conferences. In April 1988, he was appointed director and senior political advisor to the representative of the secretary-general on the settlement of the situation relating to Afghanistan.

In January 1990, he was also asked to serve as the secretary-general’s representative on the implementation of the Geneva Agreements on Afghanistan. In January 1991, secretary-general of the day Javier Perez de Cuellar decided that Sevan should also assume the responsibility for the overall administration of the Office for the Coordination of UN Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes Relating to Afghanistan.

On July 20, 1992, secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali announced the appointment of Sevan to the post of assistant secretary-general in the department of political affairs at UN Headquarters in New York, before later heading the UN’s Oil-for-Food programme in Iraq between 1995 and 2003.

Through that programme, Iraq was allowed to sell oil on the global market in exchange for food, medicine, an other humanitarian needs borne by the people of Iraq, without allowing the Iraqi government of the day, led by Saddam Hussein, to boost its military capabilities.

In an interview with the *Cyprus Mail*’s Agnieszka Rakoczy in 2023, Sevan spoke, not only about his varied international career but also an early life of poverty in Nicosia.

Sevan’s grandparents had come to Cyprus from Adana in Turkey in 1922. His mother was only six months old when they arrived. His grandmother had three sets of twins – two boys and four girls. However, one of the daughters was lost during the massacres there so they came to the island only with the remaining five.

As a small boy, he spent his childhood locked within the Venetian walls of old Nicosia in a mixed Armenian-Turkish neighborhood named Arab Ahmet.



Sevan said that the Armenians of Arab Ahmet lived very closely with their Turkish Cypriot neighbors.

“There was no discrimination, no animosity in our lives. We all lived together. I always want to pay tribute to my grandparents for this. After what had happened to them in Turkey, they had every justification to hate Turks but they didn’t. We grew up like brothers and sisters.”

The two first languages Sevan learnt in his life then were Armenian and Turkish. He started learning Greek only when he went to school and later incorporated the language along with the six other languages he spoke having been educated later at the Melkonian Institute.

Passionate about photography since childhood, Sevan started taking pictures for newspapers at the weekends to earn additional income. He also landed a job as research assistant to India’s former ambassador to the UN, Arthur Lall.

His next job provided him with another learning opportunity. In 1965, on the cusp of graduating, the 28-year-old Sevan joined the photo section of the Radio and Visual Services Division at United Nations headquarters which opened a lot of doors for him.

Sevan loved the place so much that he learned the local language, married a young Balinese woman who, when his job

finished in 1972, took back to New York.

He recalled how he wrote to his aunts in Nicosia who had been pressing him to get married, and told them that he had finally done so but the marriage was not to last long as she could not adjust to New York. They always remained in touch, however.

On returning to New York, he began steadily climbing the UN career ladder, including carrying out special political assignments on behalf of the Secretary-General. In 1980, he married his second wife, Micheline, also a UN employee. They had one daughter, Jasmine. Micheline passed away several years ago.

The Oil-for-Food programme, he said, was executed during a crucial period when everybody thought that once the Soviets withdrew there would finally be peace.

However, he said seeing how the regional conflict still was well into the 21st century, all efforts to change its destiny had failed.

As the head of the Oil-for-Food Programme, he found himself at the centre of an emerging scandal in the mid-2000s and the only time in his lengthy career that his work was scrutinized as part of a wider investigation focusing on kickbacks to Saddam Hussein’s regime that involved several coalition countries involved in the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Sevan was always candid when discussing the investigation that ultimately ended his UN career. He believed it was a US tactic to target the UN – which had opposed the invasion – in order to divert attention from the disaster of its own making in Iraq.

He had also survived the infamous suicide bombing attack on the Canal Hotel in Iraq in 2003 in which 22 UN staff members were killed, simply because he changed the place of his meeting a minute before the bomb exploded. Sevan said he felt guilty for having survived when his friends and colleagues were killed.

After leaving the UN, Benon Sevan led a quiet life of retirement in Cyprus but always maintained an active interest in the UN and in the Cyprus issue.

Charles Nishan Hovsepian

Lifelong New Britain Resident

NEW BRITAIN, Conn. — Charles Nishan Hovsepian, 81, passed away peacefully on August 18, 2026, with his sister by his side.

Born in New Britain, Charles was the son of the late Charles and Sarah (Simoni) Hovsepian.

A lifelong resident of New Britain, he was a graduate of Syracuse University. Charles enjoyed a successful career as a business executive and retired from Pratt & Whitney.

He is survived by his sister, Ruth Swisher and her husband, Wilford, of Newton; his nieces, Sarah Grigerick and her husband, Darell, and Lauren Swisher and her husband, Craig Pollard; and his great-nephews, Emery and Finn. Charles was predeceased by his brother, Nishan Mark Hovsepian.



A graveside service was held on Friday, August 21, at Fairview Cemetery, New Britain.

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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.

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Arts & Culture

From Yerevan To Kalamazoo

The Naghash Ensemble to bring Armenian Music to People Who Might Have Never Heard Any Before

YEREVAN — When the Naghash Ensemble kicks off their North American tour in Salisbury, MD, on November 4, most people in the audience will have never heard the sound of a zourna before. Let alone will they have been in the same room with a duduk, oud and dhol resonating along with three of Armenia’s most beautiful voices, and Armenian-American composer John Hodian on the piano. Most likely, the Naghash Ensemble’s concert will be their very first touchpoint with Armenian culture.

Performing for non-Armenian audiences and sharing new original Armenian music that is inspired by haunting, half-a-millennia-old poetry, has been at the heart of the Naghash Ensemble’s international touring for the past 12 years, which has led them to venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Paris Philharmonie and Elbphilharmonie.

“We didn’t set out to be cultural ambassadors of Armenia,” explained the Philadelphia-born Armenian-American composer John Hodian. “When I wrote this music, I just followed my intuition. It’s natural outcome of someone who grew up in a tight-knit Armenian family, but studied Western classical music and was surrounded by contemporary music in all its forms.”

Described as “Armenia’s most intriguing new music” by German radio WDR, and “a moment of meditation and grace” by Rolling Stone magazine, his works sit squarely at the crossroads of Armenian folk and spiritual music with new classical music, post-minimalism, and the energy of jazz and rock.

Over the years, this unique take on Armenian music has inspired international presenters to create Armenian-themed cultural festivals — most recently in Finland and France — and audience members to book their first trip to Armenia, a country they barely knew it existed, before they attended the concert. “It’s a pretty delightful side effect of us playing a concert on the other side of the world,” Hodian said.

