

Pashinyan’s Party Discusses New Armenian Constitution Demanded By Baku

By Shoghik Galstian Y E R E V A N (Azatutyun) —

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has met twice with senior members of his Civil Contract party to discuss the draft of a new Armenian constitution as demanded by Azerbaijan.

The issue topped the agenda of the latest meeting of the party’s governing board held on Sunday, October 18. No details were made public.

The board also discussed the draft at its previous meeting that took place on October 13 hours after Pashinyan said that his government will now “focus on the process of signing and ratifying the peace treaty initiated with Azerbaijan.” He spoke with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on the sidelines of an ex-Soviet summit in Turkmenistan on October 9.

Aliyev has said that the signing of the treaty is conditional on a change of Armenia’s constitution which he says lays claim to Nagorno-Karabakh. While rejecting this precondition in public, Pashinyan has pledged to enact a new constitution acceptable to Baku.

The Armenian Justice Ministry drafted it early this year, bypassing the Constitutional Reform Council that had been formed by Pashinyan. The document has not yet been made public.

The council headed by Justice Minister Srбуhi Galyan has not met since April. Edmon Marukyan, an opposition politician sitting on it, said on Monday that he has petitioned Galyan to finally disclose the draft and resume the work of the ad hoc body.

The new constitution sought by Pashinyan has to be approved by at least two-thirds of the Armenian parliament deputies see CONSTITUTION, page 4



Protesters in front of the COP17 Green Zone venue, October 19, 2026 (photo OC Media/Ani Ghulinyan)

Protesters Demand Closure Of Amulsar Gold Mine as COP17 Opens

By Ani Ghulyan Y E R E V A N (OC-Media.org) — The My Heart Is In the Highlands initiative organized a gathering on Monday, October 19, in front of a COP17 venue demanding the closure of the Amulsar gold mine and a new environmental impact assessment. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced the opening of the gold mine one week before the biodiversity conference in Yerevan.

The Amulsar gold mine is located in Armenia’s Vayots Dzor province, near the resort town of Jermuk. Construction of the gold mine began in 2016 but has been halted since June 2018 due to local protesters blocking access to the project. The blockade ended during the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020. Environmental activists have expressed concerns that the mining process and the use of cyanide to extract gold could affect the Arpa and Vorotan rivers, and even Lake Sevan — Armenia’s largest freshwater reserve.

The Amulsar gold mine is operated by the Lydian Armenia company, a subsidiary of Lydian International, registered in the British tax haven of Jersey. They argue that they are introducing the best international practices in health see AMULSAR, page 20

Iran ‘Trusts’ Armenia Over US-Run Transit Corridor

By Robert Zargarian

Y E R E V A N (Azatutyun) — Armenia is addressing Iran’s concerns over its plans to open a US-run transit corridor along the Armenian-Iranian border, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in Yerevan on Friday, October 16.

“We don’t have any concerns. We trust our Armenian brothers,” Araghchi told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service during the COP17 Biodiversity Conference.

He did not comment further on the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) that would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave as well as Turkey via Armenia’s Syunik province. Iranian officials have repeatedly said that the transit arrangement must not put Armenian control of the border at risk or lead to US security presence at Iran’s doorstep.

“We have concerns regarding any US presence in the region and in our immediate vicinity,” Araghchi told other Armenian reporters. “However, we are in direct contact with our Armenian friends regarding this matter. We trust them. We know that they are doing nothing that would compromise Iran’s security.” see IRAN, page 4



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian meet in Yerevan, October 16, 2026

Israeli Defense Company’s Mystery \$235M Customer Is Reportedly Azerbaijan

By Rafiq Shahbazov

Israeli media outlet Globes is reporting that Azerbaijan is the unnamed customer for \$235 million worth of precision-guided missiles and rocket artillery systems from Elbit Systems. The Israeli defense company announced on 19 October that the deal for an unspecified ‘European’ customer will be fulfilled over the next three years in a move which underscores the deepening defense partnership between Baku and Tel Aviv.

At the time of publication, Elbit Systems had not yet commented on the customer but had confirmed the deal.

The Azerbaijan-Israel alliance is built on shared strategic interests: Israel gains

access to energy resources, while Azerbaijan benefits from advanced military technology. This partnership proved significant during the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020, when Israeli-made long-range drones and other precision weapons helped Azerbaijani forces identify and strike Armenian positions.

According to Elbit, the agreement includes EXTRA-MR medium-range rockets, PULS launchers and logistical support, and deliveries and implementation are expected to take place over three years. The EXTRA-MR is designed for precision strikes against targets at ranges of up to 80 kilometers.

see WEAPONS, page 5



AGBU Holds General Assembly in Montreal

MONTREAL — The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) held its 94th annual General Assembly from October 15 to 17. The extensive assembly included many workshops, meetings, speeches, awards, cultural and social events and a concluding resolution, which will be covered in several forthcoming articles. Members of the Central Board of Directors of the AGBU are pictured above during the October 17 meeting.

ARMENIA Initiative Hopes To Put Spotlight On Armenian Wine Globally



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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Artsakh Armenians Urge Diplomats to Raise Right of Return At COP17

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Activists have urged foreign diplomatic missions in Armenia to raise the issue of the right of return for Armenians forcibly displaced from Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) in discussions at a U.N. biodiversity summit hosted by Armenia.

Letters are being delivered to embassies on behalf of the civic initiative “No Biodiversity Protection Without Human Rights and Justice.”

Speaking at a rally on October 20, Alvard Zakaryan, a member of the Artsakh Public Council, summarized the demands outlined in the letters. They call for the plight of displaced Armenians to be addressed during discussions and diplomatic consultations on the sidelines of the 17th Conference of the Parties to the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity (COP17), support for the preservation of Artsakh’s cultural and religious heritage, and international backing for the displaced population’s safe return to their homes.

“We must continue to speak about the genocide in Artsakh. Everyone who comes to Armenia should know that 150,000 Artsakh Armenians are living here after surviving genocide,” Zakaryan said.

Armenia is hosting COP17 from October 19 to 30.

Customs Seize Concealed Cigarettes Destined for U.S.

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenian customs officials have uncovered 37,900 packs of cigarettes concealed inside laminate doors destined for the United States, the State Revenue Committee (SRC) said on October 19.

The SRC said its anti-smuggling department had received intelligence that an Armenian-registered company was preparing to ship a large consignment of tobacco products to the United States through the Cargo terminal, with the goods hidden from customs control.

Acting on the information, officials placed the company’s export shipments under surveillance and inspected the laminate doors awaiting dispatch.

The doors weighed twice as much as standard doors made from the same material, prompting further scrutiny. Customs officers dismantled all the doors and discovered the contraband, none bearing the required excise stamps, the SRC said.

Authorities drew up a report on the customs violation and referred the case materials to the committee’s Legal Department.

The SRC urged businesses to comply with customs legislation and refrain from attempting to conceal goods from customs.

Owner Condemns ‘Illegal’ Nationalization Of Armenian Electric Utility

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The parent company of Armenia’s electricity distribution network owned by billionaire and opposition leader Samvel Karapetyan on October 19 condemned the Armenian government’s decision to nationalize it as illegal.

The government formally made the decision last week more than a year after seizing the Electric Networks of Armenia (ENA) operator and installing a new management there following Karapetyan’s arrest.

Karapetyan was initially prosecuted on charges stemming from his strong criticism of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s crack-down on the Armenian Apostolic Church. Law-enforcement authorities claim that the criticism amounted to calls for a violent overthrow of the country’s leadership.

Karapetyan was also charged with tax evasion, fraud and money laundering following his subsequent decision to set up his own political group that was the main opposition contender in the June 2026 parliamentary elections. The tycoon, who was moved to house arrest in December, rejects all the accusations as politically motivated.

In an interim measure taken in July 2025, the Arbitration Institute of the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce (SCC) ordered the Armenian authorities to refrain from seizing ENA or changing the electric utility’s top management. The authorities ignored the order.

The government’s October 15 decision to declare ENA an “overriding public interest” is a necessary step for completing the nationalization process in the coming

months. Karapetyan’s Tashir Kapital company, which had acquired ENA in 2015, described it as “yet another violation” of the international arbitration body’s injunction.

“Thus, the government is disregarding and directly violating its obligations under international law that arise from the regulatory framework Armenia has adopted to ensure the protection of foreign investments,” the company said in its first official reaction to the development.

“Such unlawful actions will undoubtedly be subject to appropriate international legal assessment, and the government of the Republic of Armenia will be required to compensate investors for all damages caused by the state’s breach of its international obligations,” added a statement released by Tashir.

Trump Donor Leading Caucasus Fund Has Major Armenia Holdings, Russia Business History

By Jonathan Landay, Alexandra Ulmer and Maria Tsvetkova

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — US President Donald Trump’s pick to lead a \$201 million investment fund in the Caucasus holds major telecom and mining interests there and formerly ran a Russia-focused investment firm that touted close ties to the Kremlin, documents reviewed by Reuters show.

Konstantin Sokolov, a 51-year-old Russian-born businessman, was put in charge of the investment vehicle, now called the Trans-Caspian Enterprise Fund, in January, according to its incorporation documents.

He holds major stakes in Armenia’s top mobile phone company Viva Armenia, and purchased Armenia’s second largest copper and molybdenum mine earlier this year after receiving a special permit from the US government to buy it, according to the Reuters reporting.

A Reuters review of public documents related to the only three other US enterprise funds now operating showed no indications that any of their heads have major investments in the countries where those funds invest.

Bo Cutter, chairman of a US enterprise fund focused on Tunisia told Reuters he had “no business interests of any kind in Tunisia,” without elaborating on whether and why that might pose a problem. Cutter declined to comment on Sokolov or the Trans-Caspian fund.

Still, according to six ethics experts who reviewed the Reuters reporting, Sokolov’s business interests create a conflict of interest because his role gives him control of government money that could potentially benefit his companies.

Ann Skeet, an ethics expert at Santa Clara University, said, “I think Congress should be asking questions.”

Reuters found no indication of any wrongdoing by Sokolov. US legislation governing such investment funds does not forbid directors from holding investments in regions of operation.

A representative for Sokolov’s private equity firm, IJS Investments, said the fund was prohibited from investing in any of his businesses and that Sokolov had complied with “all due diligence and security requirements.”

A State Department spokesperson said the enterprise fund would comply with

annual reporting requirements and independent audits “as well as with applicable grant provisions including conflict of interest requirements.”

