

Senior U.S. Diplomat Discusses Armenian Nuclear Project in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Azatutyun.am) — Senior US and Armenian officials discussed the Armenian government’s declared plans for a new nuclear plant on Friday, October 23, three weeks after Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan signaled readiness to let Russia build it.

Pashinyan repeatedly said until this month that his government made a strategic decision to replace Armenia’s aging nuclear plant at Metsamor with a facility equipped with small modular reactors (SMRs), a new and relatively untested technology offered by the United States. He and US Vice President JD Vance finalized a US-Armenian agreement on nuclear energy cooperation when they met in Yerevan in February.

“American technology is going to be coming to this country,” Vance announced after the talks.

Two days after meeting with the head of the head of Russia’s Rosatom nuclear



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan meets with Rosatom Director General Alexei Likhachev, Yerevan, September 29, 2026

corporation, Alexei Likhachev, Pashinyan indicated on October 1 that he is no longer interested in SMRs and thinks Armenia needs a much more powerful reactor proposed by the Russians. He told Likhachev that Yerevan will decide “soon” which foreign country or company should implement its ambitious nuclear project.

The Rosatom chief spoke last week of a “signal that our proposal to construct a gigawatt-class VVER-1000 [power-generating] unit within the shortest possible timeframe has been received extremely positively” in Yerevan.

The issue was high on the agenda of US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Shawna Wilson’s talks with Armenia’s Deputy Minister of Infrastructures and Territorial Administration Narek Apitonyan.

According to an official Armenian readout of the talks, Apitonyan pointed to the appointment earlier this week of a new acting director of an Armenian state company tasked with building the new nuclear facility. He was reported to express hope that

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Multimedia event LEGACY at Montréal’s Théâtre Outremont

AGBU Celebrates 120 Years of Legacy and Unity at 94th General Assembly in Montréal

MONTREAL — More than 700 Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) members, friends, and guests from around the world joined the organization’s 94th General Assembly (GA) weekend in Montréal, Canada to mark a milestone that few non-profit Armenian organizations have reached: 120 years of uplifting Armenian lives and building a foundation for the prosperity of all Armenians.

From Thursday, October 15 through Sunday, October 18, 2026, an extensive program of meetings, conferences, cultural and social experiences unfolded

across some of Montréal’s most iconic venues, hosted by the AGBU Montréal community, one of the most active in North America. Guided by the weekend’s theme of Legacy, participants honored the vision of AGBU’s founders, celebrated those who carry it forward, and looked to the future with an appreciation for the opportunities and challenges ahead.

The General Assembly

The official proceedings took place on Saturday, October 17, at the AGBU Alex Manoogian Center in Saint-Laurent. The morning opened with a grand pro-

cession of AGBU Alex Manoogian School students and representatives of AGBU Montreal’s array of youth programs (Marching Band, Scouts, Sports, Hayortyats Or Saturday School, Youth Leadership Initiative, and Garni Dance Ensemble) who led all in the Canadian and Armenian national anthems. The opening continued with a video tribute to AGBU’s 120-year journey, and an invocation by His Grace Bishop Abgar Hovakimyan, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Canada.

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Armenian Mother Shot by Azeri Soldier: ‘Nowhere is Safe’

By Alison Tahmizian Meuse
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Down the corridor from the entrance of Yerevan’s Saint Gregory the Illuminator Medical Center is a small chapel, where guests and staff alike may stop for a moment of prayer, to light a candle, or simply pause for a moment of calm and solace.

“She is a hero for us,” said a nurse at the door.

She was speaking of the hospital’s most famous patient, Ani Avetisyan.

Avetisyan, on October 1, armed with only a kitchen knife, confronted an Azerbaijani soldier who had broken into their house in the southern province of Syunik and was holding her children at gunpoint.

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Father Davit Gishyan, pastor of Sisian, visiting Ani Avetisyan in the hospital

Pashinyan Touts Local Election Sweep

By Karine Simonian and Astghik Bedevian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun.am) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan claimed to be “destroying” Armenia’s main opposition groups on Monday, October 26, after his party swept nationwide local elections marked by a lack of opposition interest.

The Civil Contract party won outright in 17 of the 19 communities and finished second behind pro-government blocs in the two others on Sunday.

The main opposition Strong Armenia alliance ran only in a community comprising the northern town of Stepanavan and surrounding villages. It came in third with about 20 percent of the vote. Civil Contract, the runner-up, trailed a bloc led by Stepanavan’s incumbent pro-government mayor, Armen Grigoryan.

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MALTA
Armenia Wins Junior Eurovision 2026



YEREVAN
Ghazanchyan Exhibition Probes The ‘Unfamiliar City’



CALIFORNIA
TCA Pasadena–Glendale, Armenian Art Gallery Present Contemporary Armenian Artists





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Mayor Says Yerevan Must Switch Entirely To Electric Buses

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Mayor Tigran Avinyan has instructed the city’s Transport Department to announce the next tender for the purchase of buses for Yerevan’s public transport system exclusively for electric buses.

Speaking at a City Hall executive meeting, the mayor emphasized the importance of ensuring that Yerevan’s transport network consists entirely of electric buses in the near future.

“In the next phase, we need to replace the Higer buses. It is already time for us to switch entirely to electric buses. This means that the Transport Department should announce the next tender exclusively for electric buses,” Avinyan said.

The Yerevan mayor also spoke about the importance of dedicated bus lanes. Analyses show that dedicated bus lanes significantly improve the quality and frequency of public transport services, he said.

“For example, a fleet operating on a dedicated lane with 15 buses performs more efficiently than a fleet of 25 buses providing passenger transport without a dedicated lane. In other words, a dedicated lane gives our bus network a significant advantage. Mr. Grigoryan, this year I expect you to present a phased plan for dedicated bus lanes. Bicycle lanes should be incorporated alongside bus lanes everywhere. Starting this year, we will gradually begin implementing the comprehensive dedicated-lane program,” Avinyan said, addressing Deputy Mayor Suren Grigoryan.

Armenia Has Received 56 Billion Drams in Dividends from ZCMC, Deputy Minister Says

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenia has received about 56 billion drams in dividends from the Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine (ZCMC) in recent years, Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Arnak Avetisyan told parliament on Tuesday, October 27.

Avetisyan said he saw nothing unusual about the state holding stakes in ZCMC, the Lydian mining company and a telecommunications company.

He suggested that state ownership ensured the revenues flowed into the public budget rather than into the pockets of wealthy and politically connected business interests.

“The political outlook that MP Edgar Ghazaryan [opposition Strong Armenia party] subscribes to suggests that these tens of billions of drams should have ended up in the pockets of the relevant criminal-oligarchic circles rather than in the state budget,” Avetisyan said. “We take pride in these revenues and the results they have produced.”

Pashinyan Touts Local Election Sweep

ELECTIONS, from page 1

Grigoryan fell short of an absolute majority in the local council and was expected to team up with Pashinyan’s party. Strong Armenia’s parliamentary leader, Narek Karapetyan, put a brave face on its performance.

“In the places where we participated, the Civil Contract party received a record-low

percentage, did not participate in the local elections at all. One of its key components, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun) party, separately fielded candidates in four communities. Dashnaksutyun polled between 10 and 15 percent of the vote there. Its leader, Ishkhan Saghatelian, praised this performance.

Other senior members of the bloc led

mayoral candidate. They are prosecuted on vote-buying charged rejected by the local as politically motivated.

Several other election candidates were detained in other communities ahead of the elections held there. Strong Armenia, Hayastan and other opposition groups claimed that the arrests are part of a broader government campaign of intimidation and obstruction of the opposition.

In the run-up to the polls, they accused the Armenian authorities of bullying many of their local activists and other potential candidates. Dozens of them dropped out of the races.

Meanwhile, Pashinyan touted the local election sweep as another milestone in the “destruction” of his political foes.

“In a word: the [foreign] spy forces — that three-headed or four-headed party of war — must be destroyed,” he said. “And the results of the local self-government elections show that this has taken place with the help and support of the citizens of Armenia.”

Opposition leaders insisted, meanwhile, that they will keep striving to oust Pashinyan and expect far more serious challenges to his rule in the months ahead.

“We will continue our daily struggle toward this end, without ever backing down,” said Dashnaksutyun leader Saghatelian.



A voter in Hrazdan casts a ballot in a local election, October 25, 2026

percentage — arguably the lowest percentage — of votes,” he said.

Former President Robert Kocharyan’s Hayastan alliance, the second opposition force represented in the Armenian parlia-

ment, did not participate in the local elections at all. One of its key components, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun) party, separately fielded candidates in four communities. Dashnaksutyun polled between 10 and 15 percent of the vote there. Its leader, Ishkhan Saghatelian, praised this performance.

Company Re-exporting Phones to Russia Is Armenia’s Top Taxpayer

By Ani Ghulinyan

YEREVAN (OC-Media) — Mobile Centre, an Armenian company involved in the import and re-export of phones and other electronics — mostly to Russia — has been ranked as Armenia’s top taxpayer in the first three quarters of 2026, according to a list compiled by Armenia’s State Revenue Committee (SRC) of the top 1,000 taxpayers.

In 2021, according to SRC, Mobile Centre was 42nd on the top 1000 taxpayers list and paid 4.4 billion (\$12 million). Since 2022, the company jumped up to the top of the taxpayers list, increasing its paid taxes almost 18 times by the end of 2025, 77.8 billion (\$215 million). By the end of September 2026, the company maintained its top position, paying 64.3 billion (\$178 million).

Following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and subsequent Western sanctions, Russia has used former Soviet countries to circumvent the sanctions — importing goods to un-sanctioned countries, and then shipping those goods on to Russia. Telephone and other electronic communication devices dominated Armenia-Russia exports last year.

Overall 2025 exports to Russia were around \$2.9 billion: accounting for approximately 35% of all exports. The most valuable items were re-exported goods, such as mobile phones (\$789 million), TVs (\$100 in the first half of 2025), and computers.

Alongside Mobile Centre, the rest of the top 10 includes Zangezur Copper-Molybdenum Combine, cigarette manufacturers — Grand Tobacco, Philip Morris Armenia and International Amasis Tabak, two banks — Arshinbank and Ameriabank, two IT companies — Soft Construct and Digitain — which are known for providing software services for the betting industry, and Gaz-

prom Armenia, which is a 100% subsidiary of the Russian state energy company Gazprom and manages the import, transport, storage, distribution and sale of natural gas in Armenia.

The previous long-standing leader of the top ten taxpayers list was the Zangezur Copper and Molybdenum Combine, which claims to have employed over 4,600 workers in 2025.

Mobile Centre is an official distributor of smartphones from some of the world’s leading manufacturers, including Xiaomi, Apple, and Samsung. The company also sells computers and other electronic items. Mobile Centre is owned by Samvel Alek-

sanyan, a former member of parliament from the Republican Party and one of Armenia’s wealthiest entrepreneurs who is also the owner of the Yerevan City Supermarket chain.

According to the Statistical Committee of Armenia, although Russian-Armenian trade shrank by around 50% to \$6.7 billion between January and November 2025, Russia still accounted for 35.5% of Armenia’s total foreign trade. During the first half of 2025, Armenia exported mobile phones worth \$332 million and TV sets worth \$100 million to Russia.

(This article was previously published by OC-Media on October 27, 2026.)



A Mobile Centre shop in Yerevan (photo Yandex Maps)



ARMENIA

An American Teacher and Social Media Star Experiences a Rebirth in Yerevan

By **Armik Grigoryan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Armenia has “arrived” on social media, with many international travelers posting about their long-term stays there. The country is now home to many expats; until not too long ago, the only expats there were diasporan Armenians. Now, more and more non-Armenians have arrived in the country, lured by its ancient charm and modern café society.

One such expat is Joy Bazzle, a larger-than-life personality who is chronicling her life in Armenia on social media under the name Only in Bazzle’s World.

The native Texan does not just put a burst of color and flavor online, but also in her classes. Inside her literature classroom at QSI International School of Yerevan, she is not merely a teacher; she is on stage. With her vibrant, eye-catching style, arms and body adorned with tattoos recording different chapters of her life, a wide, infectious smile, and a wave of warm energy, she instantly fills every corner of the room.

For the past three years, Bazzle has taught middle school children ages 11-13 at QSI.

One of her catchphrases on social media is “I know you’re lying!” She repeats the

all over the world repeat this in my exact tone and facial expression is just priceless,” she laughs. “It has become a fun little piece of my personality that we live out together in class.”

Behind this radiant and outgoing persona, however, were two decades of quiet struggle and survival. Bazzle’s story, however, is not one of sorrow, but of self-rediscovery and triumph.

“I raised my children alone, I am a domestic violence survivor, and I have no regrets whatsoever,” she said in a recent interview. Her voice carries no trace of victimhood — only the unshakable strength of someone who has overcome much. “For more than 20 years, I poured myself completely into my kids. I raised them to be independent, to fly on their own, and to take care of themselves. Once they were adults, off to college, and living their own lives, I realized: it’s time to invest back in myself before it’s too late. This is my second chance, the second chapter of my life,” she noted.

The transition from a quiet life in Texas to Yerevan was entirely unscripted. Bazzle sold her household items, placed what was left in storage, and stepped fearlessly into the unknown. In August 2024, a career opportunity brought her to Armenia.

“The most common question people ask me is, ‘Why did you choose Armenia?’ It’s the same question over, and over, and over again. Well, I always answer, ‘I didn’t choose Armenia; Armenia chose me.’ Everything in life happens for a reason. Sometimes when plans go awry, it’s to guide you in the right direction or to save you from something worse down the road,” she said.

Walking through the streets of Yerevan, Bazzle naturally finds herself the center of attention. As a Black woman, the curiosity of passersby was strange at first, but she has learned to view it with grace and understanding.

“Sometimes the stares can feel overwhelming, especially when I walk alone. At first, people

would just gaze, ask for photos, or want to touch my hair. I realized it came from pure curiosity. On some days, I take the attention lightly; on other days, I just prefer to stay home,” she said.



Bazzle in her classroom at the QSI International School of Yerevan

At school, however, her look and bold style have long become a natural part of who she is. “One of my students actually said in surprise, ‘Oh, Miss Bazzle, I didn’t even know you had tattoos!’ To them, it’s just part of me. As for my crazy, colorful outfits? Those they definitely notice,” she said with a chuckle.

In her literature classes, Bazzle guides her students to read between the lines, discover the deeper meaning and break beyond conventional boundaries. She noted how strongly Armenian children are anchored in family and religious traditions, and added that she is able to gently open windows for them to explore the diversity of the world.

Outside the classroom, she eagerly im-

merses herself in daily Armenian life.

And lucky for her, Armenian food is just right for her. “Baking lavash with the local women was a wonderful, unforgettable experience; they were so warm and welcoming. Trying khash was another unique moment — I actually made a really fun video about it! But my absolute favorite is Armenian khorovats (barbecue); it is insanely delicious. Food is definitely my love language.”

Bazzle is now writing the second chapter of her life with her own hands — without a pre-written script, but with complete inner freedom.

“I spent 20 years investing in my children,” she says, her eyes fixed on the view of Yerevan outside her window. “Now, it’s time to live my life.”



Bazzle in Armenia

sentence in one classroom, while subtly rising an eyebrows, holding a puppet in hand, her face animated, which sends the entire classroom into fits of laughter.

She added, “Hearing my students from

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“this appointment will give new impetus to the process of constructing a new nuclear power unit, including the work being carried out with relevant US companies.”

It was not clear whether those companies might still be contracted by the Armenian government for the plant’s construction. The US Embassy in Yerevan did not immediately issue a statement on Wilson’s meeting with Apitonyan.

Pashinyan’s apparent change of heart on the issue was construed by local ob-

servers as an attempt to placate Moscow ahead of his planned crunch talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the future of Russian-Armenian relations. The Armenian premier again hardened his tone against the Kremlin on Thursday, October 22, following the release of a Eurasian Economic Union report recommending Armenia’s suspension from the Russian-led trade bloc. Such a development would almost certainly lead to more Russian economic sanctions against Yerevan.



Bazzle helps bake lavash.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Queen Sofía of Spain
Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Queen Sofía, the former queen consort of Spain, arrived in Armenia on October 27. Queen Sofia of Spain was welcomed at Zvartnots International Airport by Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports Zhanna Andreasyan. Her visit to Armenia will continue through October 29. Queen Sofia will attend the award ceremony of the Prince Talal International Prize for Human Development, visit historical and cultural sites in Armenia, and participate in events dedicated to culture and the friendly ties between Armenia and Spain.