The North American tour dates are:

- November 4, 2026 • Salisbury University • Salisbury, MD
- November 5, 2026 • Universal Preservation Hall • Saratoga Springs, NY
- November 6, 2026 • The Colonial Theatre • Keene, NH
- November 8, 2026 • Stable Hall • San Antonio, TX,
- November 10, 2026 • Goodson Chapel, Shenandoah University • Winchester, VA
- November 13, 2026 • Camp Concert Hall, Modlin Center • Richmond, VA
- November 15, 2026 • Stetson Chapel, Kalamazoo College • Kalamazoo, MI

see NAGHASH, page 17



From left: Arpa Film Festival Director Maral Kazazian, Film Director Tamar Stepanyan, and Arpa Film Festival founder Sylvia Minassian (photo by Karine Armen)

Women Take Center Stage At Arpa Film Festival

By Karine Armen
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

HOLLYWOOD — The 29th Arpa International Film Festival opened on Thursday, September 24, at the TCL Chinese Theater, with “The Other Side of Fame,” starring Sveva Alviti, the Italian star/model, and Newton Mayenge. Written, directed, and produced by Erik Bernard, the film also stars German-Armenian actor Saro Emirze and Armenian filmmaker and actress Diana Madison.

The four-day festival ended on Sunday, September 27, with an awards ceremony.

This year’s festival included 51 films from 23 countries, including shorts, documentaries, features, music videos, and animation. The films were from Armenia, Argentina, Brazil, Japan, the US, Ukraine, Mexico, Korea, Spain, Canada, 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, an existing language, adds texture to the shared medium.

Another highlight of the festival was the documentary “Elvis, Rocky & Me: The Carol Connors Story.” The legendary songwriter and singer received her lifetime achievement award at the festival.

The sponsor of the film festival is the Foundation for Film, Music, and Art (AFFMA), a nonprofit founded in 1995 by Sylvia Minassian.

The festival has focused on giving a platform to filmmakers from different parts of the world who tell stories about justice, war, diaspora, cultural identity, and more.

This year, the focus was on women in the industry. Five women received special honors: Carol Connors received the Lifetime Achievement Award; actress Sveva Alviti from Italy received the Career Achievement Award; Diana Madison received a Breakthrough Artist Award, and Sofia Milos got the International Screen Achievement Award. Paris- and Armenia-based director Tamara Stepanyan received the Outstanding Achievement in Filmmaking Award and earned the most awards.

Stepanyan’s “The Land of Arto” won Best Film and Best Screenplay. “The Land of Arto,” with an international cast, is Armenia’s official submission to the 99th Academy Awards. Susanna Harutyunyan, cofounder of Armenia’s Golden Apricots International Film Festival, led the film’s Q&A. In addition to her latest film, Stepanyan screened her second feature, “My Armenian Phantoms.”

see ARPA, page 16



Actor Jack Topalian with Sylvia Minassian (photo by Karine Armen)

Afternoon of Music At St. Sarkis Church Celebrates French And Armenian Classical Music

SAN DIEGO — On Sunday, September 27, St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church welcomed more than 100 guests following the Divine Liturgy for a concert by the Grigorian Gubenko Piano Duo. The program, titled “From Yerevan to Paris,” celebrated the musical traditions of both Armenia and France.

The afternoon was emceed by Sarah Baghdasaryan, who invited the Very Rev. Pakrad Berjekian, pastor of St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church, to offer the opening invocation.

Pianist and composer Anna Grigorian, together with her piano duet partner Natasha Gubenko and guest violinist Matthias Von Herrath, led the audience through a beautifully curated program. Works by Debussy, Khachaturian, Fauré, Ravel, and selections by Babajanyan and Arutyunyan carried the listeners across cultures and centuries.



From left, Natasha Gubenko, Matthias Von Herrath and Anna Grigorian

A special highlight of the afternoon was Grigorian’s original composition, Ascension 133, performed with Von Herrath. The work offered a deeply moving moment, blending melodic memories of Armenia’s landscapes with a Western musical language, and touched the hearts of all present.

In his closing remarks, Fr. Pakrad expressed heartfelt gratitude to the performers, noting the profound impact of Grigorian’s composition and the beauty of the program as a whole.

As a gesture of appreciation, bouquets of flowers were presented to the musicians, followed by a group photo that brought the afternoon to a joyful close.



Very Rev. Pakrad Berjekian, with Natasha Gubenko, Matthias Von Herrath and Anna Grigorian

Books

Armenian Performing Arts: History and Present

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

An English-language volume titled *Armenian Performing Arts: History and Present* has recently been published in Warsaw. It was compiled and edited by Anush Aslibekyan (Armenia), a theatre scholar who is senior researcher at the Institute of Arts of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, and Andriej Moskwin (Poland), a theatre scholar and professor at the University of Warsaw. The book is the result of years of painstaking collaboration between the Laboratory for the Study of Theatre and Drama of Central and Eastern Europe at the University of Warsaw and the Institute of Arts of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia.

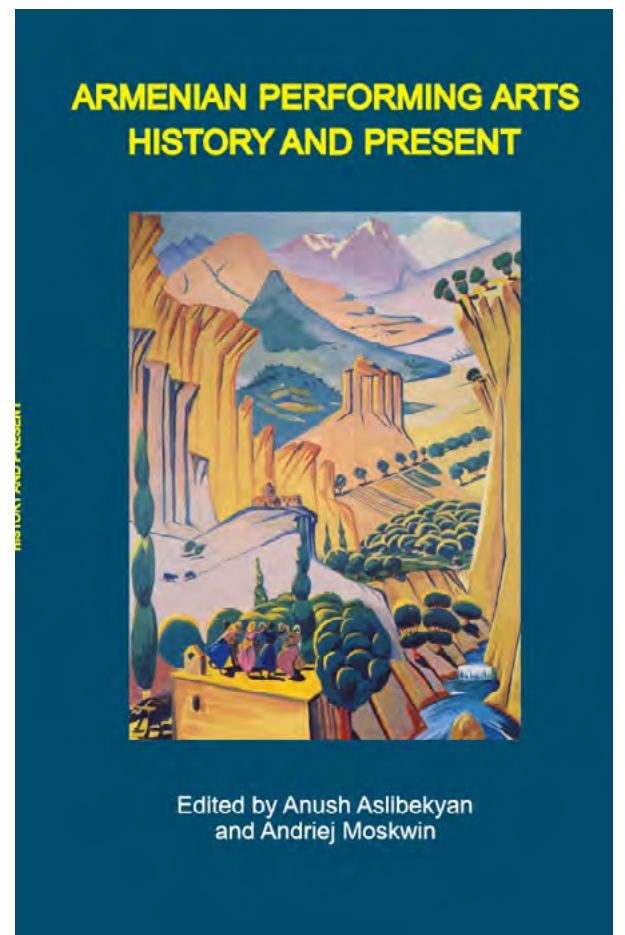
The publication is an important initiative aimed at presenting research on the history of Armenian theatre and its contemporary developments to an international readership. The two editors' prefaces and 14 articles address the history of Armenian theatre, prominent figures, contemporary dramaturgy, the art of stage direction and the development of independent theatres.