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Sokolov had been among a list of 37 corporate and individual donors to Trump’s White House ballroom project distributed by the White House last year. The Washington Post reported on Thursday that Sokolov donated \$1 million, opens new tab to the project.

Sokolov has also donated some \$13 million to Republican political groups, according to Federal Election Commission data.

Ascendant in Armenia

The Trans-Caspian fund is part of a broader US push to develop trade routes and investment across the South Caucasus and Central Asia, an effort that could reduce the region’s reliance on Russian and Chinese infrastructure.

The Trans-Caspian fund’s board, led by Sokolov, has the power to make grants, loans and investments across Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Its website lists critical minerals, energy and rail infrastructure among its top investment priorities.

Sokolov has built up his business presence in Armenia rapidly in recent years.

He and a Chinese business partner, Zhe Zhang, acquired control of Viva Armenia in January 2024 from Russia’s largest mobile provider, MTS, according to company statements and Armenian corporate records.

Zhang, a former Chinese Commerce Ministry diplomat, did not respond to requests for comment. Viva Armenia did not comment.

More recently, Sokolov’s Texas-based Dynamic Frontier Holdings company said it was granted legal authorization from the US Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control on June 1 to buy Armenia’s Teghout mine from a sanctioned state-owned Russian bank, VTB.

OFAC licenses authorize transactions that would otherwise be prohibited by US sanctions and typically take several months or years to process.

Sokolov and a representative for the Teghout mine did not respond to questions

about when they first applied for a license. A representative for Teghout said licenses and approvals for the transaction were obtained through OFAC’s “standard independent regulatory process.”

The US Treasury Department and VTB did not respond to requests for comment.

None of the heads of the only other active US enterprise funds — which focus on Egypt, Tunisia, and Ukraine-Moldova — appear to have significant business interests in those countries, according to a Reuters review.

James Harmon is chairman of the Egyptian fund, and Dennis Johnson is chairman of the Ukraine-Moldova fund. They did not respond to requests for comment.

Sokolov’s biography on his personal website highlights his modest upbringing in St. Petersburg and his dislike of the Soviet government, which he said sent his grandmother to a gulag. It says he immigrated to the United States at 21, several years after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

But his ties to Russia went on long after he left, according to a Reuters review of corporate and government records.

The businessman’s purported ties to the Russian government warrant scrutiny to ensure US interests come first in the fund’s management, said two of the ethics experts Reuters interviewed.

“I’d want a very thorough security clearance review if I were in the US government,” said Richard Painter, a University of Minnesota professor who served as ethics counsel to former Republican President George W. Bush.

A 2015 promotional brochure reviewed by Reuters for the now-defunct Liechtenstein-registered Gotthard Investment Fund, a Russia-focused real estate investment operation, listed Sokolov as a fund manager and emphasized the fund’s “strong and long-lasting personal and professional trust relationships forged over the last 20 years with Moscow, St. Petersburg and Federal governments.”

Lawyers representing Sokolov said that Sokolov “does not believe” the brochure is authentic, and that the logo on the brochure did not appear to be one used by the fund.

“Mr. Sokolov has no relationships with Russian government officials or the Russian government,” his representative told Reuters, adding “he does not hold a Russian citizenship.”



ARMENIA

Advancing the Future of Medical Education

The 3rd Dr. Aram Chobanian Conference Explores AI, Innovation, and New Approaches to Learning

YEREVAN — The 3rd Dr. Aram Chobanian Conference on Postgraduate Medical Education and Continuing Professional Development virtually brought together 187 participants for an international exchange of ideas on the future of medical education on October 10. Awarded five Armenian continuing medical education (CME) credits, the conference explored innovative approaches to teaching and learning, with particular emphasis on artificial intelligence (AI), immersive technologies, and the evolving needs of healthcare professionals.

Organized by the International Center for Professional Development (ICPD), with support from the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), the conference continued the legacy of Dr. Aram Chobanian, whose contributions to medical education, research, academic leadership, and mentorship have had a lasting impact on the medical community.

The conference opened with remarks by Dr. Richard Babayan, who reflected on Dr. Chobanian’s enduring legacy as an educator, researcher, mentor, and friend.

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. David L. Battinelli, Dean of the Donald and Barbara Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell and Physician-in-Chief of Northwell Health. His presentation examined the transformation of medical curricula and the importance of preparing future physicians to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing healthcare environment. The keynote set the stage for broader discussions on how educational institutions can adapt to technological advances while maintaining a strong focus on clinical competence and the human dimensions of medicine.

The scientific program featured presentations by an international group of experts: Edouard Aboian, David B. Pearlstone, Guzel Ulumbekova, Levonti Ohanian, Abdelrahman Adly, Jaideep Talwalkar, Ximena Alvira, Ben Muller, and Lynn Kysh. Their contributions addressed emerging trends and practical strategies



An image from the virtual conference

for strengthening postgraduate medical education and continuing professional development.

The sessions were moderated by Dr. Gevorg Yaghjian, Dr. Mikael Petrosyan, and Professor Ara Tekian, whose guidance facilitated active discussions and lively question-and-answer sessions. The exchanges encouraged participants to connect emerging educational concepts with the practical challenges and professional needs of healthcare systems.

Expanding Access to Evidence-Based Medical Information

One of the conference’s key practical outcomes was the announcement that Elsevier’s ClinicalKey and ClinicalKey AI resources will be available through the Medical Library of Armenia’s National Institute of Health. This initiative is expected to expand healthcare professionals’ access to trusted medical literature, clinical refer-

ence materials, and AI-supported tools for retrieving and navigating evidence-based clinical information.

Healthcare professionals and medical institutions are encouraged to contact the NIH Medical Library for information about individual and institutional access, subscription arrangements, and activation procedures.

The conference reaffirmed the importance of continuous innovation in medical education and the value of international collaboration in strengthening professional development. By bringing together educators, clinicians, and medical education specialists, the event contributed to an ongoing dialogue on how technology, evidence-based approaches, and innovative teaching strategies can help prepare the next generation of healthcare professionals.

ICPD extends its sincere gratitude to

all speakers, moderators, participants, and partners, particularly the Fund for Armenian Relief, for their contributions to the success of the conference and their shared commitment to advancing medical education in Armenia and beyond.

Through this annual conference, ICPD continues to honor Dr. Aram Chobanian’s commitment to academic excellence, lifelong learning, and the advancement of medical education.

The International Center for Professional Development is dedicated to advancing postgraduate medical education and continuing professional development through educational conferences, scientific meetings, seminars, and innovative learning opportunities. By fostering international collaboration and knowledge exchange, ICPD supports healthcare professionals in strengthening their knowledge, skills, and clinical practice.

‘Engage Armenia’ Forum Comes to North America for the First Time

TORONTO/MONTREAL — Repat Armenia announced the upcoming Engage Armenia Forum in Canada, taking place on October 22, 24 and 25, across Toronto and Montreal. This event will bring together more than 15 speakers and representatives from Armenia to connect with one of the most diverse and dynamic Armenian communities in North America.

Launched in 2013 as Imagine Armenia and reintroduced in 2024 as Engage Armenia, the Forum underscores the urgent need for active involvement with Armenia. It provides Armenians worldwide with practical opportunities to contribute, through social impact, volunteering, entrepreneurship, education, healthcare, professional development, and repatriation.

“Engage Armenia exists because affection for the homeland isn’t enough on its own — it has to turn into action,” said Edele Hovnanian, president of the H. Hovnanian Family Foundation. “We built this forum to give diasporans, wherever they live, concrete and various ways to plug into Armenia’s future, not just a reason to feel connected to its past.”

Each stop will feature a lineup of professionals, entrepreneurs, and changemakers from Armenia, representing some of the most influential organizations working with the diaspora today, including Repat Armenia (Vartan Marashlyan), Birthright Armenia (Sevan Kabakian), FAST (Suzanna Shamakhyan), Impact Hub (Nazareth Seferian), AGBU (Inessa Margaryan), and Armenia Education Ini-

tiative (Katrina Shakarian), among others.

Through a series of short, rapid-fire pitches, attendees will come away with a practical, concrete idea of their own next step with Armenia, whether through volunteering, internships, education, culture, healthcare, repatriation, career opportunities, business, investment, mentoring, or social initiatives. Each event concludes with a networking session, giving attendees a chance to connect directly with speakers, organizations, and fellow professionals who share an interest in Armenia’s future.

Across the seven countries visited so far, attendees have described the forum as a turning point in their relationship with the homeland. “I came to Armenia three years ago to offer my help and support, but no one really understood what I hoped to contribute,” recalled Margarita, who attended the Berlin edition in 2025. “Today, you came to where I live and answered all the questions I had back then. I was nearly in tears with happiness as I listened to each pitch.”

After extensive outreach across Europe and the UAE, the timing is right to turn to one of North America’s strongest and most organized diaspora hubs. Toronto is home to an estimated 25,000 Armenians, and the greater Montréal and Laval area to roughly 35,000, with some of the most established diaspora structures in the world, including community centers, youth groups, professional networks, and business associations.

“We are hosting our next Engage Armenia Forum in

Canada because of the potential of this destination,” said Vartan Marashlyan, Co-founder and Director of Repat Armenia. “Canada has a highly professional Armenian diaspora, with communities that are well-organized, engaged, and connected to the homeland.”

Nelly Poliakov, Head of Communications at the H. Hovnanian Family Foundation and forum emcee, has spent the past six years living in Armenia, where she met many Canadian-Armenians active in their communities and in Armenia. “Meeting Canadian-Armenians made me realize how fascinating their community is — a community I knew almost nothing about when I was still living in France,” she said. “I genuinely believe that going there and meeting people in person could take our initiative to a whole new level in terms of impact and interest.”

For more information about the speakers, the agenda, and to register, visit engagearmenia.org

Co-organized by Repat Armenia and the H. Hovnanian Family Foundation, Engage Armenia has reached more than 1,300 participants across the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, and Germany since its relaunch. Canada marks the eighth country on the forum’s journey.

The event is made possible thanks to the support of its main sponsors, the H. Hovnanian Family Foundation and the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), as well as the invaluable contributions of our many partners and supporters.



ARMENIA

Initiative Hopes to Put Spotlight on Armenian Wine Globally

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN/YEREVAN — Wine-Armenia.org, an Armenian wine network, in collaboration with the Vine and Wine Foundation of Armenia, has announced the launch of Armenian Wine Week, November 8-14, an initiative to raise awareness about Armenian wines globally.