Armenia's Aslanyan
Defeats Azerbaijani
Opponent to Win Gold
At World Wrestling
Championships

ASTANA (Armenpress) — Armenian national team member, Greco-Roman wrestler Karen Aslanyan has won the gold medal in the 63 kg category at the World Wrestling Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Aslanyan defeated Azerbaijan's Nihat Mammadli 8–4 in the final.

Slavik Galstyan (67 kg) and Gevorg Tadevosyan (87 kg) will later compete for bronze medals at the championships.

Armenia's World
Champion Gymnasts
Welcomed Home by
Hundreds of Fans

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Hundreds of fans gathered at Zvartnots International Airport to welcome Armenia's men's artistic gymnastics team home following their triumphant performance at the World Artistic Gymnastics Championships in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Gymnastics Federation of Armenia President Gagik Vanoyan was also at the airport to welcome the gymnasts and their coaches.

Armenia's artistic gymnastics head coach Hakob Serobyan said the team had achieved results beyond expectations at the World Championships.

"We were prepared to win two medals, and our guys were ready as well. They understood that they had to perform well at these World Championships. For any country, it is a great achievement when all its participants reach the finals. It is another thing entirely when all four participants win medals. We have four participants and four medals, which makes our performance at the World Championships a 100 percent success," Serobyan said.

At the World Artistic Gymnastics Championships in Rotterdam, Artur Davtyan won gold in the vault, while Hamlet Manukyan claimed gold in the pommel horse. Artur Avetisyan won bronze in the rings, and Mamikon Khachatryan took bronze in the pommel horse.

'Buying Czech Aircraft Is Part of Armenia's
Airforce Modernization' — Military Expert

Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan was on a [late October] official visit to the Czech Republic. He began his visit with a trip to Aero Vodochody, a Czech defense industry company. According to reports, he discussed the possibility of further cooperation with the company's management. He also examined Aero Vodochody's products in detail.

curriculum. If the Skyfox purchase forms part of a broader restructuring of the air force, expanding the fleet further would be the logical next step."

The L-39 Skyfox is a new-generation jet trainer designed for advanced pilot training. It features modern digital avionics, multifunction displays and an integrated virtual training system. These capabilities

fense cooperation, including military-technical cooperation; and reforms in the Armenian Armed Forces and cooperation in military education.

"Both sides stressed the importance of cooperation in multilateral formats, including within the EU and NATO," the statement said.

Papikyan also discussed bilateral military-technical cooperation with Czech First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry and Trade Karel Havlíček.

Commentary

Military expert Eduard Arakelyan noted that a Czech defense industry source had reported a month earlier that AERO Vodochody Aerospace was producing four L-39 Skyfox aircraft for Armenia. Specialist publications had also circulated the information, but none identified the customer or disclosed the terms of the deal.

Meanwhile, Arakelyan said, the Armenian Air Force already operates Czech-made L-39 Albatros trainers. Armenia acquired these second-hand aircraft in 2004 and 2010–11. It purchased some of them from Ukraine.

"However, the exact number of aircraft that remain in service with the Armenian Air Force and can still fly regularly is unknown," the expert said.

In Arakelyan's view, the Skyfox purchase fits Armenia's strategy of diversifying its arms suppliers and expanding cooperation with European defense manufacturers: "An Armenian-Czech agreement on military-technical cooperation, which has been in force since 2023, provides an additional basis for collaboration."

Arakelyan believes the Armenian defense minister's statement signals that the Skyfox acquisition has reached a practical stage.

"Nevertheless, until the parties officially disclose the terms of the deal, questions remain about the actual cost, delivery schedule, configuration and maintenance. These include technical support from the manufacturer and specialist training.

"The delivery of four Skyfox aircraft would represent a generational shift in Armenia's training platform rather than a numerical expansion of its air force. The deal's significance will depend on whether it remains a standalone purchase or marks the first stage of a broader overhaul of pilot training and air force capabilities. In the latter case, the Skyfox could bridge the gap between existing training aircraft and future combat platforms, with the four aircraft serving as the first batch in an air force modernization program," Arakelyan wrote.

(This article first appeared on Jam-News.net on October 23, 2026, while the photo is from Suren Papikyan's Facebook page.)



Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan, at left, with Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic and Minister of Defense Jaromír Zuna on October 21 (photo courtesy Suren Papikyan Facebook page)

"These marvels will soon take to the skies over Armenia," the defense minister wrote in a caption accompanying a video he posted shortly after visiting the company.

Papikyan also shared photographs, captioning them: "One of the landmark days in the history of the Armenian Armed Forces' aviation."

Experts have speculated, based on the video and photographs he posted online, that Armenia is preparing to receive Czech-made L-39 Skyfox aircraft. These are a new generation of jet trainers.

Military expert Eduard Arakelyan believes that Armenia, which has a limited fleet of aircraft, could use the L-39 Skyfox not only for training but also for certain operational tasks: "As a result, the purchase could become a practical step towards modernizing the air force. However, its scale does not yet justify claims that it would significantly change the combat capabilities of Armenian aviation. For training purposes, four aircraft could serve as the first batch in a transition to a new training system and

allow pilots to simulate various tactical scenarios during training flights.

According to Defense Mirror, one Skyfox costs less than \$10 million. The final price depends on the aircraft's configuration and delivery terms.

Depending on its configuration, the aircraft can carry air-launched weapons, reconnaissance equipment and additional external systems. This allows it to perform limited military and reconnaissance missions.

What We Know about the Defense Minister's Visit

The defense minister arrived in the Czech Republic on October 20. During his visit, Papikyan attended the opening ceremony of the Future Forces Exhibition & Forum. He toured the exhibition halls and viewed the latest technologies and advanced military equipment on display.

The Armenian minister also held talks with Czech Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Jaromír Zuna.

Armenia's Defense Ministry said the two ministers discussed Armenian-Czech de-

Armenian Authorities Free Azeri Detainee

YEREVAN (Azatutyun.am) — Armenian authorities said on Monday, October 26, that they have freed and repatriated an Azerbaijani man who crossed into Armenia a week ago.

The National Security Service (NSS) reported earlier that the man identified by it as Yashar Qasimov entered Armenia's northern Tavush province on October 19 "as a result of getting lost." It said Qasimov is a resident of a village in Azerbaijan's Tovuz district bordering Tavush.

The NSS reported the detention three days after the incident. It said he will be

handed over to Baku. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan also made this clear the following day.

"There is no border, line of contact or frontline in the world that a single person cannot cross," he told journalists amid a continuing opposition uproar over another border crossing incident that turned violent earlier this month.

An Azerbaijani soldier, Nasimi Musayev, was captured in the southeastern Syunik province on October 1 after shooting and seriously wounding a local resident inside her home. The woman, Ani Avetisyan, says

that Musayev tried to kill her and two of her children after breaking into their house in the village of Shaki. Pashinyan effectively blamed Avetisyan for the shooting, causing outrage among opposition leaders and other critics of the Armenian government who view her as a hero.

The critics also decried the fact that the soldier managed to cross the militarized border and advance deep into Armenian territory unnoticed. According to Azerbaijani authorities, Musayev deserted his military unit deployed on the Armenian border on September 26.



INTERNATIONAL

Keron Impact Gala Supports of Future Of Medical Education in Armenia

PARIS — Keron Development Foundation’s Keron Impact Gala / Paris 2026 — Uniting Lights for Armenia will take place on November 18, at the Four Seasons Hotel George V in Paris, bringing together friends of Armenia, philanthropists, healthcare leaders, cultural figures, business representatives and members of the Armenian diaspora around one shared purpose: supporting Armenia’s long-term development through education, knowledge, and human capital.

This year, the main cause of the gala is the large-scale transformation of the Yerevan State Medical University Library — a project that aims to create a modern edu-

of healthcare in Armenia and beyond. The message is simple: by investing in the environment where future doctors are educated, we invest in the quality of healthcare for generations to come.

In partnership with Yerevan State Medical University after Mkhitar Heratsi, Keron Development Foundation is implementing the large-scale transformation of the YSMU Library, turning the current 600 sq. m. space into a 3,000 sq. m. modern educational hub for future doctors, researchers, faculty members, and healthcare professionals.

For more than a century, YSMU has been Armenia’s leading medical univer-

es, exchange ideas, and develop the skills needed for modern medical practice.

The project includes open and closed reading halls, individual and group study areas, technology-enabled learning and research spaces, flexible zones for lectures and workshops, improved accessibility, modern furniture and equipment, digital educational resources, and a professional library management system.

Once completed, the renovated YSMU Library is expected to become one of the most advanced academic medical education spaces in the region.

The YSMU Library transformation is not simply a construction or renovation project; it is an investment in the people who will shape the future of healthcare.

YSMU brings together a large academic community of students, faculty members, researchers, clinicians and international students from Armenia and around the world. The future doctors educated in this environment will one day serve patients in hospitals, clinics, laboratories, research centers, and communities in Armenia and beyond.

A modern academic medical library can directly influence the way future healthcare professionals learn, think, research, collaborate and make decisions.

By supporting the YSMU Library project, Gala guests will be contributing to an environment where future physicians and healthcare leaders will gain the knowledge and tools needed to improve lives.

Holding the first Keron Impact Gala in Paris carries symbolic meaning. France has long been home to one of the most active Armenian communities in the world, and Paris remains an important center for culture, diplomacy, philanthropy, and international dialogue.

Through the gala, Keron Development Foundation aims to strengthen the connection between Armenia and its global supporters by creating a platform where shared values can become concrete action. The event will bring together people who believe that Armenia’s development de-

pends on long-term investment in education, talent, infrastructure, culture, healthcare, and international collaboration.

Keron Impact Gala / Paris 2026 will combine cultural programming, meaningful storytelling, and philanthropic engagement.

The evening will present Keron’s vision for Armenia’s development and highlight the YSMU Library transformation through video storytelling, project presentations, and direct fundraising opportunities.

Guests will have the opportunity to learn about the progress of the renovation, understand the future vision of the Educational Hub, and contribute to one of the most important educational infrastructure projects currently underway in Armenia’s medical sector.

Guests outside Armenia may use this link: <https://www.helloasso.com/associations/ayo/evenements/keron-impact-gala-2026-uniting-lights-for-armenia>; for guests from Armenia: <https://keronfoundation.am/keron-impact-gala-paris-2026/>.



cational, research, and collaborative environment for future doctors and healthcare professionals.

Keron Impact Gala is envisioned as an annual international platform that presents the Armenia of today: modern, creative, ambitious, and deeply connected to the world. It is also a platform for turning international engagement into long-term, measurable impact.

The evening invite guests to support a project with direct relevance to the future

sity, educating generations of physicians, researchers, dentists, pharmacists, and healthcare leaders. Today, as medical education and research continue to evolve rapidly, the university’s library is being reimaged to meet the needs of 21st-century healthcare education.

The future library will be much more than a place for books. It will become a dynamic academic ecosystem where students and faculty can study, collaborate, conduct research, access digital resour-

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“this appointment will give new impetus to the process of constructing a new nuclear power unit, including the work being carried out with relevant US companies.”

It was not clear whether those companies might still be contracted by the Armenian government for the plant’s construction. The US Embassy in Yerevan did not immediately issue a statement on Wilson’s meeting with Apitonyan.

Pashinyan’s apparent change of heart on the issue was construed by local observers as an attempt to placate



US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Shawna Wilson at a meeting with a senior Armenian official, Yerevan, October 23, 2026 (photo Armenian Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures)

Moscow ahead of his planned crunch talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the future of Russian-Armenian relations. The Armenian premier again hardened his tone against the Kremlin on Thursday, October 22, following the release of a Eurasian Economic Union report recommending Armenia’s suspension from the Russian-led trade bloc. Such a development would almost certainly lead to more Russian economic sanctions against Yerevan.

Armenia Wins Junior Eurovision 2026

TA’ QALI, Malta (Armenpress) — Armenian singer Naré Kerobyan won the 24th Junior Eurovision Song Contest, held in Malta on Saturday, October 24.

13-year-old Naré’s song *BOO!* captivated millions of viewers watching on TV and online around the world, topping the scoreboard with an impressive 202 points.

Spain’s 10-year-old Lucas Paulano finished in second place with 184 points for *Cuore Bello* (Te Quiero, Te Quiero), while 12-year-old Alec from France took third place with *Comment Tu Vas?*, receiving 165 points.

Viewers helped decide the winner by voting online at JESC.tv, where they could vote for up to three songs.

Each national jury consisted of three music industry experts and two children aged 10 to 15, with jury votes accounting for 50% of the total score.

Armenia received 12 points each from Cyprus and Albania, 10 points each from the Netherlands and San Marino, 3 points from Portugal, 8 points each from France, Malta and Ukraine, 6 points each from Po-



Naré

land, Italy and Spain, 7 points from North Macedonia, 2 points from Ireland, and 5 points from Georgia in the jury vote.

Armenia awarded its 12 points to the Cy-

priot contestant.

BOO! was written by Lilit Navasardyan and Grigor Kyokchyan, and the song’s music video was directed by Artur Manukyan.



Community News

Hetq Comes to Boston: Independent Journalism and the Future of Democracy In Armenia

BELMONT, Mass. — On Tuesday, November 10, Boston area audiences can get acquainted with the work of Hetq, as well as hear from diasporan newspaper leaders during a panel discussion and reception exploring the state of media in Armenia and the vital role independent media in strengthening democracy and the rule of law.

The panel discussion titled “The Role and Current Condition of the Media in Armenia” will take place on November 10 at 7:30 p.m. at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), 395 Concord Avenue, Belmont, in collaboration with the Armenian Assembly of America, Armenian National Committee of Eastern Massachusetts and the Tekeyan Cultural Association.

The discussions will also address Armenia’s most pressing challenges and emerging opportunities.

Armenia has faced an unprecedented polarization in recent years, in both media and public discourse. These issues rarely are addressed from multiple perspectives to give a 360-degree view.



Edik Baghdasaryan

An important goal of the visit is to engage with members of the Armenian diaspora, learn how they follow developments in Armenia, understand which sources of information they rely on, and identify what information they need to gain a more comprehensive picture of events in their homeland. The conversations will provide an opportunity to exchange perspectives, strengthen connections, and explore how independent journalism can help bridge the information gap between Armenia and its diaspora.

Founded in 2001, Hetq is Armenia’s leading investigative media outlet, with 25 years of experience in uncovering corruption, abuse of power, misuse of public funds, human rights violations, and environmental crises. Its investigations have contributed to legal proceedings, accountability for wrongdoing, and systemic change. Through its reporting, Hetq has helped shape public debate and influence decision-making in Armenia, while earning recognition and building partnerships internationally.

Beyond investigative reporting, Hetq is committed to strengthening journalism through education. see HETQ, page 7



RIGHT: The Abstract Sculpture in 2025 (photo by Matt Conti) and ABOVE: in 2026 (photo Steve Dunwell)



A New Shape, an Enduring Story at Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway

BOSTON — The annual reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture at Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway took place on Sunday, October 18.

With the assistance of a crane, the two halves of the sculpture, a split rhomboid dodecahedron made of stainless steel and aluminum, were lifted, pulled apart and reconfigured to create a new sculptural shape, symbolic of a new life.

As in previous years, the reconfiguration was overseen by Aurelian and Gary Mardiros of A&A Industries, which fabricated the sculpture as a gift-in-kind, and William Martin of the park’s care and maintenance team, with the participation of Brodmerkle Machinery Movers and Donald J. Tellalian, AIA, the park’s architect/designer.

The Abstract Sculpture, atop the Reflecting Pool, is dedicated to the lives lost during the Armenian Genocide and all genocides that have followed.

Its annual reconfiguration serves as a continuing reminder of resilience, renewal and the journeys of those who pulled away or were forced to pull away from their countries of origin and came to these Massachusetts shores, establishing themselves in new and different ways.

Conceived by Tellalian as an evolving work of public art, the Abstract Sculpture takes on 25 distinct geometric forms over a quarter-century before the sequence begins anew.

“The sculpture’s reconfiguration reflects an enduring idea at the heart of Armenian Heritage Park: that a strong sense of identity allows us to embrace new possibilities while remaining true to where we come from,” said Vahan Dilanyan, director of development and programming at the Armenian Heritage Foundation, sponsor of Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway. “It is a message that speaks beyond the Armenian community, reminding us all that the future takes shape through what we carry forward.”

The annual reconfiguration is supported by the Charles and Doreen Bilezikian Endowed Fund.

For more information, visit www.ArmenianHeritagePark.org.



The process of pulling apart and reconfiguring the Abstract Sculpture (Mark Hoffman photo)

Christian Churches Together Marks 20th Anniversary, Honors Archbishop Aykazian

The ecumenical group Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A. (CCT) marked its 20th anniversary with a special forum in Birmingham, AL, on October 6-9, bringing together representatives of 34 Christian communions and organizations to reflect on two decades of ecumenical cooperation and consider the organization’s future.