The contributors are: Anush Aslibekyan's "Armenian Performing Arts: From Past to Present"; Andriej Moskwin's "My Friendship with Armenia and Armenian Theatre"; Artsvi Bakhchinyan's "Sarah Bernhardt and the Armenians"; Anna Asatryan's "Stage Director Yervand Ghazanchyan and Dikran Tchouhadjians' Comic Operas"; Armen Sahakyan's "The Social Problems of Contemporary Theatre in the Transition from the Ethical to the Liberal Paradigm"; Anush Aslibekyan's " 'Goy' Theatre-Laboratory: The First Theatre with an Independent Theatre Model in Post-Soviet Armenia"; Gor

Vanyan's "The New and the Traditional in the Art of Armen Gulakyan (Dedicated to the 125th Anniversary of Armen Gulakyan)"; Elfik Zohrabyan's "Genre Directions of Modern Armenian Drama (2010–2022)"; Armen Avanesyan's "The Literary Hero (Character) of Modern Armenian Drama"; Mane Mkrtchyan's "Trends in the Development of Armenian Theatre (by the Example of the Gabriel Sundukyan National Academic Theatre)"; Andriej Moskwin's "National Drama Theatre of Armenia: In Search of Its Own Path"; Grigor Ordoyan's "The Evolution of Modern Theatrical Representation"; Naze-nik Sargsyan's "Ashot Asatryan's Symphonic Dances"; Anahit Bekaryan's "The Georgetown Boys Phenomenon in Toronto"; Naira Shahvaladyan and Gor Vanyan's "Play with the Audience"; and Narine Sargsyan's "The Role of Education in the Formation and Development of Independent Theatres in Armenia."

The volume also includes two assessments of the book, written by Ararat Aghasyan, an art historian, Doctor of Art Studies, Professor, and Corresponding Member of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, and Angelina Rosca-Ichim, a Moldovan theatre scholar and playwright, Doctor of Art Studies, and Professor at the Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts in Chişinău. The cover features Martiros Saryan's painting Armenia, with the cover design by artist Artur Manukyan.

For various objective and subjective reasons, the past and present of Armenian theatre have received comparatively little attention in foreign professional circles and non-Armenian-language environments. In this respect, the significance of the English-language volume *Armenian Performing Arts: History and Present* is indeed considerable. It is also worth noting that, in Moskwin, contempo-



rary Armenian theatre and theatre studies have gained an enthusiastic friend and a deeply knowledgeable specialist. In collaboration with Aslibekyan, he had previously brought the collection *Contemporary Armenian Drama* (2019) in Polish. In the second volume of the academic journal *Studia Teatralne Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* (Theatre Studies in Eastern and Central Europe) of 2022, edited by him, he also devoted a substantial section, entitled "Focus Armenia," to English- and Russian-language articles by Armenian authors on theatre, cinema, and dance.

Kim Theriault Deciphers Arshile Gorky for Tekeyan Cultural Association Boston

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN

— Dr. Kim Ser-

vart Theriault

gave an illustrated talk on "Arshile Gorky: Between the Figural and Abstract" on Friday, September 18, at the Baikar Building organized by the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Boston Chapter.

Theriault, the curator of the recently closed exhibition titled Arshile Gorky: Redrawing Community and Connections at the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown, has spoken and written about Gorky's Armenian identity and his forging of an artistic identity in the past.

She declared, "When you've been working on an artist for over 30 years — half a lifetime, [or] a lifetime for many of you — you really want to look for and thinking about what is new to discover. What can I learn?"

She decided to focus in her talk on the formal qualities of his art, the importance of his personal friendships with other artists and his continued use of representational art. Some people qualify Gorky as an abstract expressionist. However, she noted that Gorky's work was always founded in direct observation.

She said, "Whether drawing an image of a fellow artist, a family member, or a friend or abstracting the structures, forms or outlines of a landscape, Gorky maintained an attachment to the figural and representational because he sought out, retained, or forged an emotional connection to the individuals, spaces, and places that he presented in his compositions, even if his creations were abstracted renditions."

In her talk, Theriault pointed out in seemingly abstract works the representational basis of various images, while explaining the process Gorky used to grow as an artist, mimicking and adapting various techniques of earlier great artists. He



Dr. Kim Theriault presenting a slide (photo Jeanine Shememian)

and a group of his artist friends, including Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) or Stuart Davis (1892-1964), developed new styles but kept representational elements amongst the abstract in their paintings or drawings.

She noted, "Gorky is the bridge between Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism."

His work process, she explained, started by making lots of studies or drawings based on observation or memory which progressively became more abstract. The type of free associations that he did were similar to the approach of the Surrealists.

She showed slides of examples such as "The Liver Is the Cock's Comb," in which Gorky was working out the composition through a series of studies.

Even while he was creating abstract works in the 1930s and 1940s, Gorky con-

tinued to draw and paint representational works, Theriault said. He continued to make simplified drawings of people, often of friends for whom these became treasured gifts. Gorky always had a pen or pencil in hand and sketched even when he was in a diner or at a party.

Gorky, born Vosdanig Adoian (c. 1904-48), was often referred to as "an artist's artist" and many of the friends he depicted were themselves artists who preserved his works for decades. They sometimes made portraits of Gorky and at times went together to paint or draw the same scenes. Theriault gave examples from the work of Saul Schary (1904-1978).

Dr. Theriault was introduced at the start of the evening by Executive Director Aram Arkun of the TCA of the United States and Canada. She holds a PhD in

art history from the University of Virginia and is Professor Emerita of Modernist and Contemporary Art History, Theory, and Criticism at Dominican University in River Forest, Ill. Having previously taught graduate students at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, Theriault currently is an Adjunct Professor of Art History at the Department of Art of the University of Southern Maine.

Author of *Rethinking Arshile Gorky*, Theriault contributed the essay "Exile, Trauma, and Arshile Gorky's 'The Artist and His Mother'" to the 2009 exhibition, Arshile Gorky: A Retrospective, organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and which traveled to the Tate Modern and Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.

A lively question-and-answer session followed Theriault's formal presentation.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian



Carrie Nahabedian's Lemon And Mint Roast Leg of Lamb

CHICAGO — Chef Carrie Nahabedian says this recipe marries her extended family's Armenian-Greek heritage with her French culinary training. Ask your butcher to remove the aitch and thigh bones from the leg of lamb, she advises.

Chef Carrie says her mother and grandmother were her inspirations while growing up. "I come from a background of a really good home upbringing. My mother cooked every single day, and my late grandmother was an incredible cook," she says. She is 100 percent Armenian and grew up eating mainly Armenian and Middle Eastern cuisines, but French food became an interest for her during her high school years in Park Ridge.

A native of Chicago's northern suburbs, chef Carrie began her career as a teenager, working in the kitchens of the Ritz Carlton. Her celebrated path has taken her from Le Perroquet, Jovan and Le Francais to LaTour at the Park Hyatt, and ultimately, a hard-earned title as Executive Chef, Four Seasons Hotels in Chicago, Santa Barbara and Los Angeles.

With her invaluable education in hospitality, chef Carrie and her restaurateur cousin, Michael Nahabedian, opened NAHA in November of 2000. Her Mediterranean-inspired American cuisine earned a Michelin Star for seven consecutive years, a James Beard Award for "Best Chef, Great Lakes", and four stars by Phil Vettel — the highest rating given by the legendary *Chicago Tribune* critic.