The celebration will culminate on International Areni Day on Saturday, November 14.

The online initiative brings together wineries, importers, retailers, restaurants and Armenian organizations to help the country's increasingly popular wine industry to grow.

Participants are invited to buy two bottles of Armenian wine, gift one bottle to a non-Armenian friend, colleague, or neighbor and then challenge three Armenian friends to do the same. Being an online campaign, participants are encouraged to share their experience on social media using the official campaign hashtags: #UncorkArmenia and #ArmenianWineWeek.

The force behind the push behind Armenian wine is Vahe Balouljian, the co-founder of Akumb restaurant (The Club), Tapastan and In Vino Wine. He also founded Armenia's first organic wine producer, Trinity Canyon Vineyards.

He participated in an interview recently, explaining his involvement with wine in Armenia as well as this particular campaign.

"With Armenian Wine Week, I hope to introduce Armenian wine to more people around the world. Our wines deserve far greater international recognition than they currently receive. Compared with larger, more established wine-producing countries, our industry simply doesn't have the advertising budgets to compete for attention on a global scale," he said. "Imagine if every Armenian introduced our wine to just one person who had never tried it before. We could reach people and places that no advertising campaign of ours could ever afford to reach. One bottle, one new friend, one introduction at a time," Balouljian said.

Pashinyan's Party Discusses New Armenian Constitution Demanded By Baku

CONSTITUTION, from page 1
before it can be put on a referendum. Civil Contract fell short of such a majority in disputed parliamentary elections held on June 7.

The two opposition groups represented in the National Assembly have vowed to block the referendum. They remain strongly opposed to the change of the constitution which they say is imposed by Baku. Pashinyan and his political allies have still not clarified how they plan to overcome the opposition resistance.

"It's still too early to talk about that," said Hasmik Hakobyan, a parliament deputy from Civil Contract. She hinted that the ruling party hopes to win over some opposition lawmakers during parliament debates on the issue.

Baku objects to a preamble to the current Armenian constitution referring to a 1990 declaration of independence, which in turn cites a 1989 unification act adopted by the legislative bodies of Soviet Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. The only legal way to remove that reference is to exclude the preamble from the new constitution.

A growing wine industry, he noted, in turn creates works for thousands in the Armenia, especially in the rural areas. In addition, it can lead to wine tourism.

Armenia has a deep history with wine, dating back millennia, but it was only in recent decades that it became a big producer of wine.

Balouljian said, "Armenia's modern wine renaissance began in the late 2000s and gathered momentum throughout the 2010s. Although Armenia has a winemaking history stretching back more than 6,100 years, the Soviet period reshaped the industry, prioritizing brandy production and limiting the development of many indigenous grape varieties and quality-focused wine producers. The modern revival was driven by a new generation of Armenian entrepreneurs, winemakers, and diaspora Armenians who brought international experience, investment, and new ideas. They began rediscovering indigenous grape varieties, investing in vineyards and wineries, and introducing Armenian wines to international audiences."

In Vino opened in 2012 as the country's first wine bar. Only two years later, the EVN Wine Academy opened, he said.

"Today, Armenia is rediscovering its ancient wine heritage while building a modern wine industry with its own identity and growing international ambitions," he added.

Asked what makes Armenian wine distinct from those of other regions in the world, Balouljian said, "What makes Armenian wine distinctive is the combination of indigenous grape varieties, diverse high-altitude terroirs, and an extraordinarily ancient winemaking tradition."

He further explained, "Among Armenia's most important varieties are Areni, known particularly for elegant, structured red wines, and Voskehat, which can produce complex, aromatic white wines. Armenia is also home to many lesser-known indigenous varieties that offer exciting possibilities for winemakers and wine lovers."

Many vineyards grow at elevations of 900 -1,600 meters, he noted, where they receive a lot of sunshine and intense temperature variation from morning to night. And finally, the soil also contributes to its uniqueness.

And one last element is the traditional "karas clay vessels" which are "allowing winemakers to explore ancient techniques alongside modern technology."

"Ultimately, Armenian wine is not defined by one particular flavor or style. What makes it special is the diversity of indigenous grapes and terroirs that give Armenia a wine identity of its own," he said.

Armenian wine has not taken over the world yet. When asked where it is popular, Balouljian said Russia "remains Armenia's dominant export market for wine, because



A vineyard in Armenia

of long-established commercial ties and the historical orientation of Armenia's alcoholic beverage industry toward the former Soviet market."

He added, "At the same time, Armenian wine is gaining visibility in the United States, Europe, and other international markets. In the US, the Armenian diaspora is the main target. Interest is also growing among wine enthusiasts looking for distinctive indigenous grape varieties and wines from historically significant wine-producing regions."

Russia remains the leading destination for Armenian wine exports (by some estimates 70-90 percent), while the United States is the fastest growing market (again by some estimates up to 10 percent). Several European countries, including Poland, France, Belgium, and Germany, also receive Armenian wines, although the volumes are considerably smaller.

South America remains a much smaller market, less than 1 percent.

At home, wine is becoming increasingly visible. The wines are being sold in Yerevan, but the grapes are planted and harvested in the wine regions of Vayots Dzor, Aragatsotn, and Armavir, he explained, and those in turn are attracting visitors.

If Armenian wines are slowly gaining notice, its brandy is already world famous.

"Brandy remains a much larger and more established export industry in Armenia, with a long commercial history, substantial production capacity, and well-developed international distribution networks. Wine, by contrast, is going through a transformation. Alongside established producers, a new generation of small and medium-sized wineries is investing in indigenous grape varieties, vineyard quality, modern winemaking, and distinctive regional wines. These producers are helping Armenia move beyond its tra-

ditional reputation as a brandy-producing country," Balouljian explained.

He added, "At home, the growing wine culture is another important development. Wine bars, restaurants, festivals, and wine tourism have helped introduce a new generation of Armenians to our winemaking traditions and contemporary wines."

Balouljian's most famous restaurant is Akumb [The Club]. He said, "In 2004, we opened a restaurant in Yerevan called The Club. It's a special place, and over the years it has welcomed many international guests. During one of his visits, Paulo Coelho wrote on our menu: 'The Club is a place where I heard the soul of Armenia.'"

He added, "There's something interesting about The Club. Yerevantsis often bring their foreign guests there to introduce them to Armenian culture, food, and hospitality. But they don't necessarily come as often when they don't have guests to introduce. I began to see a similar pattern with Armenian wine. We speak proudly of Armenia's 6,100-year winemaking heritage, yet we don't always introduce our own wines to people outside our community or even choose them as often as we could ourselves."

That disconnect led him to the current initiative. "What if Armenians everywhere did for Armenian wine what Yerevantsis do for The Club? What if, during one week each November, Armenians around the world introduced Armenian wine to their non-Armenian friends, colleagues, and neighbors? The idea behind Armenian Wine Week was born from that simple thought. You don't need to organize a big event, spend a lot of money, or be a wine expert. You simply buy two bottles of Armenian wine, give one to someone who hasn't discovered it yet, and invite other Armenians to do the same."

For more information about the initiative, visit ArmenianWineWeek.com.

Iran 'Trusts' Armenia Over U.S.-Run Transit

IRAN, from page 1

The issue was high on the agenda of Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan's October 5 visit to Tehran during which he met with Araghchi as well as Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian and parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf. Mirzoyan said afterwards that Tehran is "satisfied" with Yerevan's assurances on the TRIPP.

"The Iranian side certainly has questions," he said on Friday. "Answers to these questions have been provided, and my impression is that the Iranian side is satisfied with how things are proceeding."

"For example, the Iranian side asks:

'Will there be an American military presence along the TRIPP?' ... And we replied: 'There won't be,'" added Mirzoyan.

The Iranian ambassador to Armenia, Khalil Shirgholami, earlier called for the creation of a "mechanism" to manage "potential risks of US presence and threats to Iran" emanating from the TRIPP. Shirgholami said the US and Israeli military campaign against the Islamic Republic underlined the perceived risks.

Pezeshkian also arrived in Yerevan to attend COP17. He met with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on the sidelines of the United Nations forum. It was their third face-to-face meeting in less than a month.

Tehran's official readout of their latest talks did not mention the TRIPP project. It cited Pezeshkian as saying that the two neighboring states should work out a "comprehensive framework for long-term cooperation" and "translate existing agreements and initiatives into practical results."

"The Iranian president said closer relations between Tehran and Yerevan would help strengthen stability and security across the region," added the statement.

Pashinyan's press office reported, for its part, that the two leaders discussed ways of "advancing joint programs." It did not elaborate on those programs.



INTERNATIONAL

Turkish Minister Visits Armenia

By Robert Zargarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Turkey’s Agriculture Minister Ibrahim Yumakli visited Yerevan on October 16 to participate in the latest UN Biodiversity Conference held there.

Yumakli, who is the first Turkish cabinet member to arrive in Armenia in more than a decade, met with Armenian Economy Minister Gevorg Papoyan on the sidelines of the COP17 forum.

“We discussed opportunities arising from the establishment of direct trade between Armenia and Turkey,” Papoyan said in a social media post. “We reviewed procedures for the transport and transit of goods subject to sanitary and veterinary control.”

Ankara continues to make the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border contingent on the signing of an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty. It remains reluctant to

implement a 2022 agreement to open the border to holders of Armenian and Turkish diplomatic passports and citizens of third countries. Yumakli signaled no change in this policy when he spoke to reporters in Yerevan.

“Turkey wants to see greater peace, tranquility and prosperity in the region, and, of course, we are continuing this [normalization] process,” he said.

In his words, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s direct contacts with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan are giving new impetus to the process.

Erdogan and Pashinyan most recently met in New York late last month on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. According to Pashinyan’s office, the two leaders expressed readiness to “advance” Turkish-Armenian commercial ties.

The head of Turkey’s national electricity transmission network visited Armenia last



week to discuss power supplies between the two neighboring countries. Other Turkish and Armenian officials met in the Turkish city of Kars in April this year for fresh talks on restoring a railway connecting them.

London’s St. Yeghiche Church Celebrates 25th Anniversary and Feast of Holy Translators

LONDON — On October 11, the faithful gathered at St. Yeghiche Armenian Church to celebrate the 25th anniversary of its consecration and the Feast of the Holy Translators.

The church was consecrated on June 10, 2001. Its acquisition and restoration were made possible by Vatche and Tamar Manoukian.