Among those honored during the anniversary gathering was Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director of the Eastern Diocese, who was recognized as one of CCT’s founding leaders. Archbishop Vicken, who participated in the organization’s establishment two decades ago, also delivered the forum’s principal address representing the Orthodox family of churches.

Held under the theme “Giving Thanks, Renewing Hope,” the anniversary forum featured prayer, dialogue, and presentations by Christian leaders from across the country. The program included an address by civil rights leader Ambassador Andrew Young, along with visits to historic sites associated with Birmingham’s civil rights movement.

In his address, Archbishop Vicken reflected on the hopes that accompanied the founding of Christian Churches Together, and on the challenges of sustaining relationships among churches with different histories, traditions, and theological perspectives.

“Christian Churches Together was born from a simple — but rather daring — idea: that Christians who do not agree about everything can still come together as Christians,” Archbishop Vicken said.

He emphasized that genuine ecumenical fellowship does not require churches to set aside their distinctive identities or convictions. Rather, he suggested, Christians can encounter one another in the fullness of their respective traditions while recognizing their common faith in Jesus Christ.

Speaking from the experience of the Armenian Church, Aykazian reflected on the endurance of Christian faith through centuries of upheaval, persecution, and uncertainty. He contrasted Christian hope, rooted in faith in God, with mere optimism about the course of human events.

The setting of Birmingham also prompted him to consider the relationship between Christian belief and public witness. Recalling the city’s civil rights history and the enduring significance of the Letter from Birmingham Jail, he challenged the churches to consider what practical consequences should follow from their fellowship.

“What does Jesus Christ expect us to do, because we have prayed together?” he asked. “What burden can we carry together that none of us can carry alone? What suffering can we address together? What truth can we speak together?”

see CHURCHES, page 7



COMMUNITY NEWS

AMAA Celebrates 107th Annual Meeting Banquet, Honors Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian and Dr. Nurhan Helvacian

By Louisa Janbazian

PARAMUS, N.J. (AMAA) — The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) held its 107th Annual Meeting Banquet on Saturday, October 17, at the Teaneck Marriott at Glenpointe in Teaneck, New Jersey. Bringing together friends of the AMAA and representatives of Armenian Evangelical churches and unions from around the world, the evening celebrated the theme “Our Lasting Impact on Generations” and honored two distinguished individuals whose decades of service have made lasting contributions to the organization and the Armenian Evangelical community: Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian, former Executive Director of the Armenian Evangelical World Council (AEWC) and former AMAA and AEUNA Board member, and Dr. Nurhan Helvacian, former AMAA Board member and Treasurer.

The evening began with a warm welcome from event co-chairs Lucienne Aynilian and Anita Buchakjian. Dr. Michael Voskian served as master of ceremonies, guiding the evening’s program with warmth and grace. Greg and Garen Loshkajian performed the national anthems, followed by an invocation offered by Rev. Joseph Garabedian, Pastor of the Armenian Presbyterian Church in Paramus, New Jersey.

Following a video presentation, “The Transforming Impact of the AMAA,” Serge D. Buchakjian, AMAA CEO/Executive Director, welcomed the guests and reflected on the organization’s enduring mission and the difference it continues to make in communities around the world. “Everything you just saw... Every child helped; Every student given an opportunity; Every church strengthened; Every life transformed... You are part of that story. This is your AMAA. Be proud of it. Help us tell its story. And together, with God’s guidance, let us write the next chapter,” Buchakjian said.

Buchakjian then introduced Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the United States Narek Mkrtchyan, who addressed the gathering. Mkrtchyan expressed his appreciation for the AMAA’s longstanding commitment to Armenia, highlighting its contributions to relief efforts and education in the aftermath of the devastating

1988 earthquake and its continued support for the rebuilding and development of the homeland.



Honoring Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian

The first honoree of the evening was Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian, whose decades of faithful leadership and dedicated service have left a profound mark on the Armenian Evangelical community.

Rev. Dr. Krikor Youmshajekian, current Executive Director of the AEWC, presented a tribute on behalf of the Council, while Rev. Hendrik Shanazarian, Minister to the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America (AEUNA), offered a tribute on behalf of the Union.

Reflecting on Rev. Dr. Tootikian’s 23 years of leadership with the AEWC, Rev. Dr. Youmshajekian said: “Twenty-three years is a long time to devote yourself to this ministry. During those years, Rev. Tootikian poured his heart into this Council. He served with diligence, commitment, and genuine passion. This was never just a position for him — it was a calling. He carried the responsibilities of leadership with wisdom, humility, and integrity, always seeking what would best serve the churches and advance the work of God’s Kingdom.”

Rev. Shanazarian emphasized that the true measure of Rev. Dr. Tootikian’s legacy extends far beyond his professional accomplishments. “What we celebrate most tonight is not the impressive list of positions, degrees, publications, or honors. We celebrate a life of faithful service, a lifetime devoted to teaching and communicating the Christian faith and our Armenian heritage,”

he said.

A special tribute video followed, featuring photographs of Rev. Dr. Tootikian throughout his life, from childhood to the present day. Representatives of the AEWC, AMAA, and AEUNA then presented him with special gifts in recognition of his many years of service and leadership.

In his heartfelt remarks, Rev. Dr. Tootikian expressed his sincere gratitude to the AMAA for organizing the celebration and recognizing his 67 years of service. He also gave thanks to God for the privilege of serving the Armenian Evangelical community and contributing to its spiritual growth and enduring mission.



Honoring Dr. Nurhan Helvacian

Following dinner, AMAA President Gary Phillips, Esq., introduced the evening’s second honoree, Dr. Nurhan Helvacian, in recognition of his dedicated service as an AMAA Board member and Treasurer.

Phillips highlighted Helvacian’s commitment to the organization, his faithful stewardship of its resources, and his valuable contributions to advancing the AMAA’s mission. Quoting Saint Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, he said, “‘It is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.’ Nurhan, you have proven more than faithful.”

Following a special video presentation celebrating Helvacian’s service and contributions to the AMAA, he was presented with a special gift in recognition of his many years of faithful service.

Accepting the honor, Helvacian expressed his gratitude for the recognition and reflected on the privilege of serving

alongside so many dedicated individuals. “With heartfelt gratitude I accept this recognition of my service to the AMAA as its treasurer. Over the years, I have had the privilege of working with so many devoted and faithful people. I thank the Lord for that opportunity. Indeed, it has been my honor and privilege to serve this wonderful organization that dedicates itself to doing God’s work on earth,” Dr. Helvacian said.

The tribute was followed by a musical presentation by Zulal, an a cappella trio known for its interpretations of Armenian folk music. The group delighted guests with three Armenian folk songs, adding a special musical touch to the evening’s celebration.

In his closing remarks, Buchakjian expressed his sincere appreciation to the event co-chairs Lucienne Aynilian and Anita Buchakjian for their outstanding leadership, as well as to all committee members for their hard work and dedication. He also recognized the AMAA staff in New Jersey, California, Montreal and Yerevan for their efforts in making the evening a success. “Above all, my heartfelt thanks go to each and every one of you for being here tonight, for your generosity, and for your continued support of the AMAA and its mission. It is your commitment and friendship that make evenings like this so meaningful,” Buchakjian said.

The banquet concluded with the singing of “Hayr Mer” (“The Lord’s Prayer”), led by Greg Loshkajian, followed by the benediction offered by Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian, President of both the Armenian Evangelical World Council (AEWC) and Haigazian University.

The evening served as a meaningful reminder of the lasting impact that faithful service, Christian leadership, and a shared commitment to the Armenian Evangelical community can have across generations.

Hetq Comes to Boston: Independent Journalism And the Future of Democracy in Armenia

HETQ, from page 6

Through the Hetq Media Factory, an educational initiative it established, Hetq trains aspiring journalists in investigative reporting and promotes higher professional standards and quality in Armenian journalism.

At a time when access to reliable information is essential to understanding Armenia’s political, social, and economic realities, Hetq remains committed to holding those in power accountable and ensuring that issues of public interest are brought to light. The Boston visit is an opportunity to share this work with the diaspora, hear its perspectives and concerns, and strengthen the relationship between independent Armenian journalism and communities abroad.

Pulitzer-Prize winning investigative reporter Stephen Kurkjian, who worked for the *Boston Globe*, will offer opening remarks. Speakers will include Edik Baghdasaryan, editor in-chief of Hetq; Aram Arkun, managing editor of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* and Ara Khatchaturian, executive editor of Asbarez, with Dikran Kaligian, managing editor of the *Armenian Review* serving as moderator.

Christian Churches Together Marks 20th Anniversary, Honors Archbishop Aykazian

CHURCHES, from page 6

Looking toward CCT’s next two decades, Archbishop Vicken urged its members to build on the relationships they have established, allowing their common faith to find expression in service to others.

During the anniversary banquet, Archbishop Vicken was formally recognized alongside other founding leaders for his contributions to Christian Churches Together.

Also representing the Eastern Diocese at the forum was Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan, pastor of St. Mary Church in Washington, DC, and a member of CCT’s Steering Committee. During the gathering, Fr. Karapetyan introduced participants to Orthodox worship at Holy Trinity-Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Birmingham.

The anniversary forum offered an opportunity both to acknowledge the relationships established through CCT over the past twenty years and to consider how those relationships might contribute to the Christian churches’ common witness in the years ahead.



Above: Abp. Vicken Aykazian, Fr. Hovsep Karapetyan, and members of Christian Churches Together’s Orthodox Family delegation, at Kelly Ingram Park in Birmingham



OBITUARY

Şahan Arzruni (1943 – 2026)

Pianist and Musicologist

NEW YORK — World-renowned concert pianist, musician, and musicologist Şahan Arzruni drew his final breath in the early hours of October 21 in America, at his home in New York City. His favorite items, which he enjoyed throughout his life, were raw oysters, bulghur pilaf, tangerine color, and vodka.

These are the words Şahan himself set down to serve as the coda to his life. Direct, concise, and touched with his characteristic wit, they convey something essential about the man—and his determination to describe himself on his own terms.

Yet they can scarcely encompass the life of a man who devoted his singular, extraordinary gifts to the worldwide Armenian community. Those gifts embraced the whole range of the musical arts: from performance to composition, from rarefied scholarship to the popular promotion of Armenian music around the world.

He was born on June 8, 1943, in Istanbul, to Stepan and Mariam Arzruni. As a very young boy he was recognized as a musical prodigy and came under the tutelage of the most eminent European musical instructors in Istanbul. This was due to the influence of his beloved aunt, Sirvart Karamanuk — herself a composer of profound talent, whose work and memory Şahan would honor throughout his life.

In 1964, Şahan left Istanbul, and a noted career as a young pianist, to attend the Juilliard School in New York. America's greatest city would become his home for the next six decades, as Şahan Arzruni built an international reputation as a concert pianist, ethnomusicologist, and public figure in the arts.

Şahan's achievements as an artist were profound, as the formal biographical notes below attest. He was proud to be honored as a Steinway Artist: a title bestowed only on the most distinguished pianists in the world. Indeed, one could only marvel at Şahan's soulful interpretations of Chopin and the rest of the classical repertoire.

But he was truly peerless in his championing of the Armenian musical inheritance: both its great figures like Khachaturian, Hovhannes, and the immortal Komitas, as well as lesser known (but hardly less distinguished) names like Mirzoyan, Mansuryan, Babadjanyan, Arutiunyan, Zakaryan and others.

These were the gifts most conspicuous to Şahan's vast, admiring public audience. But the many people who were blessed to know the man himself will always be aware that their lives were infinitely enriched by his wise counsel, his generous hospitality, and above all, his warm, endearing friendship.

In his last weeks, Şahan reflected on a long and successful professional life, marked by wide-ranging fame, respect of his peers, and personal satisfaction in his work. He was especially grateful to have shared his learning and talent with younger artists, especially those in the Republic of Armenia. As he struggled with failing health, Şahan devoted his energy to a few final tasks: completing a written memoir; populating an extensive online archive of his recordings and works; finding proper homes for his personal papers, artwork, library, and musical instruments — the valuable collections of a remarkable life; and putting his effects in order.

He died peacefully in his home. In accordance with his wishes, his ashes will be interred in the Arzruni family gravesite in Istanbul.

In addition to his reputation as a recitalist and chamber music partner, pianist Şahan Arzruni achieved recognition as a

composer, ethnomusicologist, teacher, lecturer, writer, recording artist, broadcasting personality, producer, and impresario. He toured in these capacities throughout North and South America, Europe, the Middle East, the Far East, and Australia.

Arzruni became a familiar figure through many television broadcasts, such as the Johnny Carson and Mike Douglas shows. He was featured in a number of PBS specials — “Around the World in '82,” “Gala of Stars,” and “A Place of Dreams: Carnegie Hall at 100” — and recorded for international radio networks, including the BBC. Mr. Arzruni performed at the White House and gave command performances in the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, and Iceland.

Motivated by ethnic awareness in the United States, Arzruni continuously researched the musical roots of his Armenian heritage. He recorded a three-record anthology of Armenian piano music and co-produced an eight-disc set of instrumental and Armenian vocal music. He also delivered papers and organized symposia for such institutions as Harvard University, Columbia University, and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

A recipient of the Renaissance Medal, Şahan Arzruni was the author of scholarly books and a contributor of articles for academic journals; he has also written for various editions of The New Grove Dictionary and the Dictionary of the Middle Ages.

Şahan was an artist of striking versatility. He performed with Victor Borge, playing the role of a straight man in the master's hilarious musical programs. As a teenage writer, he authored a textbook on music in his native Istanbul. As a performer, he recorded many albums featuring twentieth-century works intended for younger pianists. Arzruni also hosted a radio program on New York's Municipal Broadcasting System for five years, addressing issues concerned with the didactics of piano playing.

A Steinway Artist, he was invited to perform on an 1869 Steinway piano at the Metropolitan Museum of Art for the inaugural of the centennial celebrations of the Museum's collection of historic instruments. In 2001, Mr. Arzruni delivered a lecture on Armenian liturgical chants at the invitation of the US Library of Congress, in Washington, D.C.

In 1996, he received from Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin I an encyclical and the Sts. Sahak and Mesrob Medallion. In 2016, the president of the Republic of Armenia awarded him the Movses Khorenatsi Medal for exceptional achievement in cultural development.

On the occasion of Aram Khachaturian's centennial in 2003, Şahan was appointed the full-fledged representative of Armenia's Ministry of Culture in the Diaspora. In 2007, to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the Armenian National Hospital of Istanbul, he was asked to produce cultural events to mark the occasion. In 2010, through an arrangement with the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he presented a number of concerts, including a program at Van University on the eve of the inaugural Divine Liturgy to take place at the Holy Cross Armenian Church of Akhtamar.

In 2013, Arzruni's performance of Khachaturian was selected by the Republic of Armenia's Ministry of Culture for inclusion in a special set of recordings marking the very best of Armenian musical talent. In 2017 and 2019, Arzruni became the first artist of the diaspora to travel to Armenia's provinces and the capital of Nagorno-Kara-



bakh on a teaching and performance tour.

During the COVID pandemic, Arzruni started an online series “Together with Armenia” featuring various artists from all over the world, joining him on the piano, on occasion, from his New York apartment. Beginning in 2017, through the arrangement of the Fund for Armenian Relief, Şahan Arzruni traveled to more than 50 locations across Armenia, visiting Music Schools and Art Schools, conducting master classes and performances for the benefit of the public and the students.

Arzruni was a graduate of the Juilliard School, and pursued doctoral studies at New York University. He recorded for New World Records, Composers Recordings, Inc., Musical Heritage Society, Hearts of Space, Philips, Varèse-Sarabande, Good Music, Positively Armenian, AGBU, and Kalan Music.

An extensive archive of his recordings, writings, and other works can be found on his personal website, www.sahanarzruni.com.

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OBITUARY

Walter Gregory Vartanian

Immigration Attorney

BELMONT, Mass. — Walter Gregory Vartanian, Esq., of Belmont, passed away on October 20 at the age of 91.

A respected immigration attorney, devoted family man, and proud Armenian-American, Walter will be remembered for his intellect, generosity, humor, and enduring curiosity about the world.

Born in Brighton on March 5, 1935, and raised in Cambridge, Walter was the son of Armenian immigrants whose experiences helped shape his appreciation for education, perseverance, and opportunity.



He graduated from Boston University and earned his law degree from Boston University School of Law in 1959, where he served on the Law Review.

Among the early immigration attorneys practicing in Boston, Walter devoted more than 55 years to representing individuals,

families, and businesses navigating the American immigration system. As the son of immigrants, he brought both professional expertise and a personal understanding of the challenges faced by those seeking to establish their lives in the United States. His work on the 1990 landmark case *Matter of Delitizer* changed how employment-based immigrant petitions are adjudicated and led to the nickname “Delitizer” by his peers.