In April of 2013, Carrie and Michael opened Brindille — offering refined Parisian cuisine, a celebration of their love of French culinary traditions, techniques and flavors. Hailed as the "Best Restaurant to Open in 2013" by the *Chicago Tribune*, Brindille was later awarded the James Beard Foundation Award for "Outstanding Restaurant Design, 2015" for the work of Tom Nahabedian and the Bureau of Architecture and Design.

On September 22, 2009, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley named it "Carrie Nahabedian Day", coinciding with her induction into the Chicago Chefs Hall of Fame, and in 2016, chef Carrie was awarded the Jean Banchet Lifetime Achievement Award. On March 31, 2018, NAHA closed after eighteen years, just as Brindille celebrated its fifth anniversary on Clark Street.

With the closing of her beloved NAHA came the opening of a new restaurant, Kostali — which opened in 2020 in the fifth-floor lobby of The Gwen Hotel. This new offering from the illustrious team highlights the great coasts of the Mediterranean in the menu and through Michael's perfectly selected wine list. Yet another page in an incredible culinary history, further securing chef Carrie's place as not only a pioneer of the past, but an active participant in the future of hospitality.

Michelin-starred and James Beard Award-winning chef Carrie has visited 80 countries, principalities and islands. She says journeys have helped her elevate her cooking. Oftentimes she finds ways to give back to people in other countries through philanthropy and mentoring.



Michael Nahabedian, Carrie Nahabedian, and Tom Nahabedian, arrive for the James Beard Awards, at the Civic Opera House, at 20 N. Wacker Drive in Chicago, May 4, 2015

INGREDIENTS:

- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4-pound double-smoked slab bacon, sliced 1/4-inch thick and cut crosswise into matchsticks
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 10 garlic cloves, 4 whole, 4 thinly sliced and 2 minced
- 1 pound flageolet beans, picked over and rinsed*
- 1 bunch flat-leaf parsley, stems, tied with kitchen string
- 1 bay leaf
- 4 thyme sprigs
- 4 cups chicken stock or canned low-sodium broth
- 4 cups water, plus more for roasting pan
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- One 6 1/2-pound leg of lamb, haunch bone and thigh bone removed, tied with kitchen string at 1 1/2-inch intervals
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 1/2 cups loosely packed mint leaves, torn into pieces
- 1/2-pound pitted kalamata olives, and coarsely chopped oven-dried tomatoes

PREPARATION:

Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large, enameled cast-iron casserole. Add the bacon and cook over moderately high heat until golden and crisp, about 5 minutes. Add the onion and the 4 whole garlic cloves and cook until softened and just golden, about 5 minutes longer. Add the flageolet beans, parsley stems, bay leaf and thyme sprigs and toss to coat. Add the chicken stock, 3 cups of the water and 3 tablespoons of the olive oil.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Top the beans with crumpled, moistened parchment paper, then cover and bake for about 2 1/2 hours, stirring gently 2 or 3 times; the beans should be tender, but not mushy. Season the beans with salt and pepper. Drain the beans; reserve their cooking liquid and discard the parsley bundle, thyme, garlic cloves and bay leaf.

Using a sharp paring knife, make 1-inch incisions about 1 inch apart all over the lamb. Insert the garlic slices into the slits. Increase the oven temperature to 375°F.

Set the lamb in a large roasting pan and drizzle with the lemon juice. Rub the lamb with the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil, the minced garlic and half of the mint. Season the lamb with salt and pepper. Roast for about 1 hour and 45 minutes, or until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the meat registers 130°F for medium rare: Add water to the roasting pan occasionally if necessary to prevent the pan juices from burning. Transfer the lamb to a cutting board and cover loosely with aluminum foil. Leave the oven on.

Set the roasting pan over 2 burners, add the remaining 1 cup of water and bring to a boil over high heat, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Stir in the olives and the remaining half of the mint and pour the pan sauce into a bowl.

Rewarm the beans over moderate heat; add some of the reserved bean cooking liquid if they seem dry. Season with salt and pepper. Heat the oven-dried tomatoes in the oven until warmed through. Spoon the beans onto a large platter and arrange the dried tomatoes around them. Thickly slice the lamb and arrange it over the beans. Pour the pan sauce over the lamb slices and serve.

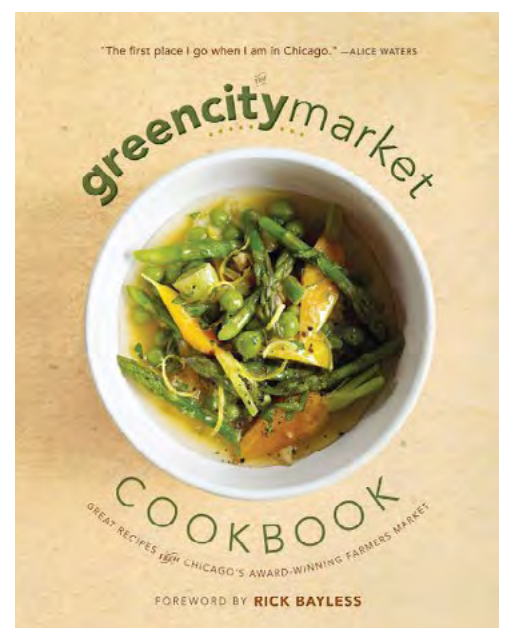
Make Ahead: The meat and beans can be prepared through Step 3; refrigerate separately overnight. Bring to room temperature before proceeding.

* Frequently called the caviar of beans, flageolet (pronounced "flaj-e-let") is a type of kidney bean harvested before it becomes fully mature. They are dubbed with the title caviar because they are tiny and delicate, yet richer and creamier than other popular types of beans.

This recipe was featured in *The Green City Market Cookbook*.

From *The Green City Market Cookbook*: https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781572847361_A24125300/preview-9781572847361_A24125300.pdf

Founded in 1998 by the late culinary luminary, author, chef, and entrepreneur Abby Mandel, the Green City Market is the venerable year-round farmers market held in Chicago's Lincoln Park. Since its inception, the Green City Market has grown into one of the most popular destinations for finding organic and sustainable produce and products throughout the Midwest's extensive farm-to-table culinary movement. Chicago's leading chefs, including Rick Bayless, Stephanie Izard, Sarah Stegner, Paul Virant, Carrie Nahabedian, and more, as well as other market regulars, have contributed recipes simple enough for the inexperienced cook but sufficiently enticing to satisfy the most discriminating gourmet. Organized by season, *The Green City Market Cookbook* provides eager readers with recipes that make use of fresh fruits and vegetables that come straight from the small regional farms that are the lifeblood of the farm-to-fork movement. Illustrated with full-color photography, the thoroughly tested recipes in this book represent a diversity of wonderful meals that can be created from the fresh, sustainable output of Midwestern family farms. To order, go to: <https://www.amazon.com/Green-City-Market-Cookbook-Award-Winning/dp/1572842369>



ARTS & CULTURE



The cast of the movie “The Other Side of Fame” at the film festival opening night. (photo by Karine Armen)

Women Take Center Stage at Arpa Film Festival

ARPA, from page 13

The festival screened five blocks of short films, several made in Armenia or by Armenians in the diaspora. These

included films by Nazik Avdalyan, Australian Armenian Filmmaker Tigran Thovmasian, Adeh Baghdasarian, Zholi Minasyan, and many more.