At the invitation of Bishop Hovakim Manukyan, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of the United Kingdom and Ireland, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Bishop Aren Shahenian, Primate of the Armenian Diocese of Argentina and Chile.

In his sermon, Bishop Aren reflected on the call “Come, let us build the holy altar of light,” emphasizing that living faith makes a church a spiritual home.

Bishop Aren read the pontifical encyclical of blessing from the Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II.



Clergy and the Armenian ambassador to the United Kingdom with his wife at St. Yeghiche Armenian Church (photo Sky Blue Photography)

Following the Liturgy, Bishop Hovakim conducted the blessing of school children and students.

King Charles III and Dame Sarah Mulally, Archbishop of Canterbury, sent congratulatory messages.

The King paid tribute to the riches of the Armenian Church’s history, liturgical life and poetry, and to the Armenian people’s centuries of Christian witness. Referring to St. Gregory of Narek’s words, he expressed the hope that the light of God’s love would continue to guide the community in its care for all people.

The Archbishop of Canterbury described St. Yeghiche Church as a place of prayer,

worship and Christian witness. She highlighted the friendship between the two Churches and Bishop Hovakim’s dedication to Christian unity.

Deacon Vahan read the messages from Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and Archbishop Nathan Hovhannisian during the evening celebration.

The evening celebration began with a prayer offered by Bishop Hovakim. Shakeh Major Tchilingirian introduced the program and served as master of ceremonies.

The choir of St. Yeghiche Church per-

formed under the direction of Aris Nadian. The program drew on the rich heritage of Armenian sacred music, featuring works by St Gregory of Narek and St Nerses Shnorhali, alongside compositions and arrangements by Yekmalian, Komitas, Mekhjian and Atayan.

Solo performances were given by soprano Hasmik Harutyunyan and tenor Davit Karapetyan. Lusine Musayelyan participated as both a soprano soloist and a viola da gamba player. Polina Sharafyan accompanied on the violin and Razmik Melkonyan on the organ.

Israeli Defense Company’s Mystery \$235M Customer Is Reportedly Azerbaijan

WEAPONS, from page 1

Elbit said that the agreement was signed as part of an intergovernmental arrangement between Israel’s Ministry of Defense and the customer country’s defense ministry.

The reported missile agreement comes amid renewed momentum in defense cooperation between Israel and Azerbaijan, with Israeli defense companies expanding their presence in the South Caucasus country.

Around a week earlier, Globes reported that Israeli firearms manufacturer Ari Arms had inaugurated a rifle factory in Azerbaijan in the presence of President Ilham Aliyev and First Vice-President Mehriban Aliyeva.

The facility, owned by the Azerbaija-

ni government, is expected to become the country’s first production site for Western-style M4 rifles. The plant previously focused on manufacturing Kalashnikov-style firearms.

Production of the M4 rifles is being developed through a joint venture involving Ari Arms, Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Defense Industry, headed by Minister Vugar Mustafayev, and the Azerbaijani company Iqlim Scientific Production Enterprise.

During the ADEX defense exhibition, Mustafayev presented Aliyev and Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov with the first M4 prototype produced at the facility, explaining the project and its manufactur-

ing process.

Several Israeli defense companies also took part in this year’s ADEX exhibition, including Aeronautics, Plasan, UVision, Bagira and Bird. Ondas, whose Israeli operations have attracted attention, was represented under the leadership of former Mossad chief Dedi Barnea, who serves as the company’s president and chairman.

Elbit Systems, which is Israel’s largest private defense corporation, has previously reportedly offered to localize the production of its products in Azerbaijan with local partners.

(This story originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on October 19.)

INTERNATIONAL

Media: Pashinyan To Participate in EU Enlargement Summit

YEREVAN (Pan.am) —Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan will participate in the European Union enlargement summit to be held in Brussels on November 3, where key issues for the further development of the union will be discussed. This is reported by European media, Sputnik Armenia wrote on October 20.

European leaders, politicians and experts will discuss the future of European Union enlargement, strategic autonomy, security issues, democratic reforms and the path of EU candidate countries.

The Armenian Parliament adopted a law to begin the process of joining the European Union in March 2025.

Representatives of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have presented a report to the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council on the possible consequences of suspending the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union with respect to Armenia. It is noted that the EAEU member states may discuss the possibility of adopting a joint decision to temporarily suspend the operation of the EAEU Treaty and other international treaties that are part of the Union’s legal system with respect to Armenia.

DiCaprio Backs Armenia Threatened Species Initiative

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Actor and conservation supporter Leonardo DiCaprio expressed support for an initiative by Armenia and Colombia to establish the Coalition of Action to Recover Endangered Species (CARES) ahead of the COP17 conference opening in Yerevan. Sixteen countries have joined as founding participants.

DiCaprio wrote on Instagram: “Preventing extinction isn’t enough. We need to bring threatened species back from the brink and recover them. Today’s announcements at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP17) signal growing global momentum to make that happen.”

The actor highlighted that 16 countries, led by Armenia and Colombia, had joined the new Coalition of Action to Recover Endangered Species (CARES), committing to accelerate efforts to prevent extinctions and achieve measurable species recovery.

“Nine philanthropic funders and organizations, including my organization Re:wild, formed the Species Recovery Alliance, collectively committing and aligning more than \$500 million over five years to support the recovery of species around the world that are Extinct in the Wild, Critically Endangered and Endangered.

“These two separate initiatives share a common goal: helping the world’s most threatened species recover, which requires sustained investment, coordinated conservation action and long-term commitment.



INTERNATIONAL

Armenian Literature at Frankfurt Book Fair

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

FRANKFURT, Germany — The Frankfurt Book Fair is correctly considered the highpoint of the cultural year in Germany, especially among voracious readers, up-and-coming authors, children and of course the people who make it all possible: essayists, novelists, illustrators, translators, literary agents and publishers.

An estimated 235,000 people attended the fair, which opened on October 7 for the 4,000 exhibitors and 119,000 people in the trade and welcomed the public from October 9 through the weekend. The guest country was the Czech Republic and 137 other countries were represented at stands in the massive fairgrounds.

Among them was the Republic of Armenia, in one of the international publishers' halls; the colorful stand displayed numerous new titles, in Armenian as well as translations. And the ARI Literature Foundation sponsored events contributing to discussion of important issues.

The first event hosted by the literary agents was an informal reception on the second day, “for conversation,” networking and the opportunity to meet Sargis Hovsepyan and Lusine Kharatyan, Armenian authors whose books have been in the short list of nominations for the European Union Prize for Literature (EUPL). The event was titled “Armenian Literature & Brandy.” Both authors appeared in panel discussions the following day, providing insight into their worldviews and works.

Literature in Times of Crisis

The countless interviews, readings, round tables and workshops that filled each day addressed perennial topics like translation,

European up-and-coming authors, highlighting linguistic diversity and literary excellence among participants. It aims to lend greater visibility and prominence to all nominees beyond their home countries.

Lusine Kharatyan, born in 1977, is a cultural anthropologist from Yerevan, author of two novels, several short stories and essays. Her first collection of short stories Անոնուկի փակուղի (Dead End Forget-Me-Not) was shortlisted for the 2021 EUPL and her second novel, Միհրապէս (A Syrian Affair) was a finalist in 2023. Last year she won the Sarmayan Prize for Short Story of Yerevan International Book Fest and her works have been translated into English, Georgian, German, Greek, Maltese, Polish and Russian.

On the short list in this year's competition is Sargis Hovsepyan, for his *You Die Today, I Die Tomorrow*, a novel that shows how past events impact the present. In the novel, Frida, a young woman in Yerevan, uncovers family secrets through research conducted on a forgotten victim of Stalinism. The past emerges in the present, in the year 2022, after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine leads to a flow of refugees into Armenia. The personal drama is reflected in the city's history, the Soviet past and the challenging present.

Armenia, Language and Translation

During the discussion, Hovsepyan noted that those unfamiliar with the country, confuse it with Russia: “People think Armenians speak Russian,” he said; “some see Armenian as a Slavic language,” unaware of the fact that it occupies a category of its own among Indo-Germanic or Indo-European languages.

This led to consideration of the role of translators, of whom Kharatyan has had many. She praised her Polish translator as an “ambassador, a co-author in another language,” and her Georgian translator as “an advocate for Armenian literature,” noting that the quality of translation is crucial for success of any book.

Hovsepyan added the important, perhaps not widely known fact, that Armenia is the only country with a religious holiday commemorating translators, the Feast of Holy Translators, from Mesrob Mashtots on. Not all translations are successful: the Farsi version of Hovsepyan's own novel was banned by an Iranian Ministry, he added.

Ignorance of Armenian culture is indeed widespread, as the discussants noted and translators have a difficult task. They must know the context of the work, for example, post-Soviet Armenia and Armenians, Western vs. Eastern Armenian, etc.

Bergman mentioned the close link of Armenians to their culture and offered that contemporary Armenian writers are not popular with Diaspora Armenians, who prefer classical authors. Here she spoke of the post-Soviet Diaspora. That said, Hovsepyan interjected that the Diaspora represents great potential, precisely because of its interest in world literature. The consensus was that translation has always been part of Armenian culture. Without it, the Armenians probably would not have



From left, Sargis Hovsepyan, Anne Bergman and Lusine Kharatyan

survived as a culture.

Women in Literature and Publishing

Arevik Ashkharoyan, the founder and director of ARI, organized a second round table session on “Women Leading Cultural Change: Stronger Literary Markets Through European Integration.” Participants came from five countries in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe. All were publishers, each with a different background and focus.

Paola Erizanu, from Moldova, said she had been “born into literature” and loved to go to book fairs. Yulia Kozlovets, from Ukraine, had a sister who owned one of the first bookstores for children in Kiev and, as a child who loved to read, she wanted to follow her example. Gvantsa Jobava, a member of the International Publishing Association from Georgia, said she was fortunate to have educated parents who supported her education. As a youth she wrote poetry that was published, even in Armenian translation. Her husband, a printer, had made posters for demonstrations when he was a member of the opposition and landed in prison. They both had a keen awareness that books and publishing could change the world.

Ashkharoyan noted that, although there are few women in publishing, they should prove themselves through their work, rather than fixate on the problem. Most of these women have had to deal with other problems, in particular censorship and state control. In Georgia, international financing in publishing is prohibited and anyone accepting funds would be legally charged with being an “agent.” Jobava said in fact for the past four years, the Georgia stand at the Frankfurt fair had been financed by independent publishers rather than the government.