In 1960, Walter established the Law Firm of Walter G. Vartanian. Forty years later it became Vartanian & Vartanian with the addition of his son, Gregory, with whom he practiced alongside for another 20 years. He served as president of the New England Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association and the Cambridge-Arlington-Belmont Bar Association. He was a member of the Massachusetts Bar Association and admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States.

Deeply connected to his Armenian heritage, Walter was active in numerous community organizations. He served as vice president and secretary of the Parish Council of Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, as a board member of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, and as chairman of the Council of Armenian Executives. He was also a member of the Knights of Vartan and the Masons.

Beyond his professional life, Walter possessed a keen intellect, an extraordinary memory, and a lifelong interest in history, politics, sports, and world affairs. He enjoyed lively conversation, spirited debate, and sharing stories, often accompanied

by his quick wit and distinctive sense of humor. His generosity and willingness to help others were equally characteristic of the man he was.

In 1962, Walter married his beloved wife, Anne Rose Ghougasian, of New York, at Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge. Together they raised three children and shared a life rich in family, friendship, travel, and Armenian traditions.

Above all, Walter cherished his family. He took great pride in his children and grandchildren, valuing the time they spent together and the traditions passed from one generation to the next. Although he experienced the profound losses of his wife Anne and daughter Regina, his devotion to family remained a constant throughout his life.

In his later years, Walter recorded memories of his childhood, family history, career, and travels. Reflecting on his life, he expressed gratitude for his parents, sister,

wife, children, grandchildren, and friends. He summarized his remarkable journey with characteristic simplicity: “Quite a trip.”

Walter was the husband of the late Anne Rose (Ghougasian) Vartanian; father of Gregory Vartanian and his wife Sonia, Carol Khalarian and her husband Alex, and the late Regina Najarian and her husband Berj; grandfather of Sebu, Avi, Nora, Armen, Eva and Natalie; and brother of the late Araxie Vartanian. He is also survived by many relatives and friends in Boston, New York, and beyond.

Funeral services were held Tuesday, October 27 at Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge, MA. Interment followed at Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge. Arrangements were by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home in Watertown.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Holy Trinity Armenian Church or Camp Haiastan, P.O. Box C, Franklin, MA 02038.

Missak Haigentz, Sr.

Writer and Attorney

FORT LEE, N.J. — Missak Haigentz, beloved father, brother, scholar, attorney, writer, editor and devoted advocate for Armenian culture and heritage, passed away on October 17.

Born Missak Kupelian on August 19, 1937, he lost his father, Haig, at a young age, an experience that shaped his lifelong sense of responsibility, perseverance, and devotion to family. As a writer, he adopted the pen name Haigentz in honor of his father and his Armenian heritage, later making it his legal surname.

The first member of his family to immigrate to the United States, Haigentz dedicated his life to education, scholarship, and service. As editor of *Nor Or*, a leading Armenian-language newspaper, and through decades of leadership and service with the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), he helped preserve and promote Armenian culture, history, literature, and identity throughout the Armenian diaspora.

As a Trustee of the Dolores Zohrab Liebmman Fund, he oversaw the publication of more than one hundred books devoted to Armenian history, culture, and literature. Following a distinguished career in community service, he pursued a second career in law, fulfilling his lifelong commitment to learning.

Haigentz was a fixture of the Fort Lee community, where he resided for nearly 60 years. Affectionately known to many as “Mike,” he preferred personal interaction and remained a familiar presence throughout town, visiting local businesses, meeting friends, and conducting daily life face-to-face despite the growing reliance on technology. He was known for his warmth, curiosity, and genuine interest in others.

Committed to a healthy and disciplined lifestyle, he exercised regularly well into



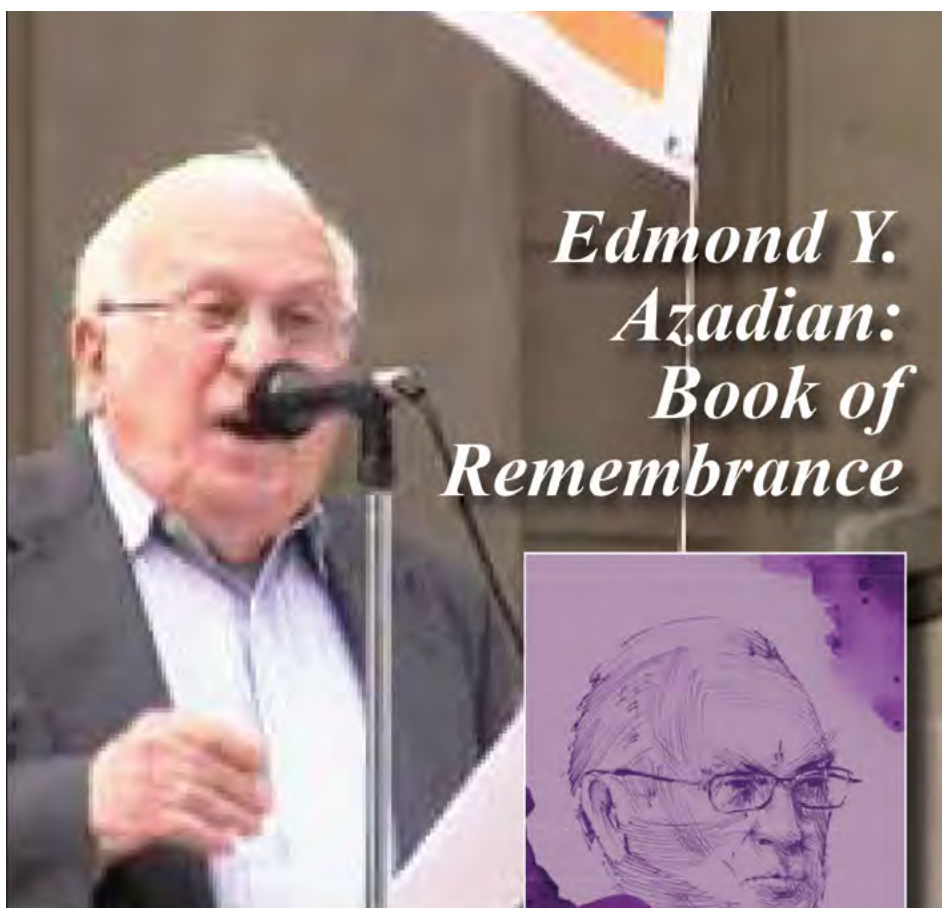
his later years and often attributed his longevity to good health habits, moderation, and staying active. He took great pride in his family and friends and found particular satisfaction in encouraging others, especially his son, to pursue education, leadership, and service. In his later years, he enjoyed reading, writing, reflection, and time spent with those closest to him.

He is survived by his son, Dr. Missak Haigentz, Jr., and daughter-in-law Madeline Haigentz; his brother, Herair Kupelian; his sister, Aida Poladian; their children and families; and many lifelong friends and colleagues whose lives were enriched by his wisdom, generosity, and example.

His funeral service took place at St. Leon's Armenian Church in Fairlawn, NJ on October 22.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to support cancer research at Rutgers Cancer Institute: <https://raise.rutgersfoundation.org/Haigentz>

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.



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.

COMMUNITY NEWS

AGBU Celebrates 120 Years of Legacy and Unity at 94th General Assembly in Montréal

AGBU, from page 1

As master of ceremonies, Central Board member Sarkis Jebejian welcomed distinguished guests, including Archbishop Papken Tcharian, Prelate of the Armenian Prelacy of Canada; Bishop Abgar Hovakimyan; Ashot Mnatsakanyan, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Egypt; reverend clergy; members of the AGBU Council of Trustees, including AGBU Honorary President Berge Setrakian, Elie Akilian, Joseph Oughourlian and Sinan Sinanian; Emeritus Central Board member Arshavir Gundjian; and Levon Afeyan, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Armenia in Québec. He thanked the AGBU Montréal Chapter, led by Chair Chahé Tanachian, Vice Chair Silva Man-gassarian and Secretary Hagop Arslanian, and the cadre of local volunteers for their efforts throughout the three days of hosting and supporting the milestone occasion. He also read a letter from AGBU Council of Trustees Chairman Vatche Manoukian, who sent his warm wishes to the Assembly and called for renewed focus on serving the global Armenian Diaspora.

Following reports by Central Board Treasurer Nazareth Festekjian and Central Board member Haig Ariyan on behalf of the Auditing Committee, the Assembly approved AGBU's financial statements for 2024 and 2025.

Central Board members then shared the organization's progress and vision. Central Board member and President of AGBU Europe Camilio Azzouz outlined AGBU's three areas of focus: a strong and independent homeland, a growing Diaspora, and the Armenian Apostolic Church. Recalling that the Church preserved the Armenian people's faith, language and memory long before the modern state, he affirmed



Members of the AGBU Central Board at the AGBU Alex Manoogian Center during the 94th General Assembly

Central Board member Dr. Levon Nazarian, Chair of the Nominating Committee, announced the re-election of board members Haig Ariyan (US); Arnaud Attamian (UK), Camilio Azzouz (UK), Yervant Demirjian (US), Ari Libarikian (US), Ani Manoukian (US), Lori Muncherian (US), Lena Sarkissian (CA) and Vartkess Knadjian (CH) to another term on the Central Board, and the Assembly welcomed new member Nicholas Nazarian (US).

Among the distinguished guests were: Honorable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Industry and Minister Responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions; Her Excellency Anahit Harutyunyan, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Canada; and His Excellency Andrew Turner, first resident and now former Ambassador of Canada to Armenia. Also in attendance were MP Annie Koutrakis, member of the House of Commons of Canada, Alain

AGBU France Nadia Gortzounian and bestowed by President Sam Simonian to Minister Mélanie Joly. In her remarks, Minister Joly recalled her October 2023 visit to Armenia as Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the wake of the forced displacement of as many as 120,000 Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh. "There's nothing like going to meet people affected by crises, affected by war," she reflected. "It was important for me to visit the southern borders of Armenia, to sit down with strong Armenian women refugees and hear their stories." Minister Joly was joined by Annie Koutrakis, Member of Parliament for Vimy and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Jobs and Families, who delivered a congratulatory message from the Right Honorable Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada.

Central Board Secretary Ani Manoukian announced and introduced the remaining awardees, first reflecting on how the Montréal community exemplifies what AGBU offers at every stage of life. She recalled her own connections to the city across generations, from childhood visits to family and friends at the AGBU school to AGBU FOCUS in Montréal in 2003. "You see different touchpoints of our lives, different generations," she said. "It is a beautiful community." The AGBU Alex Manoogian Award for Leadership was presented to Aram Yacoubian, benefactor, former Chair of the AGBU Montreal Chapter and former Vice Chair of the AGBU Alex Manoogian School Board. The AGBU President's Award for Outstanding Service was given to Hagop Arslanian, Secretary of AGBU Montreal; Boris Adjemian, Director of the AGBU Nubar Library in Paris; Takouhi Lepedjian, Coordinator of the AGBU District Committee of Lebanon; and Maroush Yeramian Nahhas, Archivist of the AGBU District Committee of Egypt, whose award was accepted on her behalf by District Chair, Dr. Kevork Erzingatzian. The AGBU Outstanding Service Award was presented jointly to the AGBU District Committee of Egypt and the AGBU Cairo Chapter, as well as to AGBU YP Nice.

Guided by Its North Star

In his address, President Sam Simonian reflected on his first two years as AGBU's eighth president, and on his duty to ensure that the founding principles that made AGBU the world's largest Armenian non-profit organization remain its North Star. "That North Star is the theme of our GA weekend," he said. "It's called Legacy." He also spoke about his Touchpoints Tour, which since 2024 has taken him to AGBU communities around the world, giving him

a firsthand understanding of each community. "There are more miles to go," he added, "but I have already gained a greater appreciation for the essential value that our local communities bring to the Armenian Experience." He reaffirmed the founders' commitment to non-partisanship and political neutrality and supporting all Armenian national institutions.



AGBU President Sam Simonian delivers his keynote address to the 94th General Assembly

Looking ahead, Simonian shared his vision for two educational initiatives for the younger generation: bringing AI education to Armenian schools, with an emphasis on critical thinking and academic independence, and offering young people in Armenia online extracurricular education in financial literacy. He promised to report on their progress at the next General Assembly in 2028.

Ara Balikian, Chair of the Committee of Resolutions, then presented the Assembly's resolution, through which the General Assembly reaffirmed AGBU's commitment to the Armenian Church, the Armenian State and the Diaspora. To close the proceedings, AGBU youth joined President Simonian, Ambassador Harutyunyan, Honorary President Setrakian and members of the Central Board and Council of Trustees to cut a 120th anniversary cake, before leading the room in a rousing rendition of the AGBU anthem. Delegates and guests then gathered for lunch at the adjacent AGBU Alex Manoogian School.

LEGACY: Celebrating the Power of Global Unity

That evening, the weekend reached its inspirational peak at Montréal's landmark Théâtre Outremont with the world premiere of LEGACY: Celebrating the Power of Global Unity—a spectacular multimedia event, organized by AGBU Arts in

continued on next page



AGBU leadership, joined by clergy and distinguished guests, including CB emeritus member and current President of the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, celebrates its 120-year legacy with an anniversary cake

that AGBU has stood beside the Church for 120 years and always will, noting that "our role must always be to bring Armenians together, never to drive them apart." Central Board member and President of AGBU Armenia Vasken Yacoubian described AGBU's shift from aid to socio-economic development in Armenia, which has entered a flourishing era of economic growth and industrial maturity.

Central Board member Lena Sarkissian reported on AGBU's education programs which now reach more than 100,000 learners worldwide. AGBU Central Board Vice President Arda Haratunian highlighted the growth and impact of the Young Professionals (YP) global network and the recognition of APRI Armenia as one of the world's top 100 think tanks.

De Souza, Mayor of Saint-Laurent, and City Councilors Aref Salem and Vana Nazarian.

Messages of blessings and congratulations were also read on behalf of Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, by Bishop Abgar Hovakimyan, and Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia Aram I, by Archbishop Papken Tcharian.

AGBU General Assembly 2026

Honorees

Continuing a longstanding General Assembly tradition, AGBU recognized individuals and groups for their exceptional service to the organization and the Armenian people. The highest honor in this regard is the Boghos Nubar Award. This year's recipient was announced and introduced by Central Board member and Co-President of



COMMUNITY NEWS

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collaboration with People of Ar Productions and generously sponsored by longtime AGBU Montréal benefactor Ani Yacoubian.

AGBU Montréal Chapter Chair Chahé Tanachian welcomed the audience, noting that through the darkest chapters of Armenian history and its brightest achievements, AGBU has remained “a source of hope, opportunity, and resilience.” “As we celebrate 120 years of legacy, let us remember that a legacy is not only what we inherit,” he remarked. “It is what we choose to build and what we leave for those who follow.”

Featuring acclaimed Armenian musicians, fan-favorite vocalists, accomplished dance troupes and artistic producers, the collaborative all-encompassing concert and dazzling motion graphic artistry paid tribute to the Armenian Experience through time, intertwined with the telling of AGBU’s 120-year history in an overture, five acts and coda: Shelter, Memory, Opportunity, Com-

with live animated visuals.

The program moved from the haunting melodies of Komitas and Barsegh Kanachyan to the works of Arno Babajanian, Georges Garvarentz and Astor Piazzolla, with playful moments such as Kradjian’s Vivaldi Eats Ghapama. AGBU Montréal’s Garni Dance Ensemble performed Uzun Dara and Qochari and the AGBU Stars Children’s Choir singing Bari Aragil. In the closing coda, The Next 120, the full company united for Garvarentz and Aznavour’s Pour toi Arménie, a fitting finale to an evening built around a message: what survives is what we pass on.

Pre-Assembly Events

Leading up to the official GA meeting, four substantive events were organized by AGBU Global in conjunction with the AGBU Montréal community, each appealing to different interests of attendees.

YP Global Executive Meeting and YP

Welcome Night: The weekend opened on Thursday, October 15, at the Montréal Marriott Château Champlain with the AGBU Young Professionals (YP) Global Executive Meeting, which convened 28 YP leaders from 11 countries, representing a network that now counts 50 groups worldwide. The program included a dance workshop led by Loussiné Khachadourian, chair of AGBU London; a presentation by Central Board member and President of AGBU Europe Camilio Azzouz on new professional development initiatives for the YP Network; and a content creation workshop led by Rouben Koulaksezian, author and founder of Little Armenias.