Maral Kazazian, director of the festival, brought out the importance of women in film, and said, “This year, we have screened several films that empower women in the film industry and other areas, giving voice through storytelling.”

This year’s jury included Nicholas Pike, Basil Wallace, Bonnie Volland, Gabrielle Fabro, Amanda de Godoi, Tome Enahi, Leslie Miller and Yaro Salov.

Cammie Jones, director of Arpa’s programming, moderated most of the Q&As. She said, “I am honored to volunteer at this film festival. The films are thought-provoking and leave the audience to reflect on many social issues.

The festival is looking ahead and beginning work on the 2027 festival, which will celebrate its 30th anniversary.



TV host Kristina Nikols interviewing the crew of the short film Heevand; from left: actor Arthur Donahue, writers, producers, and directors Adeh Baghdasarian and Zholi Minasyan (photo by Karine Armen)



Actress and filmmaker Diana Madison holding her award (photo by Karine Armen)



From left: Arman Khaghani, Writer/Director of “Breathe, Brother, Breathe,” Lead Actor Varak Krikorian, and Producer Quinnolyn Benson-Yates (photo: Karine Armen)





Tekeyan Cultural Association
Boston Chapter
invites you to an

Armenian Pickling Demo

VARIOUS VEGETABLES
MADE INTO FERMENTED
TUTTOO (‘TURSHI’)

With Master Chef Betty Arouyan

Enjoy wine, cheese, dessert & take home a bottle of your own pickled veggies

7 pm Oct. 28

Wednesday, with series
coordinator Rita Balyozian

BAIKAR BUILDING 755 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown
Use Norseman Ave. Entrance

RSVP to Sossy 617 281-1647 syogurtian@comcast.net
\$25/person including reception and bottle of tuttoo
Cash or Venmo <https://venmo.com/u/Tekeyan-Boston>

<https://www.facebook.com/TekeyanBoston>



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

OCTOBER 16-17 — St. James Armenian Church 79th Annual Bazaar – Friday 12-8 pm, Saturday 11 am-7 pm. Delicious Armenian Food, Mezze, Pastries, and Baked Goods. Silent Auction, Raffle, Children's Activities, Booths and Local Vendors. St. James Armenian Church – 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more information please visit www.stjameswatertown.org/bazaar.

OCTOBER 17 — Radius Ensemble will open its 28th season with a performance of Armenian-American composer Mary Kouyoumdjian's *Studies on Rage for Each Day of the Week*. Kouyoumdjian is an acclaimed Armenian-American composer and was a 2024 Pulitzer Prize Finalist and 2025 Grammy nominee. 8 p.m., at the brand new Thomas Tull Concert Hall at MIT, 201 Amherst St., Cambridge. There's a garage beneath the building (\$11) and it is a wheelchair accessible venue. Tickets are \$42 for general admission, \$37 for seniors, and \$15 for students. They can be purchased here: <https://radiusensemble.org/products/textures>

OCTOBER 21 — Film Screening & Mill Talk by filmmaker Roger Hagopian: *Destination Watertown- the Armenians of Hood Rubber*, Wednesday, 6:30 to 8 p.m. Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation, 154 Moody St., Waltham. Free to the Public but registration required.

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 24 — Fall Fest Armenian Bazaar at First Armenian Church, 380 Concord Ave., Belmont, 12-7 p.m. Dinner options include beef, chicken, lamb or losh Kebabs, vegetarian plates, pastries, string cheese, Choreg. Home of the double skewer. For information, call 617-484-4779 or email office@facbelmont.org.

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 Hovhanness, Emanuel Melik-Aslanian, Loris Tjeknavorian, Komitas, George Gurdjieff, Diane Goolkasian Rahbee, Aram Khachaturian, and Koharik Gazarossian. Armenian Cultural Foundation, Arlington, Sunday at 5 p.m. Free and Open to the Public - Reception to follow.

OCTOBER 28 — The Boston chapter of the Tekeyan Cultural Association is sponsoring an Armenian pickling demo with master chef Betty Arouyan. Various vegetables will be made into fermented tuttoo. Enjoy wine, cheese and dessert and take home a bottle of your own pickled veggies. 7 p.m. Baikar Building, 755 Mount Auburn St. RSVP to Sossy at 617-281-1647 or syogurtian@comcast.net. Tickets \$25 per person, including reception and bottle of tuttoo. Series coordinated by Rita Balyozian.

NOVEMBER 12 — An enchanting evening to benefit children in Armenia with cancer, hosted by City of Smile USA. Special performance by illusionist Joel Acevedo from Boston's Hit Show "Four-Handed Illusions." Thursday, 7 p.m., at Oakley Country Club, Watertown. Cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, live performance. Tickets \$150 per person. For tickets: call Cynthia (339-222-9900) or online see QR code in Mystical Illusions Flyer.

NOVEMBER 14 — Annual Fall Bazaar 12-5 PM Lamb, chicken & Losh Kebab Dinners, Cuisine Table, Pastries, Hayastan Table & Farmer's Market. Holy Archangels Armenian Church 1280 Boston Rd. Haverhill.

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

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

NOVEMBER 21 and 22: Save the Date. America's oldest Armenian Church Celebrates 135 years. Banquet November 21. Divine Liturgy November 22. Details to follow.

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

RHODE ISLAND

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

To send Calendar items email alin@mirrorspectator.com or alin.gregorian@gmail.com. You can also visit our website, www.mirrorspectator.com, and find the "calendar" section under the heading "More" or mail them to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472. All calendar entries must be received by noon on Monday before publication.

Naghash Ensemble to bring Armenian Music to People Who Might Have Never Heard Any Before

NAGHASH, from page 13

November 17, 2026 • Town Hall Seattle • Seattle, WA

November 18, 2026 • The Wallis Annenberg Center • Beverly Hills, CA

November 20, 2026 • Koerner Hall • Toronto, Canada

November 22, 2026 • The Conrad • La Jolla, CA

A Homeland-Diaspora Synergy:

The Story of The Naghash Ensemble

In 2005, Hodian had just started exploring many of the ancient monasteries and sacred spaces in the country of his ancestors. He was alone at Garni temple, when he was suddenly struck by what he describes as "the most beautiful sound I've ever heard." It turned out to be the voice of Hasmik Baghdasaryan, Armenia's leading performer of medieval spiritual music, who was rehearsing at the temple.

"The sound of that voice in that temple was mesmerizing, and it remained in my mind for days after," said Hodian. "I was determined to write something that would use this sound in a new way."