In 2022, Kozlovets said, the Frankfurt Book Fair severed negotiations with Russia and other organizations followed suit. If special projects for publishing in Germany

have been organized through the Foreign Ministry since then, they were due to years of networking beforehand.

For Ashkharoyan, “Ukraine is teaching us all a lesson.” In Armenia, she said, the 2018 revolution was followed by war. And Armenia still hosts Russian military bases. Yet, she said, this year world leaders came to Armenia for an EU summit and one of them, the Ukrainian president, said Armenia was a democratic country. In her words, during the Soviet era, “for 70 years we were neighbors, but never friends. Now through association, Russian, Armenian and Ukrainian writers are coming together.”

The same principle was at work in Moldova, Erizanu pointed out: after the Romanian-Moldovan border was closed, the two started building literary relations; with the same language, the same literature, they strengthened regional cooperation. In the 1990s, there was a literary boom, she said; books that had been prohibited in the Soviet era, appeared. People who had forgotten about neighbors, because regional relations were mediated through the USSR, began to understand the history of their region.

Intercultural Exchange at Work

If the message transmitted by these gatherings was that intercultural exchange is the key to progress and understanding, it was manifest in a special way at the Armenian stand itself. Financial and personal support for the stand came from NOAH, an association founded by Ernst-Ludwig Drayss of Heppenheim, to promote cultural exchange between Armenia and Germany. NOAH contributed not only funds but also personnel and knowledge. Members of the association volunteered to help out at the stand, greet guests, introduce them to the exhibitors and tell them about Armenia's cultural heritage and current offerings.

Among the volumes displayed at the stand was the richly illustrated book, *Twenty Years of NOAH*, issued by the association.



Arevik Ashkharoyan at the Armenia stand

as well as politically and socially relevant issues of our world today, among them, the rise of populism and right-wing extremism and especially the threat of AI; American historian Jill Lepore detailed in a keynote address how AI threatens freedom of thought and expression — books, reading, culture, the core of constitutional democracy. Whatever the theme, the role of literature and the importance of reading constituted the leitmotif of discussion.

The two Armenian shortlisted EUPL candidates shared insights with visitors in an event on “The EUPL Effect – Enlarging European Borders,” moderated by Anne Bergman of the EUPL. This literature prize, initiated in 2009, is an award for the best Eu-



Community News

Armenian Museum Of America Appoints Sarah Hayes as Deputy Director

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America (AMoA) announce recently the appointment of Sarah Hayes as deputy director, expanding her leadership role at the Museum and positioning her to support the institution's continued growth, strategic development, and national visibility.

Hayes has served as director of development since 2023, leading membership, grant management, donor relations, corporate and foundation partnerships, and events. In her new role, she will retain leadership of the Museum's development program while taking on broader responsibilities across the institution.

In her new role, Hayes will work closely with Board President Michele M. Kolligian, Executive Director Jason Sohigian, the Board of Trustees, staff, volunteers, donors, members and community partners to advance the Museum's mission and strengthen its financial and or-



The AMoA has appointed Sarah Hayes as Deputy Director of the organization (Photograph by Natalie Nigito)

ganizational sustainability. She will provide leadership and coordination across exhibitions, programs, communications, facilities, visitor experience, and administrative functions, helping ensure that the Museum's activities are aligned with its strategic priorities.

"Sarah has been an extraordinary leader and advocate for the Museum," said Kolligian. "Her vision, energy, relationships, and deep commitment to our mission have made an enormous impact on the institution. We are thrilled to expand her leadership role as Deputy Director and look forward to all that we will accomplish together."

During her tenure as director of development, Hayes has strengthened the museum's fundraising and membership programs, expanded foundation and institutional partnerships, and pursued significant grant opportunities to support exhibitions, programming, and capital improvements. Her efforts have contributed to membership growth, including expanded outreach through direct mail and email campaigns, and have helped establish a stronger foundation for the museum's long-term sustainability. Her work supports an

see HAYES, page 11



AYC presents \$2,000 to Operation Homefront in support of military families. (Photography by Talar Festekjian, 2026)

A Day of Golf, Generosity And Community

AYC Golf Fore Kids Celebrates Its Ninth Year

By Charles G. Yessaian ROCKVILLE, Md. — On Monday, October 5, supporters gathered at Norbeck Country Club for the ninth annual Armenian Youth Center (AYC) Golf Fore Kids Classic. With the golf course completely sold out and more than 200 participants in attendance across golfers, volunteers and dinner guests, the much-anticipated autumn tradition once again brought together supporters of all backgrounds for a day of camaraderie, laughter and, most importantly, giving back.

The gathering was a celebration of the local American-Armenian community and the many people who invest their time and resources in its future.

This year's outing borrowed a popular idea from AYC's inaugural Casino Royale fundraiser, held in May. Two blackjack tables added another layer of entertainment to the golf experience, while the event's 50/50 raffle reached its highest total in the Classic's nine-year history. The lucky winner took home more than \$3,800, with the other half supporting the charitable effort.

The course also featured comedians, providing unexpected laughs and a reminder that a charity golf outing should never take itself too seriously. The good-natured atmosphere extended well beyond the fairways, as participants reconnected with longtime friends and welcomed newcomers.

The most meaningful moments came during the evening's charitable presentations, when AYC recognized three organizations with contributions totaling \$5,000. These gifts reflect the organization's commitment to helping families, children and neighbors while advancing the long-term vision of a permanent Armenian youth center in the Washington area.

see GOLF, page 11



A \$2,000 presentation supports traditional Armenian dance costumes for Hamazkayin's Washington, DC Dance Group. (Photography by Talar Festekjian, 2026)

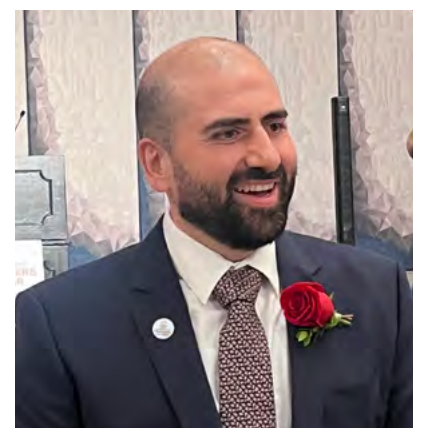
Glendale Teacher Gagik Galfayan Named One of Calif. Teachers of the Year

GLENDALE — Gagik Galfayan, an Armenian American educator at Woodrow Wilson Middle School in Glendale, has been selected as one of California's five Teachers of the Year for 2027.

His journey began with his selection as Glendale Unified School District's 2026 Teacher of the Year, followed by recognition as one of the Los Angeles County Teachers of the Year. He then advanced through the state selection process, which included a classroom observation and interview, becoming one of the five California Teachers of the year for 2027.

Galfayan is in his 14th year of teaching. He teaches seventh grade world history and CTE Digital Media and Yearbook Design and serves as the school's History Department Chair. Before joining Wilson in 2019, he taught fifth and sixth grades in the Armenian Dual Immersion program at Thomas Jefferson Elementary School.

His story is especially meaningful because he grew up in the same community where he now teaches. His family immigrated to the United States in May 1995, and he attended Glendale public schools, including Horace Mann Elementary, Toll Middle School and Clark Magnet High



School. He later earned his bachelor's degree, graduate degrees and teaching credentials at California State University, Northridge.

As someone who learned English after immigrating, Galfayan brings a personal understanding of the challenges many of his students face. His teaching emphasizes helping students understand what they read, think critically and express their ideas with confidence. He also helped coauthor the Armenian American section of California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, contributing to the inclusion of Armenian American experiences in the state's educational resources.

His previous honors include the California Council for the Social Studies' Carol Marquis Global Understanding Award in 2024 and the Armenian American Public Service Employees Association's Outstanding Teaching Award in 2019.

For Galfayan, this recognition is also a chance to represent his students, his fellow teachers, and the Armenian American community. He hopes to use the opportunity to mentor other educators and eventually help prepare future teachers through part time teaching at CSUN.



OBITUARY

Jack Bousian, 105

World War II Veteran and Prolific Artist

HAYWARD, CA — Jack Bousian, one of the San Francisco Bay Area’s oldest World War II veterans and artists, passed away of natural causes at 105 years old on October 22, 2025. A beloved husband, father, grandfather, and dedicated Armenian-American community member, Jack lived a life defined by creativity, discipline, and devotion to family.

A California native, Jack was born on January 14, 1920, in Sanger (Fresno County). His parents, Boghos (Paul) and



Zarouhie (Rose) Bousian, had narrowly escaped the Armenian Genocide, in which Jack’s grandparents were killed. At age five, Jack moved with his family to the Bay Area, working in his father’s grocery store

during the Great Depression.

Jack graduated with honors from the California College of the Arts (CCA) in 1942 and was immediately drafted into the U.S. Army. Recognizing his graphic design talents, the Army assigned him to Company B, 660th Engineers Topographical Battalion in London. Operating in strict secrecy, Jack drafted the critical maps used for the June 6, 1944 Allied invasion of Normandy. Following D-Day, his unit mapped Allied movements through France and Germany, eventually relocating to Paris until V-E Day.

After the war, Jack enjoyed a prominent advertising career as an art director in New York and San Francisco, working as one of the original “Mad Men” at the indus-

try-leading firm BBDO. In 1965, he married Barbara Boyajian at St. John Armenian Church in San Francisco. They lived in Diamond Heights, welcoming their son Mark, before relocating to Westport, Conn., in 1970, where their daughter Adrienne was born. There, Jack founded and led Graphics One Associates in Stamford as Creative Director.

In the 1980s, Jack matured into a prolific Abstract Expressionist painter and sculptor. Over the decades, his works were showcased at the CCA alumni exhibit, Gump’s San Francisco, Fresno State, Silvermine Guild Arts Center, and the Armenian Museum of America. During the COVID pandemic, while isolating in Hayward, Jack produced over 400 unique pieces—often using paper grocery bags when supplies ran low. In his final years, he created a groundbreaking mixed-media series depicting the 1915 Armenian Genocide. In 2024, CCA honored him as their oldest living alumnus

at age 104. An avid runner who jogged daily until age 100, Jack continued walking daily until he was 105. He credited his longevity to vigorous exercise and lifelong creativity. He was a member of the Armenian Triple X Fraternity (Golden Gate Chapter), St. Vartan Armenian Church in Oakland, and St. John Armenian Church in San Francisco.