A highlight of the meeting was a fireside chat on community leadership with Central Board Secretary Ani Manoukian, moderated by Natasha Nouri, Vice Chair of AGBU YP Greater New York. Drawing on more than two decades in the YP Network, Manoukian offered practical advice on balancing a demanding career with volunteer life and on keeping teams motivated and spoke to the value of gatherings like this one. “There’s nothing that can replicate the energy when you’re sitting together with people who are like-minded and want to make a difference,” she said.

She closed by asking the room to remember what first drew them to AGBU. “You signed up for this because something in you wants to give more,” she said. “Reconnect with what that something is.”

That evening, more than 200 young professionals kicked off the weekend in festive style at the YP Welcome Night hosted at Auberge Saint-Gabriel in Old Montréal.

Delegates Workshop: On Friday, October 16, more than 150 delegates from AGBU districts, chapters, and YP groups took part in the Delegates Workshop at the Marriott, led by Ani Manoukian and Camilio Azzouz. The day opened with a look back at 120 years of service guided by a simple principle: where there was need, AGBU responded. Presenters noted that AGBU’s support for Armenia has remained unconditional and non-partisan for more than a century. Through its Artsakh Heritage Grants, AGBU continues to ensure that Artsakh is not forgotten. Delegates then turned to the organization’s priorities in Armenia from 2026 onward: adult education and job training, youth engagement, a scalable curriculum and digital literacy for public schools, and programs that keep the Diaspora connected to the homeland. In breakout sessions, delegates discussed how their communities engage with Armenia today and how to grow their own, from scaling successful programs to reaching new generations.

APRI Montréal Meeting: Immediately following the Delegates workshop, the APRI Armenia Montreal Meeting themed Armenia at the Crossroads: Geopolitics, Connectivity, and the Tech Frontier, offered an insightful discussion among international experts in related disciplines. APRI Armenia President Lara Setrakian opened with an overview of the think tank’s mission and impact, followed by remarks from Board Chair Dr. Yervant Zorian and Board Member Arda Haratunian and an interview with former Canadian Ambassador to Armenia Andrew Turner.

Moderated by Setrakian, three panels examined The Economic and Strategic Acceleration of a High-Tech Armenia, US Policy in the South Caucasus and the Implementation of TRIPP, and US-Iran Tensions and the Future of the South Caucasus. Speakers included Raffi Krikorian, Chief Technology Officer of Mozilla; Garo Paylan, Scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; and Dr. Hriar Cabayan, Visiting Scientist at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, among other leading experts.

120th Anniversary Cocktail Dînatore: On Friday evening, 420 guests filled Crew Collective, the grand former banking hall of the Royal Bank of Canada’s historic headquarters in Old Montréal, for a 120th Anniversary Cocktail Dînatore. Beneath soaring vaulted ceilings, members of the AGBU community celebrated 120 years of impact, connection and community. The evening was generously sponsored by longtime AGBU benefactors Aram and Bellinda Yacoubian. Event chair Bellinda Yacoubian welcomed guests with remarks, after which the program featured duduk player Emmanuel Hovhannisyan, DJ Crowna and visual artist Kevork Mourad.

Divine Liturgy

On Sunday, October 18, the Divine Liturgy at St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Cathedral, celebrated by Bishop Ashot Mnatsakanyan, was attended by past and present members of the AGBU Central Board and dozens of delegates from abroad. Before the sermon, Bishop Abgar Hovakimyan warmly welcomed his fellow Primate from Egypt who offered words of praise in recognition of AGBU’s 120 years of legacy. A reception followed in the Diocese’s reception hall.

Over four days in Montréal, AGBU members honored 120 years of service and looked ahead to the next, in the same spirit of unity that has put AGBU in the forefront of Armenian life since 1906.

Relive the 94th General Assembly weekend through photos, videos and highlights at agbu.org/general-assembly-gallery-2026



AGBU 94th General Assembly honorees

munity and Continuity.

Headliner Sebu Simonian, one-half of the Grammy-nominated duo Capital Cities, performed works by Komitas alongside his hit Safe and Sound. He was joined by Emmanuel Hovhannisyan, first duduk player of the Armenian State Orchestra of National Instruments; pop singer and Eurovision alumna Inga Arshakyan; soprano Armine Vardanyan; oboist Hayk Hekekyan; the Serouj Kradjian Band; the Quatuor Rhapsodie String Quartet; and the Navasard Folk Project. Throughout the night, New York-based painter and video artist Kevork Mourad brought the music to life



AGBU President Sam Simonian with Boghos Nubar Award recipient Minister of Industry Mélanie Joly

Sts. Sahag and Mesrob
Armenian Church
70 Jefferson St
Providence, RI

FOOD FAIR & BAZAAR

NOVEMBER 7 & 8
SATURDAY 12PM - 7PM
SUNDAY 12PM - 5PM

DELICIOUS ARMENIAN FOOD AND PASTRIES

Lamb shish kebab, losh kebab, baked half chicken,
kheyma, kufta, lahmajoon, boreg, yalanchi,
choreg, cream khadaif, paklava, katah, kourabia,
Armenian coffee and much more!

COME FOR LUNCH,
DINNER, OR TAKEOUT

\$1000 Raffle
Kids Activities, Vendors
Nazeli Dance Group 2:00 Sunday



Clockwise from top left: Soprano Armine Vardanyan; pianist Serouj Kradjian; pop singer and Eurovision alumna Inga Arshakyan; and Sebu Simonian of Capital Cities, perform at LEGACY at Montréal's Théâtre Outremont



Arts & Culture

System of a Down’s Shavo Odadjian Makes Cameo on New Tubi Comedy

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

LOS ANGELES — A raunchy buddy movie, directed by and starring Constantine Paraskevopoulos, titled “BFFs,” is now available to stream on the free platform Tubi. The film is written by veteran filmmaker Adam Rifkin, who also co-stars alongside Constantine as the childhood friend, Henry.

There are a whole host of noted stars in the film, including System of a Down’s Shavo Odadjian, Taye Diggs, Terrence Howard, Jennifer Morrison, Kane Hodder, Nick Stahl and Amaury Nolasco.

The story follows a chaotic reunion when Jerry Klugman (played by Paraskevopoulos) returns to reconnect with his childhood best friend, Henry Hartman. Of course, mayhem ensues.

The film is produced by Ammni Studios and Digital Ignition Entertainment, with Wu-Tang Clan member RZA serving as a producer.

In a recent interview, Paraskevopoulos explained the film as “a raun-



Poster for “BFFs”

chy buddy comedy in the spirit of the ‘80s and ‘90s classics — the kind Hollywood stopped making. Two childhood best friends reunite and their prank war escalates until everything spirals out of control.”

“Jerry (me) reconnects with his old best friend Henry (Adam Rifkin), who’s stuck in a dead-end marriage and a soul-crushing job. Jerry’s mission is to reignite his best friend’s spark — but the pranks go too far, and chaos comes from every direction. The leads represent relationships that have hit that rough spot, and that’s always fascinated me. Movies always let you know what happens when it’s over, or they spend the whole film building up to the spark of something — but what about the messy middle, the in-between? That’s what we were exploring,” Paraskevopoulos explained. “It’s amazing how people who would’ve literally jumped in front of a train to save the other person’s life can sour so quickly — eighteen months after being in love, people hire divorce attorneys, spend see BFFS, page 14



Gagik Ghazanchyan

Ghazanchyan Exhibition Probes the ‘Unfamiliar City’

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — On September 30, large numbers of artists and art-lovers filled the spacious rooms of Gallery One of the Cafesjian Center for the Arts in Yerevan for the opening preview of an exhibition of recent works by Gagik Ghazanchyan. The artist, born in 1960 in Yerevan, studied in the Painting Department of the Panos Terlemezian State College of Fine Arts in Yerevan, and in the Graphic Arts Department of the Yerevan Institute of Fine Arts and Theater. A member of the Artists’ Union of Armenia since 1992, in the last 40 years he has exhibited in major cities in the USA, Europe and the Middle East. The Cafesjian Center for the Arts, which included his works in 2018 in a group exhibition of contemporary abstract art, now hosts a solo exhibition.

The show, entitled unFamiliar City, is both exciting and provocative, as it poses challenges to the eye and the intellect. As one strolls along the walls and pauses to contemplate each of the gigantic canvases, the question arises, where am I? It is like driving a car into a metropolitan center on a cold autumn evening, with torrents of rain pounding on the windshield, making it almost impossible to identify people or objects. Then, slowly, the eye begins to discern among the webs of parallel black lines flanking broad brush strokes of color, snippets of photographs (taken by the artist during travel) of urban edifices, towering against a darkened sky. Aha, we are in the city, some city – but what city?

The Ideal City or Megalopolis Madness?

The works on display, painted between 2024 and 2026, record Ghazanchyan’s continuing preoccupation with urban settings, and the process of urbanization over time, through which the city assumes enigmatic new forms and exudes shifting moods. Historically, the typical European city, for example, grew up around

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A scene from the exhibition preview

Artist Marine Zuloyan Returns To Montreal for Solo Exhibition at Tekeyan Center This November

MONTREAL — The Armenian Diocese of Canada is organizing a solo exhibition featuring recent works by artist and painter Marine Zuloyan. The three-day exhibition will take place November 27–29, 2026, at the Tekeyan Cultural Association’s Center in Montreal.

Born in Echmiadzin, Armenia, and holding a master’s degree in fine arts, Zuloyan has exhibited internationally, presenting her work to audiences across Canada, the United States, and Europe.



Marine Zuloyan

Her distinctive artistic style combines the bold, expressive colors of Fauvism, inspired by masters such as Henri Matisse and Paul Gauguin, with the rich traditions of her Armenian cultural heritage. Her oil paintings and watercolors often portray women in traditional Armenian attire, adorned with intricate lace veils and headdresses. Her work also encompasses poetic floral compositions, depictions of nature, and portraits.



Marine Zuloyan, “Vardy-Nova,” 2022, oil on canvas, 24×30 inches

Through her vibrant palette and expressive imagery, Zuloyan invites viewers into a dreamlike world of innocence, purity, beauty, and heartfelt sincerity, celebrating the enduring connection between cultural identity and artistic expression.

The opening reception takes place on Friday, November 27, at 6:00–9:00 p.m.. The exhibition continues on Saturday, November 28 at 11:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m., and Sunday, November 29 at 11:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m., at the Tekeyan Center (825 Manooagian St., Ville Saint-Laurent).

For more on Zuloyan’s art, see www.zuloyan.com or her Instagram page.



ARTS & CULTURE

Tekeyan Cultural Association Pasadena–Glendale Chapter, Armenian Art Gallery Present Contemporary Armenian Artists

ALTADENA, CA — The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Pasadena–Glendale Chapter, in collaboration with the Armenian Art Gallery, organized “Many Visions, One Space,” a collective exhibition held on October 15–17 at the TCA Beshgeturian Center. Over the course of three days, art enthusiasts and community members had the opportunity to discover the works of participating artists and experience the richness, diversity, and originality of contemporary Armenian art.

The exhibition brought together 48 Armenian artists from Armenia, France, and the United States. Their works showcased a wide range of artistic styles, individual perspectives, and creative approaches, reflecting the richness and diversity of contemporary Armenian art. The exhibition offered the community a unique opportunity to experience the works of Armenian artists gathered under one roof.

Upon entering the center, guests were warmly welcomed by Armenian women



A scene from the exhibition

dressed in traditional Armenian costumes. The costumes were provided by Lilit Melikyan, founding artist of the Teryan Cultural Center of Yerevan, who was also present at the exhibition as a participating artist, showcasing some of her distinctive works.

At the opening ceremony, Executive Secretary of the Western Region of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of America and Canada Mayda Kuredjian

delivered welcoming remarks.

Kuredjian emphasized that bringing together such a large number of artists under one roof to share their work with the public was an exceptional and unprecedented undertaking. She highlighted that the mission of the Tekeyan Cultural Association has always been to preserve and pass on Armenian national values through various fields of culture and the arts. The Association’s cultural programs consistently serve this important mission.

More than 20 participating artists attended the exhibition in person, giving visitors the opportunity to meet them, engage in conversation, and learn more about their creative vision. It is noteworthy that works by several participating artists are represented in the collections of internationally renowned museums, including the National Gallery of Armenia,

the Modern Art Museum of Yerevan, the Zimmerli Art Museum and the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow.

“Many Visions, One Space” was more than an art exhibition; it was a celebration of Armenian creativity and cultural heritage. By bringing together artists from Armenia and the Diaspora, the exhibition became a place for cultural exchange and connection, uniting diverse experiences, artistic expressions, and shared national values.

The Tekeyan Cultural Association Pasadena–Glendale Chapter has long played an important role in preserving and promoting Armenian culture and national heritage through literature, music, theater, the visual arts, educational initiatives, and community programs.

For its part, the Armenian Art Gallery, for more than 40 years, has been dedicated to collecting, preserving, presenting, and promoting the works of artists from Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora, making a significant contribution to the recognition and appreciation of Armenian art.

In concluding her remarks, Kuredjian thanked the participating artists and performers, including pianist Razmig Khatchigian and young singer Tamar Chavdarian, who performed Armenian songs accompanied by guitar. She also extended special thanks to Manouk Satamian and the participating volunteers for their meticulous work and valuable assistance in organizing the event.

Finally, she thanked all the art enthusiasts and guests whose presence, appreciation, and encouragement supported this cultural initiative.



Maestro Razmig Khatchigian

Ghazanchyan Exhibition Probes the ‘Unfamiliar City’

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the church and city hall, the court or palace, and seats of religious, political, cultural, and civic institutions. Plazas, large open spaces provided areas for craftsmen and artisans, merchants and bankers, and markets. The city existed as an organic structure, arranged with a center and successive concentric circles or polygonal shapes moving outwards, with radial avenues spanning out from the center. Geometric spatial relations created architectural harmony, and as the city expanded, growth occurred as an organic process. Cities that preserve such historical development are themselves works of art: Florence, or Cordoba, Prague or Isfahan, to name a few. In the modern era, the city has yielded to the megalopolis, sprawling, seemingly haphazard conglomerations, flanked by shopping malls and suburbia; or, the traditional city has become a collection of tightly knitted islands hosting ever-higher glass-and-steel skyscrapers that dwarf the human being. And they appear not only in the USA and Europe, but increasingly throughout the world. The personality of the city has devolved into anonymity, a process depicted on canvas in the cityscapes painted by artist Ghazanchyan.

As explained by exhibition curator Armen Yesayants, “The title unFamiliar City reflects both the spirit of Gagik Ghazanchyan’s recent work and his artistic engagement with urban environments, conceived between the recognizable and the unrecognizable. The familiar remains interwoven with the unfamiliar, just as

recognizable urban fragments persist within artistic forms that obscure, displace and transform them.”

The Ghost City

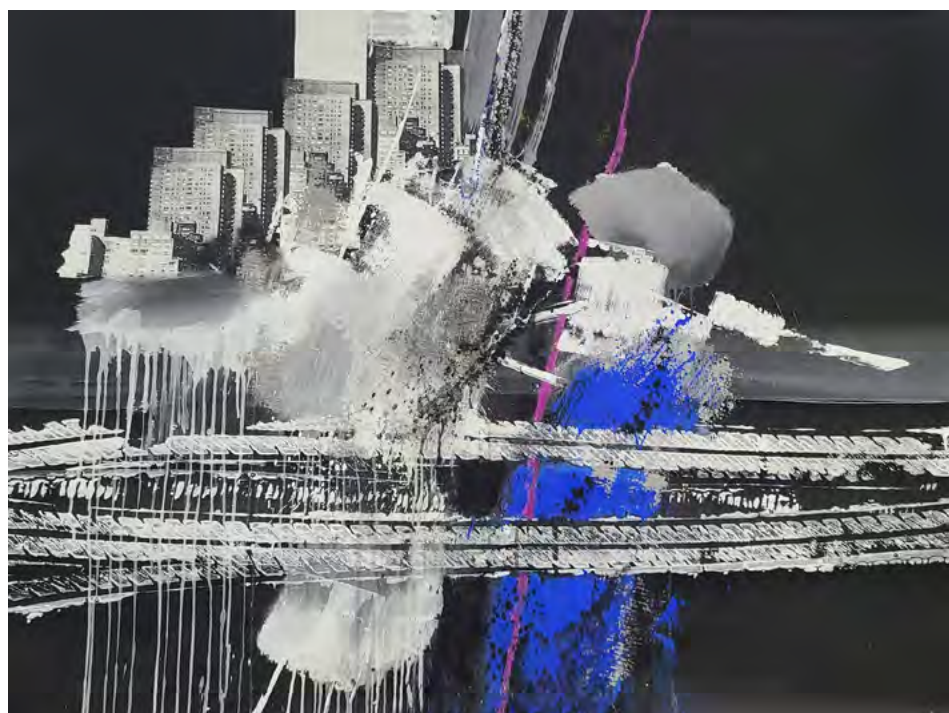
The physical changes in architectural design, city planning, and construction materials, have given rise to a city that, Yesayants notes, “recalls French Anthropologist Marc Augé’s concept of the ‘non-place’: spaces organized primarily around transit and consumption rather than dwelling, attachment and enduring socio-cultural relations. They therefore lack a stable identity and historical depth and are not shaped through enduring human relationships.”