Though he knew what the music would sound like, Hodian spent several years looking for just the right text to set to music until he finally came across a short fragment of a poem by a little-known Ar-

menian medieval priest named Mkrtich Naghash. This haunting text described the terrifying plight of people forced to live in exile. "The words leapt off the page and into my soul. I knew I had found my text." The original manuscripts were lost, but Hodian was able to track down versions by later copyists. With the help of several Armenian scholars and the Mekhitarists of San Lazzaro degli Armeni, he was able to unearth all the remaining 16 poems.

In letting the texts dictate the direction that the music was taking, Hodian subconsciously drew on a wide range of influences: Armenian folk and spiritual music, European classical composition, particularly medieval polyphonic vocal music, and contemporary minimalist composers. To perform his "Songs of Exile", he gathered some of Armenia's most virtuosic instrumentalists on oud, duduk and dhol, along with three stunning female vocalists, including his original inspiration, Hasmik Baghdasaryan. The group launched their first European tour in 2014 and has been touring internationally ever since. Their upcoming tour of North America marks their third appearance on the continent.

The Naghash Ensemble consists of Hasmik Baghdasaryan (soprano), Tatevik Movsesyan (soprano), Shahane Zalyan



(alto), Andranik Gasparyan (duduk), Aramayis Nikoghosyan (oud), Tigran Hovhannisyan (dhol), John Hodian (piano/composer).

For more information visit www.naghashensemble.com or follow them on Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/naghashensemble/>



COMMENTARY

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



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Moscow’s New Strategy toward Yerevan

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Alongside the pressure coming from Azerbaijan, Russia has become considerably more active in its policy towards Armenia. Most likely, recognizing that its strategic presence in the South Caucasus is under threat, Moscow changed its foreign political strategy toward Yerevan after the Armenian elections.

Russia appears to be withholding from Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan the support he had enjoyed since the 2020 war, whether through various statements by the Russian president himself or through Moscow’s political backing in helping him remain in power (as voiced by the Armenian opposition back in those days). The main objective was probably realizing the November 9, 2020, agreement, which Moscow hoped to implement as long as Pashinyan remained in power.

Today Russia has changed its strategy, and the impression is that the trust Moscow once placed in Pashinyan has taken on a different character. Moscow seeks new strategies to maintain its influence in the South Caucasus. One of its new initiatives and political moves is a project for railway and road links along the Black Sea coast connecting Russia, Georgia and Armenia, which reportedly has been presented by Moscow. Provisionally dubbed “Putin’s Route,” the proposal has become a subject of extensive public discussion in expert circles in recent days.

Although it has not been officially announced, the public discussion is most likely a way to test the reactions of Armenia and Georgia. What is particularly interesting is that Russia is not taking this step by accident. Moscow is well aware of Pashinyan’s Crossroads of Peace initiative, and through this new proposal, it appears to be seeking a clear response from the Armenian authorities.

If Yerevan rejects Moscow’s proposal on this route, this could suggest that, from Yerevan’s perspective, the Crossroads of Peace applies only to the normalization of relations with Armenia’s direct neighbors and it would help the West to gain influence in Armenia to balance Russia. If Yerevan does not reject it, Moscow would gain an opportunity to intensify its political engagement in the South Caucasus, using this economic initiative as a basis, just like in the case of the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP).

This is a carefully calculated move that could provide answers to several important questions. It cannot be ruled out that Pashinyan and Russian President Vladimir Putin will discuss the matter at their next meeting. For Russia, whose position in the South Caucasus has weakened, every available opportunity must be used to restore its influence in what Moscow considers its traditional sphere of influence, while simultaneously counterbalancing Turkish and American influence.

As for Armenia, its authorities will face a difficult choice. The logic of relations with the West, particularly the European Union, tends toward pushing Moscow out of the South Caucasus. Moreover, at least at the level of rhetoric and official statements, Yerevan is contributing to the deepening of these tensions.

Of course, “Putin’s Route” is still only a preliminary initiative, and it is too early to draw any firm conclusions about it. Nevertheless, Moscow will most likely seek to pursue this idea more actively, at least as a means of increasing pressure on Armenia. If Yerevan rejects the proposal, Moscow may draw serious conclusions and resort to concrete actions.

One thing is clear: Russia may be losing influence in various countries and regions, but that does not mean Moscow will not fight until the last possible moment to preserve or strengthen its influence. It would be naïve to assume that Russia or any other power will easily surrender its positions in any region that it has considered part of its sphere of influence for centuries, dating back to the time of the Russian Empire.

Moscow understands that, regardless of everything else, it needs to maintain a strong position in at least one of the South Caucasus countries. Otherwise, it would mean being pushed out of the region altogether. And if we take into account the strained relations between Russia and Georgia and between Russia and Azerbaijan, Armenia remains Russia’s only foothold in the South Caucasus. Moscow will fight to preserve it.

(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.)



Biodiversity Is Local: That’s Why Mayors Are Going to Armenia

By Amb. Nina Hachigian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

This October, I will return to Armenia for the third time. The first time, I went as a mother. The second, as a diplomat. This time, I will return as a supporter of local elected leaders.

Although I was born and raised in the United States, Armenia has always been part of my story. My grandparents came from a community that is now in Türkiye, and my family’s history is intertwined with a country that has endured extraordinary challenges, foremost the Genocide, while holding fiercely to its identity, culture, and connection to its land. I am a proud Armenian American.

So it is deeply meaningful to me that I will be heading a delegation of roughly 50 American mayors, county leaders, and regional officials to Yerevan for COP17, the United Nations conference on biodiversity. It is a tremendous and well-deserved honor for Armenia to host this gathering. I hope the experience will not only strengthen Armenia’s security and economy, but also introduce my colleagues to the wonders of this amazing country I love — from fresh lahmajun to the ancient vanks tucked into mountains.

We are going to Armenia to confront a

challenge that can seem far removed from city halls: the loss of biodiversity, as species disappear and wilderness continues to shrink. But the more time I spend working with local leaders around the world, the more convinced I am that some of our biggest global challenges are ultimately local. Biodiversity is one of them.

Biodiversity is the forest outside a community. It is the river running through a city. It is the pollinators that sustain agriculture and the wetlands that protect neighborhoods from flooding. It is the parks and green spaces that make cities healthier, cooler, and more livable. These are not abstract environmental assets. They are the places where people live, work, and raise their families. And they are where solutions can begin.

Armenia knows something about the importance of place.

For a country of its size, Armenia contains remarkable ecological diversity, from forests and wetlands to mountain ecosystems and rare species found nowhere else. The Yerevan Blue butterfly, featured on the COP17 emblem, is endemic to Armenia. Its survival depends on a particular landscape in a particular place.

That makes it an apt symbol for the biodiversity challenge. We often talk about extinction and ecosystem loss in global

terms, but biodiversity is experienced one place at a time. A forest is protected — or lost — in a particular community. A river is restored—or polluted—in a particular watershed. A habitat is preserved — or destroyed — in a particular place.