Jack was predeceased by his parents and his brother, Lee. He is survived by his devoted wife of 60 years, Barbara Bousian, and son Mark Bousian of Hayward; daughter Adrienne Bousian, son-in-law Alex Long, and granddaughter Sophia of Berkeley; brother-in-law David Boyajian; and three nieces.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, October 24, at 11 a.m. at Chapel of the Chimes, 4499 Piedmont Ave., Oakland. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Armenian Triple X Fraternity Golden Gate Chapter, St. Vartan Armenian Church,

Jeanine Laura Fereshetian

Nurse, 33

LACONIA, N.H. — Jeanine Laura Fereshetian, 33, passed away on Saturday, September 12, 2026.

Jeanine was born in Malden, MA, on February 25, 1993, the daughter of Steven R. Fereshetian and Jeanette Adamkowski.

Jeanine was a licensed practical nurse (LPN) at the Plymouth House in Plymouth, NH, where she dedicated herself to helping others. Prior to becoming an LPN, Jeanine was a successful business owner in Laconia, where she founded and operated Skincare Dreams by Jeanine. She was passionate about beauty and took great pride in helping others feel beautiful and confident. Her creativity, dedication, and entrepreneurial spirit were a special part of who she was.

Jeanine had a love for sports and staying active that began at a young age.

Throughout her life, she enjoyed many different sports and activities, including T-ball, gymnastics, soccer, track and field, and basketball. She also loved horseback riding and spending time outdoors. Some of her happiest moments were spent hiking and enjoying nature with her two beloved dogs, Sessi and Kai, who were an important part of her life.

Jeanine will be remembered for her caring heart, beautiful spirit, adventurous nature, and the love she had for her family, friends, and animals.

In addition to her parents, she is survived by her brother Steven Fereshetian, Jr., godmother Laura Lynch, and other aunts, uncles, and cousins.

A Graveside Service for family and close friends was held on Thursday, September 17, in Wildwood Cemetery, 34 Palmer Street, Winchester, MA.



For those who wish the family suggests memorial contributions in Jeanine’s name be made to Church of Another Chance, PO Box 944, Meredith, NH 03253.

Rachel Seville Tashjian Wise Named to Vanity Fair Best-dressed Fashion Professionals List

NEW YORK — Rachel Tashjian, a CNN Senior Style Reporter, was recently included in the Best-Dressed Fashion Professionals List of 2026 at *Vanity Fair* magazine.

Tashjian is a former fashion writer for the *Washington Post*’s Style section, known for her distinctive voice blending fashion with politics, social media and pop culture. She’s also the creator of “invitation-only” newsletter *Opulent Tips*, which has developed a cult following for its chatty tone, screwball interviews and pearls of fashion knowledge.

Tashjian graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in English and art history. Before joining the *Washington Post*, she was the fashion news director at *Harper’s Bazaar*, where she profiled leading designers like Miuccia Prada and Dior’s Maria Grazia Chiuri. Prior to that, she was GQ’s first fashion critic, turning her pen to subjects ranging from the evolution of streetwear to the fashion diplomacy of the Bidens, the British Royals and the Trump administration.

Tashjian’s writing portfolio extends to renowned publications such as *Artforum*, *Bookforum*, and *New York Magazine*.

Tashjian has been described as “one of the most exciting and influential fashion critics working today, putting her in company with newspaper veterans like Robin Givhan, Vanessa Friedman, and Cathy Horyn,” according to SSENSE.

In 2023, Tashjian was an ASME nominee for her reviews and criticism, a first-place winner in the Society for Features Journalism, Excellence-In-Features Awards for arts and culture criticism portfolio in 2024 and was named to the Business of Fashion 500 list in 2023.

— Christine Vartanian Datian



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OBITUARY

Dr. Silva Babayan Karayan

Educator

PORTER RANCH, Calif. — Dr. Silva Babayan Karayan devoted her life to education, combining a distinguished academic career with decades of service to Armenian schools and community initiatives.

Born in Aleppo, Syria, in 1942 to Yervant and Rosin Babayan, she grew up in a family deeply committed to education and Armenian community life. Her father, Yervant Babayan, was a respected educator in Syria and Lebanon; her grandfather, Archpriest Nerses Babayan, helped establish schools in the years following the Armenian Genocide. Inspired by her father's example, Dr. Karayan regarded teaching as a noble calling.

She attended Giligian Elementary School in Aleppo and AGBU Tarouhi Hagopian High School in Beirut. At the American University of Beirut (AUB), she earned a bachelor's degree in psychology in 1963 and a master's degree in clinical and counseling psychology in 1966. From 1970 to 1976, she lectured in AUB's Department of Psychology.

On August 19, 1967, she married Dr. Sarkis Karayan, a distinguished physician and historian. Their daughter, Zella, was born in November 1969. In 1976, the family moved to the United States and lived in Amherst, Massachusetts, where Dr. Karayan was a professor at the University of Massachusetts School of Education until 1979. The family then relocated to Southern California. In 1999, she earned a Ph.D. in educational psychology, specializing in development and disability, from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Dr. Karayan joined California Lutheran University (CLU) as adjunct faculty in

1982 and became a full-time assistant professor in 1989. She directed the university's Service-Learning Projects beginning in 1996 and, from 1999, led its Special Education Internship Program and Education Specialist Credential Programs. She later chaired the Education Specialist Program and founded CLU's Center for Academic Service-Learning. She retired as Professor Emerita.

A respected scholar and educator, Dr. Karayan authored *A Guide to Academic Service-Learning*, a resource for college faculty and K-12 teachers. Her research appeared in peer-reviewed professional journals, and she presented frequently at national and international conferences. She also received competitive national and state grants supporting her scholarship. As an educational consultant, she worked with the California Department of Education's statewide effort to promote service-learning in teacher preparation and was a founding member of its first statewide advisory committee. She also served on the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing bilingual and bicultural panels that developed the CLAD and BCLAD tests.

Her teaching and leadership earned wide recognition. In 1996, she was unanimously nominated for CLU's President's Award for Teaching Excellence. The following year, she received the CCET Quality of Education Award for Distinguished Service to Children and Preparation of Teachers. In 2002, she became the first professor nationwide to receive the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education's (AACTE) Best Practice in Service-Learning Pedagogy award. She also received the



In 2002, in recognition of her "significant contributions in the field of teacher education, through innovation, high standards and leadership," Dr. Silva Karayan (second from left) was the first professor nationwide, to receive the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) award for "Best Practice in Service-Learning Pedagogy."

AACTE National Award for Best Practice in Service-Learning Pedagogy.

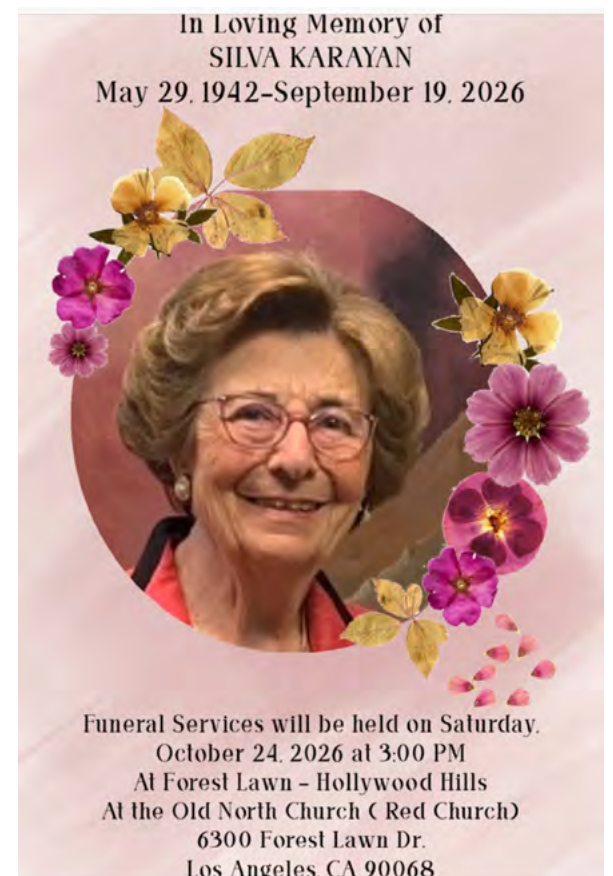
Service to Armenian education was central to Dr. Karayan's life. She was a founding board member and founding chair of the Education Committee at both AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manukian High School and AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School, which her two granddaughters, Tamar and Patil, attended from pre-school until 12th grade. She also served as vice chair of the boards of trustees at both schools and was a founding member of the Board of Trustees of Ararat Charter School.

In 2006, Dr. Karayan established the AGBU Yervant Babayan Institute of Pedagogy for Research and Development, along with the Azkanviroum Program. Created in tribute to her father's career as an educator, writer, and community leader, the institute was intended to carry forward his legacy and serve as a resource for Armenian schools. Under the leadership of Dr. Mihran Agbabian and Dr. Karayan, the Azkanviroum Program developed initiatives to support Armenian education.