The devastating impact on social interchange is expressed in Ghazanchyan’s cityscapes by its absence; his cityscapes are unpopulated: steel, concrete, glass, and asphalt abound, even the tread tracks of a vehicle mar the canvas, but not a single human face.

Art as a Way of Life

To conclude that the artist may be expressing a lack of human contact would be a grave error. The title of the exhibition, unFamiliar City, echoes with the idea of family, and Ghazanchyan’s own family environment tells a different story. The entire family are artists.

His son Guy’s central concern in his recent works is in fact the human face. And intimate human relationships, exemplified by the bond between mother and child, are a leading motif in the work of Lilit Soghomonyan, Ghazanchyan’s wife. Her late father, Van Soghomonyan, was a painter and ceramics artist, and her mother, Nona



Trajectory,” 110 x 150 cm., collage, paper, acrylic, 2025

Gabrielyan, is a multi-genre artist, who works in sculpture, painting, ceramics, poetry and prose. All, though in different forms, deal with the contemporary world. In depicting dehumanizing, depressing cityscapes, or the faces of suffering, or the ravages of war, is the artist acquiescing to a world devoid of humanity? Or is he stirring consciousness by decrying the degeneration of the modern urban environment in a clarion call to awaken humanity?

The exhibition unFamiliar City, which runs from October 1, 2026, to February 28,

2027, is taking place within the framework of “Natura Naturans: Human Beings, Nature, Landscape,” a project of the CYFEST 17 International Media Art Festival. In this project, significantly, the city is conceptualized as a “human-made landscape,” which in turn redefines the mode of human existence.

(The author is grateful to curator Armen Yesayants, whose exhibition concept has greatly enhanced her understanding of the works shown. All photos in this article are courtesy of Yesayants.)

ARTS & CULTURE

Konstantin Petrossian's Anniversary Concert Bridges Genres, Generations, Stamping His Legacy

By Vahan Artsruni

YEREVAN — Not every concert becomes a cultural event, nor can every musical evening transcend the boundaries of the concert hall and exert a lasting influence on the cultural life of society. Such events are distinguished not only by the excellence of their performances but also by the artistic substance, historical significance, and cultural value that allow them to become part of the collective memory of an era. The anniversary concert of Konstantin Petrossian, Honored Artist of the Republic of Armenia, composer, conductor, and pianist, held on September 28 in the Great Hall of the Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall, was undoubtedly one such occasion.

Petrossian's artistic achievements and longstanding creative career have received widespread recognition in Armenia and the United States. His contributions have been honored with prestigious state awards. On the occasion of the anniversary concert, Aram Satyan, President of the Composers' Union of Armenia, presented the composer with the Union's Gold Medal. In her welcoming address, Anna Asatryan, Director of the Institute of Arts of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia and a distinguished musicologist, likewise reflected on Petrossian's artistic achievements and creative legacy, characterizing them as a distinctive cultural phenomenon. These tributes acknowledged not only the significance of his individual accomplishments but also his distinctive place in Armenian musical culture. A message of congratulations and appreciation from the editorial board of the Armenian Musical Encyclopedia was also delivered from the stage. The evening was hosted by television presenter Karen Kocharyan.

The anniversary concert brought together leading ensembles and soloists representing the breadth and vitality of Armenia's musical and performing arts. Among the participants were the State Chamber Choir of Armenia, conducted by Robert Mkheyanyan; the State Jazz Orchestra of Armenia, under the direction of David Melkonyan; and Arevik, the Public Radio of Armenia's children's and youth ensemble, led by Vahe Hayrapetyan. They were joined by Sofia Melkumyan and Tigran Hakobyan, soloists of the National Opera Theater; jazz vocalist Anna Vardazaryan; saxophonist David Melkonyan; trumpeter Daniel Melkonyan; and virtuoso flutist Nelly Manukyan. This remarkable constellation of performers endowed the concert with exceptional artistic breadth and symbolic significance, bring-

ing together different generations, musical genres, and artistic sensibilities on a single stage.

The program's stylistic and generic range was particularly striking. Moving from academic choral music to jazz compositions, from spiritual works to patriotic songs, it revealed both the stylistic diversity of Petrossian's oeuvre and the underlying unity of his artistic vision. The evening featured premieres, new arrangements and performances of a high artistic and technical standard, offering a multifaceted portrait of the composer's creative world.

Of particular significance was the premiere of the folksong cycle *Native Bells*, arranged for mixed choir. These arrangements demonstrated Petrossian's ability to preserve the distinctive character of Armenian folk melodies while reimagining them within a richly developed polyphonic texture. Rooted in a profound respect for the Komitas tradition, the works also reflected the composer's individual creative voice and his commitment to sustaining the living continuity of Armenia's musical heritage.

One of the evening's highlights was the first performance on an Armenian stage of Petrossian's celebrated *Concerto for Voice and Jazz Orchestra*. In previous decades, the work had been performed in numerous countries by the legendary jazz vocalist Tatevik Hovhannisyan and the Vilnius Conservatory Big Band, conducted by Vladimir Chekasin. On this occasion, the solo part was entrusted to Anna Vardazaryan, daughter of composer Martin Vardazaryan.

Conducted by Konstantin Petrossian and performed by the State Jazz Orchestra of Armenia, the concerto emerged as a compelling synthesis of jazz expression and elements of Armenian sacred musical tradition. Its intricate harmonic language, diverse compositional techniques and richly layered orchestral texture formed a cohesive artistic whole. Bringing this complex work to life demanded not only technical virtuosity but also a refined understanding of style, expressive nuance, and the delicate balance between solo voice and orchestra.

The program also included magnificent variations for flugelhorn and orchestra, alongside two of Petrossian's best-known jazz compositions, *Gyumri* and *Garni*. The latter has, for decades, served as one of the signature works associated with the Armenian State Estrada Orchestra under the direction of Konstantin Orbelyan, becoming an enduring part of the ensemble's artistic identity.

Another noteworthy moment was the

first performance of Petrossian's *Vocalize* in a mixed-choir arrangement. The interpretation brought to light the work's distinctive timbral qualities and polyphonic possibilities, demonstrating how a new performing context can reveal previously unexplored dimensions of a composition.



Konstantin Petrossian at the concert

The song *Our Lady*, imbued with spiritual solemnity and set to words by Archbishop Nerses Pozapalyan, was performed by Sofia Melkumyan, the young soloist of the National Opera Theater. Her interpretation brought a distinctive sense of intimacy and reverence to the work, enriching the concert's spiritual and emotional dimension.

The academic portion of the program concluded with the stirring patriotic chorus *Azg Haykazyan*, set to words by Gevorg Karapetyan. The work transformed the evening's artistic momentum into a powerful affirmation of national identity, collective memory, and cultural belonging.

The participation of the Arevik ensemble occupied a special place in the concert's emotional landscape. Its performances of *Chocolate Clock* and *Space*, both set to lyrics by Aramayis Sahakyan, evoked childhood memories shared by several generations of listeners. These familiar songs brought the passage of time and the continuity of human experience into particularly vivid focus. Their inclusion underscored one of the defining qualities of Petrossian's music: its ability to transcend generational boundaries and draw listeners of different

ages into a shared emotional world.

The concert culminated in Petrossian's iconic and much-loved song *Armenia*, with lyrics by Nansen Mikaelyan. Accompanied by the choir and orchestra, Tigran Hakobyan, a young soloist of the National Opera Theater, delivered a performance of great solemnity and emotional intensity. Having long since transcended the boundaries of an individual composer's oeuvre, *Armenia* has become part of the nation's collective musical memory. Its performance united the stage and the audience in a shared expression of emotion, bringing the anniversary evening to a powerful and fitting conclusion.

The significance of the concert, however, extended far beyond the celebration of Petrossian's anniversary or a retrospective. The packed hall, the participation of performers from different generations and the audience's evident engagement with the works on the program all testified to the continuing relevance of his music. Petrossian's artistic language cannot be confined to a single period or genre. It brings together the structural and expressive traditions of academic music, the freedom and improvisational spirit of jazz, the melodic richness of Armenian musical culture, and the profound resonances of its spiritual heritage. From this synthesis emerges a distinctive musical idiom capable of speaking to audiences across generations.

Perhaps the enduring appeal of Konstantin Petrossian's music lies in its ability to transcend time. Bridging the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, his works have retained their vitality, continuing to engage new generations while remaining deeply rooted in Armenian cultural identity. They do more than evoke the past: they remain active participants in the musical life of the present, acquiring new interpretive dimensions through successive performances and reaching new audiences in the process.

The concert offered compelling evidence of this continuity. It reaffirmed Petrossian's place as a significant figure in Armenia's musical life and demonstrated the enduring resonance of his artistic legacy among Armenians both at home and around the world. More than a commemorative evening, the concert became a celebration of national musical heritage, a testament to creative continuity, and a meaningful dialogue between generations. It also demonstrated how an individual composer's oeuvre, shaped by diverse musical traditions yet grounded in a distinct cultural identity, can transcend the concert hall to become a living phenomenon within the broader cultural consciousness.

System of a Down's Shavo Odadjian Makes Cameo on New Tubi Comedy

BFFS, from page 12

\$200,000 on custody battles, and try to destroy each other's lives."

Paraskevopoulos said he has spent his entire career in films, and is currently the showrunner for an Icelandic series called "Fjord."

As for how he met and persuaded Odadjian to pop up in the film, he said, "Shavo and I hit it off early — I love all my Armenian brothers. When I moved to Los Angeles, RZA introduced us. RZA came on as a producer of this film, and the three of us have been friends for many, many years. When I asked him to do the cameo, I thought he was perfect for it — he looks like the biggest badass you'd ever see in a jail cell, so I thought

it was funny that this absurd character Jerry I play would somehow be friendly with the toughest-looking guy in the jail. It's kind of amazing to me, and it shows what kind of person he is — that on a super low-budget film, he would show up and be such a champion, willing to do a super fun cameo. I love him completely. He's the man. And there's a little treat with Shavo at the very, very end of the movie — but you have to get all the way to the end for it."

The film is free on Tubi now.

He concluded, "And as a Greek-American, I've always felt a real kinship with the Armenian community, so having Shavo in the film means a lot personally."



Shavo Odadjian, at left, in a scene from "BFFs"



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe
Corner



by Christine
Vartanian Datian



Collections from the Grapevine:
Mary Krikorian’s Imam Bayeldi
(Eggplant Appetizer)

FOWLER, CA — Located about 10 miles south of downtown Fresno in the quiet farming community of Fowler, St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church parishioners have met and held church services in the original structure since 1910, making it the second oldest Armenian Church still in use today in America (the oldest is located in Union City, New Jersey, consecrated in 1907). St. Gregory also has the distinction of being the fourth oldest established Armenian Apostolic parish in the country.

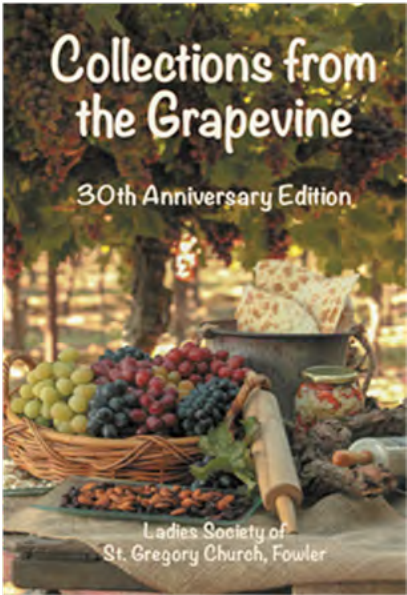
The church cookbook, Collections from the Grapevine says, “As the Ladies Society of St. Gregory the Illuminator, our objective is to study, practice, and to propagate the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, the doctrines, and rites of the Armenian church. The year 2020 found us adapting to a global pandemic by changing our daily routines and spending more time at home – especially in our kitchens. Creating a home-cooked meal became more than an infrequent endeavor. It stood as a means for younger generations to quiet the rush of their busy lives and bond over food and family. Older generations found comfort in revisiting past routines filled with sweet memories.”

“In revising this cookbook, we have retained nearly all of the original recipes and have added almost 100 new ones. We have reorganized sections to make them more user-friendly, and have added an index to assist in finding foods you might like to prepare. We hope you will enjoy this new edition and use it regularly. As you knead the dough, or roll the yalanchi, may your hearts be fed.”

“Collections from the Grapevine is dedicated to the hard-working and devoted women who loved and supported this church from its early beginnings over 110 years ago. These women worked tirelessly to prepare countless meals for church dinners, food bazaars, annual picnics, and other events. Through the years, their many culinary talents and efforts received accolades from both Armenians and non-Armenians alike. The first edition of the cookbook (1990) aimed at keeping our heritage alive by transmitting and preserving favorite, well-tested recipes to future generations. We hope this edition will meet the same goals.”

Mary Krikorian’s Imam Bayeldi (Eggplant Appetizer)

Imam Bayeldi, literally “the imam fainted,” is a traditional vegan dish of tender stuffed eggplant shared across Levantine, Armenian, Greek, and Turkish cuisines. While its origins trace back to the Ottoman Empire, it is a staple in the Armenian kitchen, where it is prepared as a vegan or meatless baked or simmered vegetable dish.



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 large eggplant
- 2 to 3 medium onions
- 2 medium green bell peppers
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup Armenian parsley, chopped
- 1 large tomato, sliced
- Salt, pepper, and Accent to taste
- 1 can or a little less tomato sauce
- Olive oil

PREPARATION:

Slice the eggplant into 1/4-inch slices. You want uniform pieces so they will bake evenly and at the same time. Sprinkle each slice with salt and let stand at least 30 minutes to expel water evenly. Drain and dry with paper towels.

Brush eggplant slices with olive oil and bake on a cookie sheet in a hot oven (450°F) until lightly browned.

In a frying pan, heat olive oil and sauté the onions, bell pepper, garlic, and spices. Do not overcook, just until wilted. Add the parsley and tomato sauce and cook for a few minutes longer. Arrange eggplant slices in a prepared baking pan and pour tomato sauce over all.

Bake in a 375°F oven for about 30 minutes. Serve cold or at room temperature.

Serves 4

Also see Ara Kassabian’s Imam Bayeldi recipe at: <https://thearmeniankitchen.com/meatless-imam-bayeldi-or-baylee-baghlee/>

Marge Esraelian’s Lenten Kufta

A meatless kufta with a unique blend of flavors.

Filling:

- 1 18 oz. jar chunky peanut butter
- 6 medium onions, chopped
- 1/2 to 3/4 jar (16 oz.) tahini
- 2 1/2 cups walnuts, ground
- 1 large bunch Armenian parsley, chopped
- Olive oil

Outside Shell:

- 6 cans garbanzo beans, washed, drained, ground
- 2 1/2 cups fine bulgur
- 1 1/4 cups regular Cream of Wheat
- 3 eggs
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Seasonings:
- Lemon juice
- Paprika or cayenne pepper
- Salt and pepper

Filling: Fry the onions in 1/4 cup of oil until wilted; remove from stove and cool. Squeeze liquid from the onions with paper towels. Combine the peanut butter, tahini, walnuts, parsley, onions, and seasonings in a large bowl. If mixture is too dry, add a little hot water. Mix or knead filling gently for a few minutes and make the balls for the filling (about the size of a walnut). Place them on a tray and cool in the refrigerator.

Outside: Combine and knead the outside shell ingredients; use a little hot water to make a workable dough. Press down in center and sides, rotating until you get a thin shell. Make an indentation in the center with your thumb and keep opening and shaping with your index and middle finger. Place one walnut-size ball of filling in the center, gently encase the filling with the outer shell. Finally, smooth the surface with wet fingers, making sure the kufta is flat on the bottom and slightly rounded on the top.

Place shaped kufta on a waxed paper-lined tray or plate, and refrigerate for 20-30 minutes. Bring a large pot of water to a full boil, adding some salt and about 1/4 cup lemon juice. Remove kufta from the refrigerator; boil in small batches for about 10 minutes until all kufta are cooked and rise to the top. Cool kufta for a few minutes; rub with a little oil and sprinkle with paprika or cayenne pepper on top and serve.