That is why local leaders have such an important role to play, and why the US delegation heading to Armenia matters.

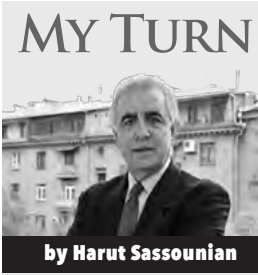
To date, the United States has not ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity. But American local officials do not need to wait for national governments to act before they begin protecting the places and communities they serve. They can learn from one another, share what works and adapt solutions to the needs of their own residents.

With support from ICLEI USA, the California Global Biodiversity Alliance, and ALLIES, our delegation will join local leaders from around the world in Yerevan. We will share what American communities are doing, learn what is working elsewhere and bring those lessons home.

The timing also matters. At COP17, countries will conduct the first global review of progress toward the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which established 23 targets for halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. Those global see BIODIVERSITY, page 20



COMMENTARY



by Harut Sassounian

Azerbaijan Sides with Pashinyan, Opposing Armenian Nationalists

The governments of Azerbaijan and Turkey and their media outlets closely follow and critically respond to developments and articles published in Armenia and the Diaspora. Many of my weekly articles have been translated and reprinted by Azeri and Turkish newspapers and websites over the years.

The most recent example is an article by Haroutioun Aga-Sarkisian of Atlanta, Georgia, published on September 29 on a news website in Armenia. He is the chairman of the All-Armenian Council for the Defense of the Armenian Church and the founder of the local chapter of the Armenian National Committee of America. The article, titled “Pashinyan’s New Dividing Line Among the Diaspora Youth,” criticized Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for meeting with a small group of Armenian-American university students in New York City on September 24. Pashinyan intended to present to the students his controversial concept of “Real Armenia.”

On September 30, the Azeri news website, 1news.az, responded by criticizing Aga-Sarkisian and defending Pashinyan’s policies, which are detrimental to Armenian national interests. The article, written by Farida Baghirova, was titled “Captive to a draining phantom: how revanchism undermines Armenia’s future.”

Baghirova wrote: “In recent years, Armenian political discourse has increasingly become hostage to a dangerous trend — radicalism and revanchism are becoming the cornerstone of public life. The drivers of this destructive dynamic are not only radical forces within the country, but also part of the Armenian Diaspora abroad.”

Baghirova then attacked the Armenian Apostolic Church: “Etchmiadzin and the diaspora circles connected with it remain one of the important channels for mobilizing revanchist rhetoric. This interwoven network of influence gave the radicals the opportunity to dictate the agenda to Yerevan for decades. For them, Armenia was not a place to live with its socio-economic problems, but a springboard for satisfying their political ambitions.”

Baghirova then defended Pashinyan’s concept of “Real Armenia,” adding, “Pashinyan [is] destroying the illusion that lobbyists abroad have the right to sacrifice the security of Armenia’s citizens for the sake of their own ideological dogmas.”

Returning to her attacks on the Armenian Church, Baghirova wrote: “Similar processes are taking place in the Armenian Church as well, which, instead of preaching peace, is turning into a headquarters of ideological resistance to any movement toward a final peace in the region. Revanchism is no longer a dispute about the past; it is a political model that requires the constant ‘presence of an enemy,’ a return to ‘losses’ and a refusal to accept the new reality. If they want to continue living by this logic in Armenia, well, that is their choice. Azerbaijan has stated its position with utmost clarity -- peace, stability, development. Armenian society will have to deal with its own political ghosts by itself.”

Several Azeri websites routinely attack the Armenian opposition in Armenia and the Diaspora. The articles are well researched and are written in several languages, including fluent English. It is clear that these websites are well-funded and that the analysts writing these articles are highly compensated by the Azeri government.

In their eagerness to attack Pashinyan’s opponents inside and outside Armenia, the Azeri media and government officials do not seem to realize that they are making it obvious that Azerbaijan welcomes and supports the Prime Minister’s policies. When your enemy sides with your own government, there is ample reason to be suspicious. In recent years, Pashinyan has done everything possible to align himself with the wishes of Azerbaijan and Turkey. He has made numerous concessions and continues to do so. He has handed Artsakh to Azerbaijan and ceded parts of the territories of the Republic of Armenia, while alienating the citizens of Armenia and members of the Diaspora. Naturally, Azerbaijan and Turkey are pleased with him. As the saying goes, “the enemy within is far more dangerous than the enemy outside.” The worst fear of Azerbaijan and Turkey is that Pashinyan will be replaced by a patriotic Armenian leader who will defend the interests of the nation.

The constant drumbeat by Azerbaijan that it is a peace-loving nation is contradicted by President Ilham Aliyev’s refusal to sign the negotiated “peace treaty,” even after claiming that he dictated to Pashinyan all 17 articles of the agreement.

Aliyev makes constant threats, warning that Azerbaijan will attack Armenia unless it accepts all Azeri demands. He describes Armenia’s leaders as “war criminals who must receive the punishment they deserve,” while refusing to release the Artsakh officials who have been imprisoned and tried in Baku. Recently, Aliyev even referred to constructing “a third Victory Arch... in the center of Yerevan today.”

Meanwhile, Pashinyan is constantly talking about how he has brought peace to Armenia. But peace cannot be one-sided. Peace does not exist when the enemy is swinging a yatagan over your head, threatening to chop it off.

How Azerbaijan Is Erasing Armenian Heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh

By Stephan Pechdimaldji

The Azerbaijani government’s embrace of pseudohistory is a direct threat to the peace process with Armenia.

In recent weeks, Azerbaijani officials hosted foreign diplomats, academics, and international guests on a carefully choreographed tour of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh). Along the way, visitors were shown ancient churches, monasteries, and cultural landmarks long recognized as Armenian, and were told that these sites were not Armenian at all, but rather “Caucasian Albanian.”

To many attendees, the exercise may have seemed little more than an academic presentation on regional history. It was anything but.

The campaign to redefine Armenian cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh is not a scholarly debate. It is a state-sponsored political project with profound implications for peace, reconciliation, and long-term stability in the South Caucasus. At a moment when much of the international community is celebrating diplomatic progress toward a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, this systematic revisionism deserves far more scrutiny than it is receiving.

In September 2023, the Azerbaijani government effectively expelled more than 120,000 Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, in what many observers described as ethnic cleansing. The exodus ended a centuries-long Armenian presence in the area virtually overnight and followed an intense blockade and military offensive. While the immediate humanitarian implications of that forced displacement were widely covered, far less attention has been paid to Azerbaijan’s accelerating effort to rewrite the identity of Nagorno-Karabakh’s monuments long associated with Armenian heritage.

These efforts to rewrite history do not stop at Na-

gorno-Karabakh’s borders. In public addresses and official state media, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has repeatedly referred to the sovereign Republic of Armenia itself as “Western Azerbaijan,” claiming that much of present-day Armenia was built on historically Azerbaijani land. This irredentist rhetoric signals that Baku is laying the ideological groundwork for territorial expansion. When a state claims that its neighbor’s history is a myth and its territory is rightfully theirs, it signals that it does not want peace with Armenia—it wants Armenia.