Dr. Karayan was also a board member of the Armenian Film Foundation for over 20 years, supporting the foundation's mission of documentary filmmaking on Armenian heritage and the Armenian Genocide. In 2017, Dr. Silva Karayan with the support of the Armenian Film Foundation published her husband, Dr. Sarkis

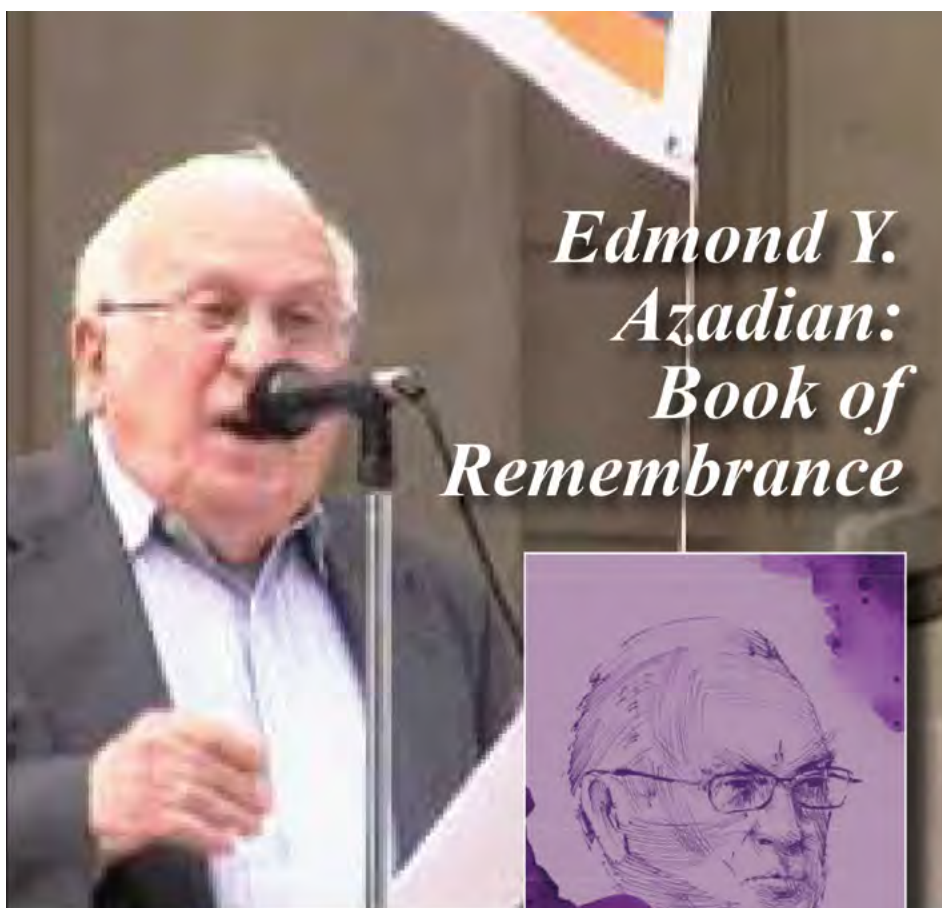
Karayan's research on Armenian villages in pre-Genocide Turkey into a book titled *The Extermination of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*.

Dr. Karayan passed away on September 19, 2026. Funeral services were held on



Saturday, October 24, at 3 p.m. at Forest Lawn – Hollywood Hills, at the Old North Church (Red Church).

Dr. Karayan's legacy lives on in her family and in the students, educators, schools, and community initiatives shaped by her vision, generosity, and lifelong devotion to education and the Armenian community.



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

An Armenian-American Partnership Is Changing The Way Armenia Teaches Medicine

BOSTON — At a teaching hospital in Yerevan this autumn, a clinical scene that looked entirely routine carried something new. A resident presented a case and reasoned through it aloud with faculty; the group moved together to the bedside to examine the patient; and then, instead of dispersing, they paused to talk — not only about the diagnosis, but about how the case had been taught. What set the moment apart was not the medicine, but the method. The session had been designed, led, and critiqued by Armenian physicians who, a year earlier, had set out to master something their own training had never formally offered them: how to teach medicine at the bedside.

Those physicians are the first graduates of the Master's of Science in Health Professions Education (MSHPE) program, a partnership between Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine and HENAR Foundation. Delivered through the Boston University - Armenia Medical Partnership (BU-AMP), the program has recently entered a new, practice-based phase, and representatives of Boston University and HENAR traveled to Armenia to see the results firsthand, at the bedside, where they matter most.

The delegation visited several hospitals that serve as clinical bases for the academic departments of Yerevan State Medical University (YSMU) and the National Institute of Health/Armenia (ANIH); Muratsan University Hospital Complex, the Mikaelyan Institute of Surgery, Wigmore Women's and Children's Hospital, and Erebuni Medical Center. In each, they watched physician-educators from the program's first cohort lead clinical teaching sessions alongside faculty they themselves had helped train, proof that the learning had already moved out of the classroom and into daily practice.

The significance of the MSHPE program lies less in any single visit than in what it is quietly rewiring. For generations, medical training in Armenia, as in much of the world, rewarded the transfer of knowledge: what a physician learned in the classroom. This program is helping shift that model toward competency-based medical education, which asks a harder question: what a physician can actually do at the bedside, and how well they can teach the next generation to do it.

"One of the most important impacts of this initiative is that it contributes to a shift in the way we think about teaching. It is not simply about transferring knowledge, but about developing competencies, promoting active learning, strengthening assessment and creating a supportive educational environment," said Jeffrey Markuns, MD, EdM, executive director of the Boston University Global Health Collaborative and founding director of the MSHPE program at the school.

That shift is designed to spread. Rather than importing foreign experts to deliver care and then depart, the program invests in Armenian physician-educators who become, in effect, multipliers. The first cohort — six physicians selected in partnership with YSMU and



MSHPE graduates, attendings, and residents teaching at the bedside while BU faculty observe

ANIH — completed graduate-level training this year at Boston University through a blend of online and in-person study, including a six-week intensive summer session in Boston. But even as they studied, they taught: through local faculty development and "Training of Trainers" sessions every two weeks over the past year, those six passed their new expertise to 171 fellow physician-educators across Armenia's academic and clinical institutions.

Six became 171 in a single year. Each of those 171 now shapes the residents in their own departments, and those residents will one day care for patients in every region of the country.

"The power of this program is that it is designed to multiply. Every physician-educator we train becomes a teacher of teachers, and each of them reaches the next. We are not filling a gap, we are helping reshape the system that will train every future physician in this country," said Yelena Abovyan, executive director of HENAR Foundation.

The program's first year closed with graduation ceremonies at ANIH and YSMU in September, attended by representatives of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, ANIH, YSMU, HENAR and Boston University. The presence of both ministries was itself a measure of how far the work has traveled from pilot to policy: the institutions that govern Armenian healthcare and educa-

tion are watching, and increasingly investing.

"Reforming medical education is a national undertaking, not an institutional one. What gives us confidence is seeing the Ministries of Health and Education, our academic institutions, and our clinical partners aligned behind a shared goal, because a system built together is a system that lasts," said Arman Voskerchyan, co-founder of HENAR Foundation.

The program has already begun its second year. A new cohort of ten physician-educators has been selected to pursue MSHPE studies at Boston University, and, like those before them, they will carry what they learn back to their colleagues, departments, and institutions, widening the circle with every cycle.

"We are embedding international best practices into the structure of Armenian postgraduate medical education, so that progress continues whether or not we are in the room. That is the difference between humanitarian assistance and a strategic partnership," said Aram Kaligian, MD, clinical associate professor at Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine.

For the Armenian-American community that has helped make this work possible, the program is a reminder of what the diaspora's partnership with Armenia can achieve when it is built to last — not a single act of generosity, but an investment that keeps multiplying long after the visit ends.



MSHPE graduates from Yerevan State Medical University (l-r) Hripsime Апре-
syan, Suren Brutyan, Alvard Hovhannisyán



Alexander Bazarchyan, the Director of the National Institute of Health/Armenia, with the MSHPE graduates from ANIH (l-r): Alexander Bazarchyan, Hrachuhi Ghazaryan, Lilit Marutyan, Zaruhi Tavadyan



Arts & Culture

TCA Metro LA Chapter Hosts Program with David Karamian On *Khatchkars* In Noratus

By Karine Armen
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

ALTADENA, CA — On Sunday, October 4, the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) Metro Los Angeles Chapter organized a book presentation by photographer, author and publisher David Karamian at the Tekeyan Cultural Association Beshgeturian Center.

Aleen Yadegarian, a UCLA student and representative of the TCA Metro LA chapter, served as master of ceremonies.

Karamian’s new book, *Eternal Armenia: Khatchkars - The Cross-Stones of Noratus*, is a photographic and cultural study of the ancient cemetery of Noratus, on the western shore of Lake Sevan in Armenia. This is Karamian’s third book on Armenia, independently published through NorArtGallery Publishing. It is the culmination of nearly three years of photography, research, writing and design. The 264-page, large-format bilingual English-Armenian volume features nearly 200 photographs, including expansive panoramic views of the Noratus Cemetery, intimate studies of individual *khatchkars*, carved monuments on graves, and the landscape where these centuries-old stones have endured.



Aleen Yadegarian and David Karamian (photo by Karine Armen)

Each photo in the book has long captions that are not mere descriptions of each *khatchkar*, but the photographer’s personal interpretation. The descriptions are intended to make the observer slow down and reflect. Karamian said, “The information about each stone is not exactly what an artisan was thinking eight hundred years ago. They are invitations to observe the symbols, composition, craftsmanship, and personality of each stone.”

For Karamian, the book is not simply about photographing beautiful stones. It is about memory, survival, and responsibility. Once a cultural treasure disappears, photographs and

see KARAMIAN, page 14



An iced beverage at Café POM sits alongside colorful décor, reflecting the small details incorporated throughout the café

Cafe POM Offers Like to Armenian Heritage Through Food and Community

By Grace Yacobe
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PAOLI, Penn. — For some customers, a visit to Cafe POM is about more than finding a favorite Armenian dish; it is an opportunity

to reconnect with a culture.

For Anita Torcomian, the cafe’s owner-operator, those encounters are among the most meaningful parts of running the business. Together with her husband, Tory (Toros) Torcomian, Anita built Cafe POM around a simple idea: preserving the foods and traditions they value while creating something their family and community can carry forward.

The idea began as a joke between the couple over drinks. While driving past Armenian Delight, a longtime Armenian food business, they began discussing the possibility of buying it. What started as a passing thought gradually became a serious consideration.

When they shared the idea with Tory’s father, they expected him to dismiss it. Instead, he encouraged them to pursue it.

see CAFE, page 14



Café POM’s storefront welcomes customers at its location in Paoli, Pennsylvania, where the café has brought its distinctive concept to the local community

Vincent Baguian

‘When Things Started Going Well, My Roots Resurfaced’

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN-PARIS — Vincent Baguian (born Pambaguian, in 1962 in Saint-Ouen) is a French singer, songwriter and author of Armenian origin. He began his professional life at the age of 18 as a courier in an advertising agency, eventually becoming a creative copywriter and working notably on campaigns for albums by Serge Gainsbourg. At the same time, he pursued his own musical career,



recording his first album, “Triste,” in 1991, followed by “Pas mal” in 1996 and the acclaimed “Mes chants” in 2000, known for its mixture of poetry, irony and wordplay. His later album, “Ce soir, c’est moi qui fais la fille” further demonstrated his distinctive approach to songwriting. Baguian has also collaborated closely with singer Zazie, performing duets with her and participating with her in the musical tale “Sol En Cirque”. His songwriting talents have extended to artists such as Anggun, Florent Pagny, Marjolaine Piémont, as well as to major French musical productions including “Mozart l’Opéra rock,” “1789 Les Amants de la Bastille,” “Mistinguett reine des années folles,” “La légende du Roi Arthur” and “Le Rouge et le Noir.” He has written the novels Émile Titan: Operation Salicorne (2020) and Émile Titan: Ten Days to Save Paris (2023), written for young readers (co-authored with Baptiste Vignol), and Let Him Who Has Never Killed Throw the First Stone at Me (2023).