Also see Peanut Butter Kufteh – a Unique Lenten Recipe from the Women’s Guild of St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Charlotte, North Carolina at: <https://thearmeniankitchen.com/peanut-butter-kufteh-unique-lenten/>

Photos courtesy of Ladies Society of St. Gregory Church in Fowler

The St. Gregory Ladies Society was founded in 1949 by Rose Kandarian, Edna Ahronian, and Nan Mirigian. This organization flourished with members that were dedicated to aiding different aspects of the church such as the church choir, Sunday school, and maintenance of the Markarian Hall. For over seven decades, these devoted women at St. Gregory Fowler have served their church collectively, faithfully, and spiritually.

ORDER TODAY: Published in 2020, the fourth printing of Collections from the Grapevine is available for \$25.00 each plus shipping costs. Please send check to: St. Gregory Ladies Society, P.O. Box 246, Fowler, CA 93625.

For information or to contribute, contact:

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ARTS & CULTURE

Mellow Moodscapes at Guillaume Toumanian's 'Inwardness'

By Christopher Atamian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK — Curated by Laura de Pontcharra, Guillaume Toumanian's exhibition "Inwardness" at the Curator Lab in the 529 Arts Building in Chelsea introduces New Yorkers to a talented painter with a canny sense of the uncanny. Using a delightfully uncommon palette of midnight blues, glistening blacks, crimson reds, ochres and muted orange, he elicits in viewers a wide range of inner emotions. These hover somewhere between outright melancholia and bluesy unrest, through both landscape and portraiture.

They speak to us, and say something ineffable about the human condition, about its "inwardness" or inner life, as I take the painter to mean in the title used for the works on display. The influence of Turner and especially Dutch and Flemish Lowland painters comes through strongly in these haunting mid-sized landscapes, with their ineffable and subtle play on light. The truncated bodies in others reflect both a philosophical mind/body schism, as well as our everyday estrangement from ourselves.

On the subject of Toumanian's way with color, fellow critic Julie Chaizemartin recently wrote: "To enter Guillaume Toumanian's paintings is to enter a nitescent darkness. Black gleams, not with classic chiaroscuro, but with a sheet of dreamy acidity of purplish and cobalt-blue stripes."

Toumanian was born in Marseille in 1974 and divides his time between Bordeaux and Paris. He studied visual arts at Université Bordeaux Maigne from 1993 to 1997, including drawing and painting workshops at the annex of the École des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux. Since then, he has developed a distinctive visual language he describes as "landscapes of memory."

He has held several solo exhibitions in Paris at the Lazarew de Pontcharra Gallery, which represents him internationally, and at the Luxembourg Art Week international art fair. He has also exhibited at the Chapelle des Cordeliers in Toulouse (2024), accompanied

by the publication of a monograph by the Paris-based Éditions Lord Byron; *Enraciné* at the Centre d'art contemporain des Landes in Mont-de-Marsan (2020); and *Variations* at Galerie Samira Cambie in Montpellier (2018, 2021 and 2025). His career includes several major group exhibitions, such as *Immortelle*, at MO.CO. Montpellier Contemporain in spring 2023, which brought together eighty contemporary painters, as well as *Luxe, calme et volupté* at the La Malmaison Art Centre in Cannes.

At a time when contemporary art was dominated by conceptual art, photography and new media, Toumanian remained faithful to the traditional practice of painting. Emerging in the 1990's he chose a path centered, as he explains, "not on irony, politics, or provocation, but on silence, contemplation, and the metaphysical." As Dominique Rabaté has written on several occasions, painting for Toumanian is an "essential gesture."

Toumanian's practice is also informed by a renewed connection to his paternal Armenian heritage. His grandparents' family survived the Armenian Genocide and settled in Marseille where a prosperous community of Armenian merchants has existed as far back as the 16th century. Like many Armenians, the Toumanians gradually lost touch with their ancestral roots as they rebuilt their lives. A visit to Armenia several years ago however, rekindled the artist's interest in the country's history and culture, inspiring a deep engagement with its contemporary artistic scene.

In 2022, he founded *Projet Menk*, whose name means "we" in Armenian, to foster exchanges between French and Armenian artists through residencies, exhibitions, and publications. The initiative creates opportunities for Armenian artists to gain visibility internationally, while enabling French artists to engage with Armenia's cultural landscape.

Among the project's activities are collaborations in printmaking and ceramics. In June 2024, the project brought Armenian artists Arman Vahanyan and Tigran Sahakyan to



Guillaume Toumanian, "Double," 2026, oil on canvas, 51 x 39 in.

Paris for a residency at the prestigious Idem art printmaking studio. The collaboration extended into the publication *This Morning, That Night* in Yerevan, printed in Armenia by Editions Aivazian, accompanied by limited-edition printed engravings at Studio Sahakyan in February 2026. The book and accompanying limited-edition prints will be presented to the Parisian public in November at the Signatures Art fair at the Carreau du Temple. Fourteen artists have now created original prints through the initiative, several of which are available through the *Projet Menk* online site.

Over the decades, Toumanian's mastery of pigments and his use of thinly layered oil and glazing have created a style both rich in depth and luminosity, while his use of *sfumato* and *chiaroscuro* recalls that of Caspar David Friedrich. Yet the artist's take on classic oil painting is uniquely contemporary: the process is deliberately slow and forms are deliberately blurred or partially obscured. The paintings depend on uncertainty, on places recognizable but difficult to pinpoint.

There is also something strikingly contemporary about this way of treating an image. Toumanian's blurred contours and unstable light suggest out-of-focus photographs or memories. But these are not paintings about technology. Interestingly enough, when first seeing these paintings last week, a distant memory etched in my head returned — it turns out that Mes Arménies blog editor Georges Festa, rest in peace, had used some of Toumanian's landscapes to illustrate sections of a poem that rock musician Anne Hirshfeld had set to music. Sometimes life does imitate art and vice versa.

So what interests Toumanian as an artist? Not the perfectly preserved image but, as he states, "the image as it fades, flickers, or survives in memory. quiet tension between the physical slowness of the paintings and the instability of the images they contain. Pigment is accumulated patiently, layer upon layer, while the forms themselves seem to be disappearing."

In "Double," the artist depicts an eerily still forest and the shallow pond at its base,

painted in ochre and different shades of vegetal green. The trees reflect down into the pool of water — everything seems both real and faded, like a memory we cannot quite recall, a place we have been many times but cannot quite place. It is both a specific forest and any forest. An almost pointillist method informs the work, but one is also reminded of Monet, absent the water lilies. Toumanian's talent also lies in creating depth on a two-dimensional page and his ability to foreground objects and suggest space by dint of shading: the pond loses itself in the deep forest — whether it merges or ends towards the back is anyone's guess. There is also the clever use of light, which is reflected in the water, almost otherworldly.

The vertical triptych entitled "Distant Landscapes" painted in deep blue, green and brown hues, as well as shades of dark brown, ochre and black recalls 19th century seascape painters such as Turner and another Armenian artist, the celebrated Crimean master Aivazovsky.

Strangely enough, it is neither Toumanian's Baconesque portraits nor his compellingly melancholy blue landscapes and seascapes that stay with one the most, but rather a deep glowing crimson work titled simply "Threshold." This last work seems to recall an open barn at sunset, simultaneously brash yet subdued, where work has just ended, or perhaps a sexual tryst is about to take place.

The exhibition title "Inwardness" speaks to all these works and to our existential solitude and the inexorable dominion of nature over man. This first New York City exhibition was long in coming. The Curator's Lab provides an important and unique way for artists of all stripes and genres to be introduced to the public in a salon environment in one of Chelsea's modern if somewhat aseptic spaces. My one reservation about "Inwardness": the works vary somewhat in quality and impact. A more selective choice of pieces and a better-considered arrangement could lend the exhibition a truly haunting power.

The Curator Lab, at 529 Arts, is located at 529 West 20th Street, New York City, and the exhibit runs from October 17 to November 4.



Guillaume Toumanian, "Threshold," 2026, oil on canvas, 39 x 31.5 in.



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

NOVEMBER 2 — Monday night, St. James Men’s Club, monthly dinner & gathering, with guest speakers Suzy Ohannessian & Mahaon Makridopoulos, topic: “The Sacred Art Of Healing Body, Soul, and Spirit.” Suzy is the founder of the Fifth Essence, LLC, a holistic wellness company, specializing in natural products and integrative therapies. Mahaon is a botanical researcher, herbalist, holistic therapist, and teacher specializing in ancient Greek medicine and philosophy. Mezza 6:15 pm, dinner 7 pm: Losh Kebab & Kheyma. All are welcome. Saint James Armenian Church, 465 Mount Auburn St., Watertown. For info or reservations call 617-923-8860.

NOVEMBER 10 — “The Role and Current Condition of the Media in Armenia” panel discussion with intro by Pulitzer-Prize winning investigative reporter Stephen Kurkjian, speakers Edik Baghdasaryan, editor in-chief of Hetq, Aram Arkun, managing editor of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, and Ara Khatchatourian, executive editor of *Asbarez*, with Dikran Kaligian, man-aging editor of the Armenian Review serving as moderator. 7:30 p.m. at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), 395 Concord Avenue, Belmont, in collaboration with the Armenian Assembly of America, Armenian National Committee of Eastern Massachusetts and the Tekeyan Cultural Association.

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 — Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church invites the community to its Thanksgiving Luncheon at 12:30 PM in Nishan & Margrit Atinizian Hall, 200 Lexington Street, Belmont, MA 02478. Join us for an afternoon of thanksgiving and fellowship. Sunday. Tickets: Adults \$40; youth and children \$25. Reservations: Parish Office, (617) 489-2280, or Ingrid, (617) 312-0805. Online registration and Venmo payment QR codes are available on the attached flyer.

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 15 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church’s Dr. Michael and Joyce Koligian Distinguished Speaker and Performing Arts Series presents pianist Karine Poghosyan, performing works by Liszt and Khachaturian. Poghosyan has appeared at Carnegie Hall, Vienna’s Musikverein and the Chicago Cultural Center, with acclaim from Gramophone Magazine and the American Record Guide. Sunday, 4 p.m., Holy Trinity Church Sanctuary, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. For info, visit www.htaac.org or call 617-354-0632. Free and open to the public.

NOVEMBER 21 — Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church Food Festival. 11 a.m. – 6. p.m., 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. Eat-in or Take-out. The Food Festival menu includes lamb, chicken, and losh kebab dinners, and a vegetarian platter, a country store with a variety of Armenian specialties and deserts. The festival also features a jewelry table, an antique treasures boutique, gift items from Armenia as well as a backgammon tournament and narrated tours of the church’s sanctuary. For further information, call the church office at 978-256-7234.

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 — Join Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church for an evening of sacred music and a Christmas pageant on Sunday at 6 p.m. at 200 Lexington St., Belmont. Featuring Fr. Ghazar Bedrossian, Angeline Nazarian and Maria Emma Lyons, with pianist Marina Margarian and violinist Armenuhi Hovakimian. Refreshments will follow in Nishan & Margrit Atinizian Hall. Tickets: \$25, available through Venmo @HCACCMA or at the entrance. Everyone is welcome! Email:holycrossbostonma@gmail.com

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

MICHIGAN

NOVEMBER 9 — The Tufenkian Foundation and the Women’s Support Center are jointly sponsoring a luncheon featuring a talk by Maro Matosian, the executive director of the Women’s Support Center in Armenia, on November 9, at the Iroquois Club, 43248 North Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills. Tickets are \$35. Luncheon will be served at 11:30 a.m. To attend, RSVP Linda Karibian by October 26, at (248) 496-6292 or ldkaribian@yahoo.com

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.

Third Annual Golden Gate Armenian Film Festival

Coming to San Francisco This November

SAN FRANCISCO — The third annual Golden Gate Armenian Film Festival (GGAFF) will take place from November 20 to 22 at the charming Vogue Theatre in the Iconic Pacific Heights neighborhood in San Francisco.

This year’s festival features highly acclaimed movies screened at the Venice, Locarno and Golden Apricot International Film Festivals. Produced in Armenian, France, Germany, Belgium and Canada, documentaries, dramas, short films and animated films brings to the screen topics from the lives of Armenians across the globe. The distinguished jury will reward the best films in each category. The awards are handcrafted on Armenian tuff stone by famous Lebanese-Armenian artist Narine Paladian.

The audience will experience films such as: Tamara Stepanyan’s “In the Land of Arto” (2025) - Armenia’s official submission to the 99th Academy Awards; Robert Guediguian’s masterpiece “Woman

Today” (2026); “Outliving Shakespeare” by Inna Sahakyan and Reuben Ghazaryan (2025); “Here Elsewhere” by Comes Chahbazian (2026), set in Artsakh during the final month of the Armenian population in 2023, when they are losing their homes and trying to preserve ordinary life and memory).

Full program, tickets, Awards are available at: <https://ggaff.art>. See also the Facebook site <https://www.facebook.com/p/Golden-Gate-Armenian-Film-Festival-100071632466645/> and Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/goldengatearmenianfilmfestival/?hl=en>

GGAFF was founded with the goal to build and strengthen collaborations between Armenian film directors and the Armenian diaspora in the United States, as well as to provide an opportunity both for the Armenians living in the Bay Area and the general public to enjoy the best selection of films created by Armenian film directors.





COMMENTARY

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



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Russia, the U.S., Iran, and TRIPP: The Interplay of Global and Regional Interests

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The past few weeks have been quite active in terms of Russian-American negotiations, discussions surrounding the situation on the Ukrainian front, and developments concerning Iran.

It became clear that the first shipments of fuel from Russia would reach the United States very soon. This addresses important issues for both the United States and Russia. Russia can circumvent a substantial package of sanctions, establish direct relations with the United States, and restore ties between the two countries. The United States, in turn, is trying to extricate itself from the crisis in which it has found itself amid developments surrounding the Strait of Hormuz and, more broadly, its relations with Iran.

It cannot be ruled out that the United States will attempt to initiate a process of establishing a degree of rapprochement with Iran through Russian mediation. It is no coincidence that Iran's president is expected to visit Moscow soon to meet with Putin. This becomes particularly interesting in light of the Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff Moscow trip.

US President Donald Trump needs cheap fuel and Russia needs to export fuel and secure financial resources, while the United States needs to resolve the Strait of Hormuz problem as quickly as possible, since pressure on Trump will intensify even after the midterm elections. It is in this context that Trump's statement calling for a replacement of Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky and elections in Ukraine can also be considered, an issue Russia has consistently raised.

Active contacts are taking place between Russia and the United States, while the European Union has adopted a separate political line on this issue by supporting Ukraine. Against this backdrop, the hacking of Kushner's phone and the leak of extremely important information from Trump's son-in-law's device were no coincidence. The operation was reportedly carried out through surveillance conducted by one of the European countries.

In other words, the European Union is clearly demonstrating its dissatisfaction with the warming of relations between Trump and Russia and that it is not going to abandon its political course. This creates a situation in which the global rivals, the United States and Russia, have, at least in this particular case, found themselves on the same side, facing opposing camps consisting of Ukraine and the European Union.

Developments surrounding Iran and their potential impact on

the project itself, as it would completely push Russia out of the region and deprive it of its influence. It cannot be ruled out that TRIPP will also be discussed by the presidents of Russia and Iran during their upcoming meeting.

Armenia and the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) are also important. The likelihood of possible additional military action against Iran is high. It cannot be ruled out that such action could take place before the midterm elections, if not at the hands of Trump, then at least through Israel. However, Trump cannot simply step aside and will inevitably have to become involved in the situation in some form. It is no coincidence that the US government has called on its citizens and diplomats to exercise caution amid escalating developments in the Middle East.

All of this leaves open the possibility that, if negotiations with Iran fail or Israel attempts to derail them, this could somehow affect TRIPP's timeline. The reason is that, as I have noted, TRIPP is an American economic and strategic project located extremely close to Iran's border, despite not having a military component.

It is no coincidence that the Russian railway system is considered one of the next major obstacles to TRIPP, along with



the project itself, as it would completely push Russia out of the region and deprive it of its influence. It cannot be ruled out that TRIPP will also be discussed by the presidents of Russia and Iran during their upcoming meeting.

In other words, global developments are also shaping more localized issues, which are directly interconnected. Yerevan must take into account not only the interests of all players in the South Caucasus, but also the broader dynamics of global relations.

(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.)

Armenian Mother Shot by Azeri Soldier: 'Nowhere is Safe'

SHOOTING, from page 1

The soldier shot her through the hand when she put it between his gun and one of her children, and then he shot her in the knee after she attacked him with the knife.

Today, Ani has no left kneecap, which shattered from the bullet. The nerves from the left knee to the ankle are wrecked. She was taken initially to a hospital in Sisian and then transferred to Yerevan.