As the grandson of Armenian Genocide survivors, I understand the power of memory and the destructive consequences of its denial. History teaches us that peace is not built merely through temporary ceasefires, trea-

THE SOUTH CAUCASUS FACES A CHOICE BETWEEN A FUTURE BUILT ON RECOGNITION AND ONE BUILT ON ERASURE. ONLY ONE OF THOSE PATHS LEADS TO LASTING STABILITY.

ties, or staged diplomatic declarations. It is built through recognition of reality, including the history, culture, and humanity of neighboring peoples. When states seek to erase those realities, they destroy the very foundation on which lasting peace depends.

Supporters of normalization between Armenia and Azerbaijan often focus on border delimitation, transit corridors, security guarantees, and economic integration. Those issues are undeniably vital to regional stability. But a fundamental question remains unaddressed: How can two nations reconcile if one side is actively working to erase the other’s historical presence?

For centuries, sacred monasteries such as Gandzasar and Dadivank have been central to Armenian religious, artistic, and cultural life. Today, coordinated efforts are underway to strip these sites of their heritage and reassign them to a state-approved historical narrative.

Historical revisionism is rarely just about the past. It shapes current claims about who belongs, who has legitimate roots in a region, and who possesses the right

to return. When the historical identity of a people’s holy sites is recast or wiped away, it creates a dangerous framework through which their very connection to the land, and their status as human beings, can be questioned and dismissed.

For displaced Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh, this matters profoundly. If the physical history of a people is erased from a landscape, it becomes infinitely easier to argue that their connection to that place never existed in the first place.

True normalization requires more than the temporary absence of active combat. It requires mutual recognition. The most successful peace processes around the world have never depended on one side abandoning its identity or capitulating to historical fiction. Rather, they have required difficult acknowledgments of competing narratives, painful memories, and inconvenient truths. Reconciliation is not achieved by demanding historical surrender. It is achieved by creating space for coexistence.

The international community also has a crucial responsibility. Western governments and international institutions frequently express support for peace efforts in the region, but diplomatic engagement must not come at the expense of cultural truth.

A durable peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan remains possible, but peace requires honesty. It requires acknowledging that Armenians lived in Nagorno-Karabakh, built churches there, worshipped there, and developed deep cultural connections to the land over generations.

History cannot be negotiated away. As someone whose family history was shaped by the consequences of denial and erasure, I know that memory matters, not because the past should imprison us, but because understanding it is the only way to move forward together. The South Caucasus faces a choice between a future built on recognition and one built on erasure. Only one of those paths leads to lasting stability.

(Stephan Pechdimaldji is a communications strategist and writer living in the San Francisco Bay Area. He is a first-generation Armenian American and grandson of survivors of the Armenian genocide. This article first appeared online on September 25, 2026 at nationalinterest.org.)

AMAA Child Care Benefit Evening Brings Community Together in Support of Children

PARAMUS, N.J. — The AMAA NY/NJ Child Care Committee of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) welcomed guests to Sanzari’s New Bridge Inn in New Milford, New Jersey, on Tuesday, September 22, for its annual Child Care Benefit Evening.

The event, which was attended to capacity, brought together longtime supporters and new friends for an evening of fellowship, dinner, a silent auction, and a shared commitment to caring for children and providing them with opportunities for a brighter future.

AMAA NY/NJ Child Care Committee Chair Seta Nalbandian welcomed guests and encouraged them to visit the Child Sponsorship Table and Giving Tree, where each ornament represented a child, a story, and an opportunity to make a difference in that child’s life. Committee member Lorraine Marootian then offered the opening prayer.

AMAA CEO/Executive Director Serge D. Buchakjian spoke about the impact of AMAA’s Child Care Programs and the many forms that care can take – from a warm meal and a safe place after school to educational support, summer camp, and opportunities that can change the course of a young person’s life. Today, more than 3,000 children across the communities



AMAA Committee members and staff



Dr. John P. Bilezikian

AMAA serves throughout Armenia receive sustained financial and educational support through its Sponsorship and Child Care Programs.

Underscoring the individual lives behind that impact, Buchakjian told guests, “Behind every number is a child. Behind every child is a family. And behind every opportunity are people like you.” He emphasized that generosity toward Child Care not only addresses a child’s needs today, but creates opportunities that can shape a lifetime.

Following his remarks, Buchakjian introduced a brief video offering a glimpse into the scope of AMAA’s work in Armenia.

Committee member Dr. Celeste Telfeyan Helvacian then invited guests to participate in the evening’s silent auction and learn more about Child Sponsorship opportunities before introducing the evening’s guest speaker, John P. Bilezikian, M.D.

Bilezikian presented “The Keys to Healthy Aging,” focusing on osteoporosis, its impact on health and independence as

people age, and the importance of prevention and early detection. He discussed the consequences of osteoporosis-related fractures while emphasizing that osteoporosis can be diagnosed before a fracture occurs and treated to reduce fracture risk. Despite the seriousness of the subject, Bilezikian brought warmth and humor to his presentation, engaging guests as he shared both his expertise and practical guidance for protecting bone health throughout life. His presentation was followed by a question-and-answer session moderated by Helvacian.

Throughout the evening, guests enjoyed dinner and fellowship while participating in a silent auction benefiting AMAA’s Child Care Programs.



Child Sponsorship Giving Tree



Dr. Bilezikian and guests

Biodiversity Is Local: That’s Why Mayors Are Going to Armenia

BIODIVERSITY, from page 18

commitments are important. But they will only mean something if they translate into action on the ground.

That is where mayors, county leaders, and other local officials come in. They make decisions about parks, public spaces, land use, infrastructure and resilience. They see firsthand how environmental changes affect residents, and they are often among the first to hear from communities about what is working and what is not.

They can also learn from one another in ways national governments cannot. A city in California can learn from a municipality in Europe about restoring habitat. An American county can learn from a community in Asia about protecting watersheds. A mayor can return home with an idea that has already been tested in another part of the world and adapt it to the needs of their own residents.

That is the promise of city diplomacy: turning relationships across borders into practical improvements at home.

My Armenian heritage and professional experience have always reminded me that countries are more than their governments. They are people, communities, histories, landscapes and the places they call home. Those connections can survive across generations and across oceans.

The same is true of the relationships being built between cities today — mayor to mayor, city to city, community to community. That is what I hope this delegation will do in Yerevan.

Together, we will go to Armenia with a shared concern about the future of our planet. But we will also go with something more practical: a willingness to listen, share ideas, learn and bring ideas home.

While the challenge of biodiversity is global, its solutions will be built in specific places, by people who know those places best. I’m honored to return to Armenia to learn from others, share what our communities are doing, and bring those lessons home.

Donation

Ruth Swisher donated \$100 to the *Mirror-Spectator* in memory of her brother Charles Nishan Hovsepien.