"I'm in pain," she told the Mirror-Spectator from her hospital bed on Monday, October 19.

She will require a major surgery to insert a prosthetic kneecap and connect the bones

that remain.

It will take a year of recovery and physical therapy before she may walk again, the doctors have told her.

She has not only her children, but the state of the country and its security now on her mind.

Never Going Back

Avetisyan's daughter and son had been the first to come home after school, where they found a strange man with a gun in their home.

It was not just any stranger, but an Azerbaijani soldier named Nasimi Musayev, who had managed to cross with his rifle —

undetected for days — to the median point of the country, more than 12 miles from the border, and into their home.

The daughter managed to call Avetisyan before the soldier took the phone away, and she rushed over from the neighboring city of Sisian.

Though she placed a call to the police, the mother of two beat them to the house.

With only a knife she managed to grab, and her own body and will, she was able to defend her children.

The soldier's first shot missed. The second went through Avetisyan's hand, which

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COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Turkish and Azeri Media Outlets Respond to My Article on Diaspora vs. Pashinyan

Over the years, I have frequently seen my weekly analysis of Armenian issues either reprinted or rebutted by Azerbaijani and Turkish media outlets.

However, what happened last week was very unusual. Three Turkish and Azeri media outlets published rebuttals to my article titled: “Turkish Research Center Repeatedly Praises Pashinyan and Criticizes the Diaspora.”

The most absurd article, written by Ulash Fakir, was published by ODATV, a Turkish nationalist online news outlet. It was titled “Their Names Were Listed One by One: Four Turkish Women Targeted by Armenians.” There were two major mistakes in the headline alone: 1) They were not targeted “by Armenians,” but by a single Armenian, namely, me; and 2) I did not target any “Turkish women.” I merely responded to the articles written by four Turkish analysts. I did not even know whether they were women or men. I wrote about a political, not a gender-related, issue.

ODATV wrongly referred to “the extensive coverage of [Aygun] Attar’s article by the diaspora press in the US.” There was no such thing. There was only one response: mine. ODATV disclosed that Pres. Recep Tayyip Erdogan appointed Attar to his “Security and Foreign Policy Council” in February 2021. Attar’s government post indicates that she cannot be considered an objective analyst on Armenian-Turkish issues.

ODATV went on to introduce the other three Turkish women whom it claims I “targeted.” All four women are highly educated, but that does not mean they are unbiased in their analyses of Armenian issues.

The second rebuttal to my article, written by Abulfaz Babazadeh, was published by NEWS.AZ in Baku, Azerbaijan. It was titled “Why Praise from Baku and Ankara Alarms the Armenian Diaspora.” He is described as “a scientist, a scholar of Japanese studies, and a political observer.” It is strange that a “scholar of Japanese studies” would write about an Armenian issue. Much of Babazadeh’s article was lifted verbatim from ODATV’s article, without any acknowledgment of the source. This is plagiarism by a so-called “scholar.”

However, I am pleased that Babazadeh praised parts of my article: “Sassounian deserves credit for identifying a genuine contradiction that is difficult to dismiss. The prime minister asks the diaspora not to interfere in Armenia’s domestic affairs while readily accepting its money for charitable campaigns. His criticism of [Prime Minister Nikol] Pashinyan’s meeting with ASA [Armenian Student Association] students rather than the broader Armenian community follows the same logic: engagement is selective rather than institutional. That is a legitimate criticism of the Armenian government – and it is directed at Yerevan, not Ankara.”

At the end of his article, Babazadeh offered several positive suggestions regarding relations among Armenia, the Diaspora, Azerbaijan, and Turkey: “The first conclusion concerns tactics. The most effective support for normalization comes through restraint and concrete action. Every enthusiastic

paragraph written in Ankara or Baku can become a quotation in Los Angeles. That is not an argument for silence. It is an argument for choosing words more carefully and backing them with tangible steps: opening borders, developing transport projects, expanding trade and strengthening humanitarian contacts.

“The second conclusion is strategic. The main front in the normalization process lies within Armenian politics itself – between the state and the diaspora, between memory and pragmatism. Only Armenians can resolve that debate. Armenia’s neighbors can offer predictability and wait for Yerevan to reach an understanding with its own society.

“The third conclusion is the most important for all sides. If Yerevan fails to create an institution through which the diaspora can influence decisions without blocking them, radical voices will gain a monopoly on the role of defender of the nation. Peace does not require defeating the diaspora. It requires integrating it into a new reality. Türkiye and Azerbaijan can contribute to that process in one crucial way: by avoiding actions or rhetoric that allow the peace agenda itself to be turned into a weapon against normalization.

“Sassounian’s column is written with a sense of grievance, and that grievance carries political meaning. It is a signal that part of the Armenian world feels excluded from the conversation. Ignoring that signal could prove costly. Hearing it – and responding with action rather than praise – could put peace on a much firmer foundation.”

The third rebuttal, written by Aygun Attar, was titled “The Armenian Diaspora’s Real Challenge is not Türkiye, but the Changing Geopolitical Reality. A Response to Harut Sassounian: Diaspora, State Sovereignty, and the Future of Peace in the South Caucasus.” The article was published by the Center for Eurasian Studies in Ankara.

Surprisingly, the Turkish analyst Attar is much more positive about the Diaspora than Pashinyan: “The Armenian diaspora possesses a deeply rooted historical consciousness, extensive organizational networks, and considerable political influence in several countries. Its role in preserving Armenian cultural identity and promoting Armenian causes internationally cannot be dismissed. Diaspora organizations in the United States and France, in particular, have long exercised influence over international discussions concerning Armenia.”

Attar acknowledged that “An Armenian living in Los Angeles, Paris, or elsewhere is fully entitled to advocate historical or political claims.” This is exactly what I have done, not as a representative of the Armenian government, but as a diasporan.

However, Attar omitted two important points from her analysis: First, the discussion is not about one “Armenian living in Los Angeles,” but about millions of Armenians who live around the world. Second, this is not simply a matter of the Diaspora vs. the Republic of Armenia, but also of the many Armenians living within Armenia who vehemently oppose Pashinyan’s concessions.

In conclusion, Armenians around the world must be aware that foreign analysts and their governments closely monitor the opinions and declarations of Armenians both inside and outside Armenia.

Azerbaijan and Turkey should know that whatever compromises Pashinyan is making today will be rejected once he leaves office. Therefore, they must understand that these temporary concessions will soon be reversed.

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she put in front of the barrel of the gun that he had aimed at her son, 15.

She was able to stab the soldier with the knife, and managed to push the gun down when he aimed it at her chest, so he shot her knee instead.

When he went to reload, her son was able to hit him hard enough to send him running away.

“Everyone needs to be like this,” she responded solemnly, when told she had protected not only her family, but the country, with her courage.

But she has ruled out going home.

“I can never return to Shaki. I will always relive what happened,” she told the Mirror-Spectator, when asked if she would go back once she has recovered from her surgeries.

And above all, she does not want to re-traumatize her children.

“When the children hear the word ‘Shaki’ they cry,” she said.

Instead, she will look for a suitable place to live on the outer limits of Yerevan, closest to her doctors and to safety.

“But now, I think nowhere in Armenia is safe,” she said.

Better to Alert

In the wake of the attack, Armenia’s National Security Service said it had received advance notice on September 29 from Azerbaijani counterparts that a serviceman had left his post in Lachin and could be in

Armenia.

Speaker of Parliament Ruben Rubinyan justified the concealment of that information from the public, positing that “residents might accidentally shoot at each other” were they notified.

He conceded, however, that implementing an alert protocol could be up for consideration.

Such a protocol may have protected Avetisyan and her children.

It is already too late for Hayrapet Meliksetyan, the 52-year-old security guard of the Zangezur Copper Molybdenum Combine, who in April 2023 was murdered by one of two Azerbaijani soldiers who had infiltrated Armenia’s southern province of Syunik.

Avetisyan told the Mirror-Spectator on Monday, October 19, that she would prefer a warning in all cases.

“It is better to alert people, though they will panic, as they will know how to proceed,” she said.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and senior members of his cabinet have sought to downplay the severity of the incident, with the premier going so far as to blame Avetisyan for acting on “maternal instinct.”

Had she waited for the police, “nothing would have happened,” he claimed.

A Folk Hero

In the vacuum of state acknowledgement of her courage, Armenian civil society has sought to recognize Avetisyan as a heroine.

On the table at the foot of her bed was a



The table at the foot of Ani Avetisyan’s hospital bed

collection of these gestures.

There were bouquets of flowers, the Armenian novel *The Priestess of Destiny*, and a personalized mug with an elegant photo of Avetisyan on it.

There were crosses and prayer cards following a visit by Armenian Apostolic Church clergy, led by Father Davit Gishyan, pastor of Sisian.

There were framed certificates of recog-

niton and medals from civil society organizations.

And, in a humorous touch, there was a nutcracker, with two walnuts — an apparent allusion to her strength against the male attacker.

When asked what kind of support she is in need of as she embarks on her long road to recovery, Avetisyan responds: “A house.”

Remembrance and Armenian Heritage at 10th Anniversary Genealogy Conference

WATERTOWN — Every Armenian family has a story. Some have been lovingly preserved across generations. Others survive only in fragments — a faded photograph, a family name, a village remembered by grandparents, or a story interrupted by the Armenian Genocide. For many descendants, the desire to recover those stories has become a deeply personal journey of discovery.

On Saturday, November 21, Armenians from across the United States and beyond will gather at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center (ACEC) in Watertown, for the 10th anniversary Armenian Genealogy Conference.

Organizers have announced the finalized lineup of speakers and are encouraging everyone interested in attending to register before the November 11 deadline.

The conference, sponsored by the Armenian Cultural Association of America (ACAA), begins at 9 a.m. and promises a full day of presentations, practical research techniques, new resources and opportunities to connect with others who share a passion for Armenian family history.

Registration and additional information are available at <https://armeniangenealogy-conference.com/>.

Five Conferences, Countless Family Connections

What began as an effort to introduce Armenians to the tools and resources available for researching their ancestry has grown into a vibrant community of researchers, historians, genealogists and individuals seeking to rediscover their roots.

Over the years, Armenian genealogy conferences have demonstrated that reconstructing family histories once thought permanently lost is increasingly possible. Immigration records, Ottoman-era documents, church registers, community memorial books, historical photographs and advanc-

es in DNA testing are opening doors that previous generations could scarcely have imagined.

But Armenian genealogy is about much more than names and dates. It is about restoring connections severed by genocide, displacement and migration. It is about discovering the villages where ancestors lived, the communities they built, and the relationships that connect Armenian families across continents. The tenth anniversary conference celebrates both the progress already made and the extraordinary possibilities that lie ahead.

Lineup of Speakers

This year's conference brings together leading researchers and innovators whose work is transforming how Armenians discover and preserve their family histories.

Mark Arslan: Reconstructing the Armenian Immigrant Experience

A pioneer in Armenian genealogy, Mark Arslan began researching his Armenian ancestry in 1971. A second-generation American, he established the Armenian DNA Project in 2005 and developed the Armenian Immigration Project, an extensive database documenting the Armenian diaspora in North America before 1930. His decades of research have helped countless families identify immigrant ancestors, trace their arrival in America and reconnect with relatives whose paths diverged generations ago. His presentation will introduce participants to resources and methods for navigating the complex world of Armenian immigration and naturalization records.

Gregory Jundanian and Lisa Misakian: Preserving the Armenians of Whitinsville

What happens when an entire community becomes the subject of a genealogical research project? Gregory Jundanian and Lisa Misakian, co-founders of the Armenians of Whitinsville Project, will demonstrate how local history, family records, photographs

and personal memories can be brought together to preserve the story of an Armenian American community.

Their innovative website serves as a modern houshamadyan, continuing the Armenian memory-book tradition that emerged in the diaspora beginning in the late nineteenth century. Their work offers an inspiring model for other Armenian communities seeking to document their own histories before invaluable memories and records disappear.

Zeynep Devrim Gürsel: Discovering Armenian Lives Through Ottoman-Era Photographs

Photographs can reveal stories that written documents leave untold. Zeynep Devrim Gürsel, a media anthropologist and Associate Professor of Anthropology at Rutgers University, is the author of *Portraits of Unbelonging*, an examination of Ottoman Armenian emigration to the United States during the politically turbulent years from the 1890s through the end of Sultan Abdülhamid II's reign in 1909. Her research offers a fascinating perspective on the visual documentation of Armenian migration and the ways historical photographs can help reconstruct the experiences of individuals and families navigating a world of political uncertainty and displacement.

Boghos Tchitchekdjian: Connecting Armenian Families Across Europe

Armenian family histories rarely respect modern national borders. Records of a single family may be scattered across Armenia, Turkey, France, the Middle East, the United States and numerous other countries. Boghos Tchitchekdjian, co-founder and Vice President of *Relais International de Généalogie Arménienne* (RIGA/RIGAGEN), will introduce participants to the important work being undertaken in France to preserve Armenian genealogical records and reconnect families.

RIGA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to making dispersed archives more accessible and providing free genealogical assistance to Armenians throughout the diaspora. Its work demonstrates the tremendous potential of international cooperation in overcoming the barriers that have historically complicated Armenian family research.

George Aghjayan: DNA and the Reconstruction of Armenian Family History

For descendants of genocide survivors, traditional documentary research often encounters an almost insurmountable obstacle: the destruction or disappearance of records and the rupture of family connections. George Aghjayan, organizer of the Armenian genealogy conferences and host of "Hye Roots: Descendants of Ararat," will explore how advances in genetic genealogy are helping to overcome these obstacles.

His presentation will examine the critical role of DNA testing in identifying previously unknown relatives, reconstructing family relationships and recovering connections lost through generations of displacement.

DNA cannot replace historical research, but when combined with documentary evidence, oral histories and geographic knowledge, it can become an extraordinary tool for rebuilding Armenian family histories.

The conference experience will continue well beyond the final presentation. Beginning at approximately 6 p.m., participants will gather for an Armenian dinner catered by Kevork Boyajian and the Armenian American Social Club of Watertown.

The evening will feature an all-star ensemble of Armenian musicians: John Ber-

berian — oud; Mal Barsamian — clarinet; Jason Naroian — vocals and drum; and Bruce Gigarjian — guitar.

The dinner promises an evening of wonderful Armenian cuisine, traditional music and lively conversation, offering participants an opportunity to deepen the connections made throughout the day. For many conference attendees, these informal conversations are among the most rewarding parts of the experience. A discussion over dinner can lead to the discovery of a common ancestral village, an unexpected family connection or a new research partnership.

Sunday, November 22: A Rare Screening of 'The Melody of Armenia'

The weekend's celebration of Armenian heritage will continue on Sunday, November 22, with a special screening of the historic Armenian film "Երգն Հայաստանի" [The Melody of Armenia].

Presented jointly by the ARF Boston "Sardarabad" Gomideh, Watertown High School's Armenian Club and the Armenian Genealogy Conference, the screening will take place at 2 p.m. in the auditorium of the new Watertown High School, 50 Columbia Street. First premiered in 1930, "The Melody of Armenia" offers a powerful window into the lives of Armenian Genocide survivors attempting to rebuild their world in exile.

The film tells the story of Mrs. Ghazarian, an Armenian mother living in France during the 1920s. Of her six children, five perished during the Genocide. Only one son survived, and together mother and son struggle to establish a new life while carrying the overwhelming burden of personal loss and the destruction of their homeland.

Haunted by the memories of what she endured, Mrs. Ghazarian embodies the grief, resilience and uncertainty experienced by countless Armenian survivors.

Yet the film is more than a dramatic account of one family's suffering. It incorporates remarkable historical footage, including images of the burning of Smyrna, appearances by prominent Armenian figures such as Alexander Khatisian and Avetis Aharonian, and scenes depicting Armenian schools, scouting organizations and community life in France.

These images offer a rare visual record of a generation that experienced the destruction of its ancestral communities while simultaneously laying the foundations of a new Armenian diaspora.

For those attending the genealogy conference, the film provides a particularly meaningful complement to the preceding day's presentations. Where genealogy seeks to recover the identities and relationships of individual ancestors, "The Melody of Armenia" brings viewers face to face with the historical world those ancestors inhabited — their trauma, determination, institutions and enduring commitment to Armenian identity. Together, the conference and film screening create a weekend devoted not simply to remembering the past, but to reclaiming it.

Proceeds from the film screening will benefit the ARF Archives project, an initiative dedicated to preserving and making Armenian historical materials accessible to future generations. Additional donations are warmly encouraged.

Tickets for the screening may be purchased at: <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/film-screening-the-melody-of-armenia>. A trailer for the film can be viewed at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DeKE-crTg2En/?hl=en>.



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