Vincent, I first heard about you from songwriter Arlette Kotchounian in 2018 and since then I have followed your artistic activities. You began your professional life in advertising and became a copywriter before developing your career as a singer and songwriter. What made you leave that world and devote yourself fully to music?

I worked in advertising primarily to earn a living, but it wasn’t my passion; I wanted to be a singer. That said, I learned a great deal in the field, conceiving over 120 commercials directed by major filmmakers like Patrice Leconte, Michel Blanc,

see BAGUIAN, page 13



ARTS & CULTURE

Vincent Baguian: ‘When Things Started Going Well, My Roots Resurfaced’

BAGUIAN, from page 12

Jean-Marie Poiré, Etienne Chatiliez... I also spent a lot of time in the studio. I also spent a lot of time in the studio producing music for commercials or recording radio spots, experiences that kept me close to my passion. Then, I was hired to create advertising campaigns for major artists like Serge Gainsbourg, Billy Idol, Calogero... This brought me into contact with record labels and gave me insight into how the industry works. I signed up for a internship organized by the renowned French artist Francis Cabrel and was selected. Subsequently, Francis Cabrel and a producer named Richard Seff decided to sign me to their label. For a time, I continued working in advertising while performing on stage, but once I was hired to write musicals that became major successes, I was able to leave the advertising world behind.

Your songs are known for their poetry, irony, humor and particularly their wordplay. What attracts you most to playing with words, and how do you find the balance between humor and deeper emotions in a song?

Everything began with a double problem. First, I grew up in a family where little attention was paid to child's feelings. Doing well at school was the main priority.

So, at the age of 12, I started writing songs to make myself heard. I got into the habit of saying exactly what I think in my songs which may be what stirs up emotion: that deep connection to who I really am. The second issue is that I'm dyslexic. In my head, I break words down and mix up expressions hence the wordplay. And there's certainly an element of Armenian culture involved, too. We don't complain; humor is a form of courtesy, a way to avoid burdening the person you're talking to with serious problems.

You have written for other singers and for major musicals such as “Mozart, l’opéra rock,” “1789 : Les Amants de la Bastille” and “Le Rouge et le Noir.” How does your approach change when you write for another artist or for the stage rather than for yourself?

I think that, surprisingly, we never really write for others. We don't know what they are thinking deep down. The same applies to characters. I believe that if you are sin-



cere—if you convey a feeling with genuine emotion—you become universal. And anyone can make the song their own, whether they are a man or a woman, young or old.

I also believe that is why the songs from these musicals work so well across different cultures—in China, Korea, and Japan, for example.

What subjects concern Vincent Baguian the writer?

Every subject — from the simplest and most poetic to the most complex and risqué. Georges Brassens was my mentor in songwriting. He proved that one could sing about anything, provided it was done with the necessary detachment, refinement, and — if possible — talent.

Where is the Pambaguian family from?

I know very little about my family. I know that they came from Mush. I know that my grandparents likely fled alongside singer H  l  ne Segara's grandparents. And when I went to Armenia, I was deeply moved to pass through a village that bore my name: Pambak. That couldn't happen to me in France.

In an interview you said: “I have always felt an obligation to be effective, because I am Armenian and, by virtue of that, represent a community.” What did your Armenian heritage mean to you while growing up, and does it have a place in your artistic identity today? I know only you sing Armenian song *Hingala* with Diane Minassian and one, with Marine Gyulumyan.

When I was younger, I felt different — largely because of dyslexia, I think. My main concern was fitting in and succeeding in life despite that handicap. So, the added factor of being Armenian was simply too much to handle. But once things started going well for me, my roots resurfaced. Now, whenever I'm called upon to support the Armenian cause, I always make sure to step up. I've shed the burden of being the kid at the back of the class who felt a bit dim-witted; school simply failed to recognize my particular kind of intelligence. My journey has restored my self-confidence, and now I can connect with my ancestral emotions. I am still deeply moved when I sing or work with Armenian women like Diane Minassian or Marine Gyulumyan — or when I hear the language spoken.

You have been in Armenia, but not performed there. Do you have any plans to perform there?

I have been to Armenia four times. Never to sing. I appeared on television once with Marine Gyulumyan. That's all. But if you invite me to come and sing in Armenia — and the event is well organized — I would gladly return for free to support a cause that benefits the Armenian people. To help soldiers and families affected by the war, for example.



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Boston Chapter

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ARTS & CULTURE

Cafe POM Offers Like to Armenian Heritage Through Food

CAFE, from page 12

Anita began working at Armenian Delight to become familiar with the business and the women who prepared its food. Although the original owner ultimately did not sell the business to them, Anita's experience there helped lay the groundwork for what would eventually become Cafe POM.

The connection between the two businesses remains central to Cafe POM's identity.

"We were fortunate enough to be able to use Asik's [the late owner Asdghig Kazanjian] recipes, along with the women who brought those recipes with them," Anita said. "The choreg, lamb dishes, yalanchi, and many other items came from her recipes."

The cafe's name also reflects Anita's connection to Armenian culture. Inspired by the pomegranate and its symbolism of fertility and family, the owners chose a name and visual identity that would reflect their heritage



Anita (left) poses with her husband, Tory, and their three children

while welcoming a broader audience.

Gathering Place for Community

Cafe POM's vision extends beyond its menu. While working at Armenian Delight, Anita noticed that many customers wanted somewhere to sit down and enjoy their food rather than take it away. She and Tory carried that observation into their own business, creating a space where people could share meals and spend time together.

"One advantage of having an area where people can sit down is that someone might come in for lunch or dinner, and then somebody else who hasn't been part of the Armenian community for a while will walk in," Tory said. "They haven't seen each other in ages."

These unexpected reunions have become one of the cafe's defining features. For some customers, visiting Cafe POM offers a way to reconnect with people and traditions that have become less present in their lives.

The business also reflects a broader Armenian tradition of entrepreneurship and mutual support. Tory's father and uncle John helped guide the couple through the challenges of establishing a business, while restaurant owner Tavi Murray offered practical advice about opening and operating a restaurant.

"Having someone with that specific experience was really big for us," Anita said of the guidance they received.

That support extended into the wider Armenian community. When Cafe POM first opened, customers arrived in such numbers that the owners struggled to keep up with demand.

"Once we opened, people came in droves," Anita recalled. "The first week was packed, and we could barely keep up with the demand. As soon as we made something, it was out the door."

The response demonstrated the community's appetite for Armenian food and its willingness to support a business dedicated to preserving it.



Cafe POM's build-your-own-bowl counter gives customers a look at the fresh, customizable options offered inside the Paoli cafe

Sharing Armenian Food with New Audiences

Situated on Pennsylvania's Main Line, Cafe POM also serves customers who may be familiar with Mediterranean cuisine but have never encountered many specifically Armenian dishes.

To encourage customers to explore unfamiliar flavors, the cafe introduced Palm Samplers, allowing visitors to select five items from the refrigerator to create a sampler plate.

The menu combines recipes passed down through Armenian Delight with dishes from the Torcomian family's kitchen. The gata recipe comes from Anita's mother, while the vospov kofte and eetch recipes reflect Tory's mother's cooking. Although she is Puerto Rican and Spanish by heritage, her recipes have also become part of the cafe's culinary repertoire.

The family's experience illustrates how food traditions can be preserved and shared across cultural backgrounds without losing their connection to family history.

Cafe POM also hopes to accommodate customers with different dietary preferences. Anita has expressed interest in experimenting with gluten-free versions of traditional Armenian foods, including lahmajoun, as well as exploring additional vegan options.

Balancing tradition with changing customer expectations is part of the cafe's ongoing evolution.

More than a Restaurant

Beyond its kitchen and dining area, Cafe POM provides space for community gatherings and artistic expression. The cafe has hosted exhibitions featuring Armenian artists, including Mania Arabalian, Gary Altunian and Monique Sarkisian, as well as events involving the Armenian basketball community.

Rather than charging artists to display their work, the owners ask them to make a donation to the Armenian Sisters Academy, helping support the wider community while giving artists a place to share their work.

The cafe's communal spirit is especially visible in its kitchen. Women and other community members sometimes volunteer their time to prepare traditional foods, help make yalanchi or clean parsley.

"They'll come and they'll make Lahmajune or help with the yalanchi or just cleaning parsley," Anita explained. "They just like to come and hang out in the kitchen with us."

Some volunteers refuse payment, accepting food in return for their help. Their involvement has helped create a family atmosphere that the owners say developed organically as the business grew.

For Anita, this sense of connection is inseparable from the cafe's purpose.

"Our community has been absolutely amazing," she said. "I truly believe we have one of the most unified Armenian communities in the entire country."

Looking ahead, Cafe POM hopes to extend its reach beyond the Main Line through nationwide shipping, making traditional Armenian foods more accessible to people who cannot easily find them in their local communities. The initiative could offer another way for Armenian families across the country to maintain connections to their culinary heritage.

TCA Metro LA Hosts Program with David Karamian on *Khatchkars* in Noratus

KARAMIAN, from page 12

memories may be all that remain. The second part of the book includes tombstones and graves, and Karamian clearly explains the difference between a *khatchkar* and a tombstone.

A San Francisco Bay Area resident, Karamian is an Armenian-American photographer, author, publisher, and contributing writer for Black & White Photography Magazine. After a long career in engineering, design, and corporate leadership, he fully turned his attention to photography, publishing, and projects that document Armenian cultural heritage. Through NorArtGallery Publishing, Karamian has produced three books on Armenia, to date, with his recent work increasingly focused on cultural documentation and preservation.

Documenting the *khatchkars* and advocating for their preservation became an important purpose of Karamian's photography. Over repeated visits to Noratus, he sought to document not only its most beautiful or historically significant *khatchkars*, but also its weathered stones, graves, inscriptions, details, and the cemetery's broader landscape. For Karamian, this is where photography moves beyond artistic interpretation and becomes documentation.

"Photography cannot physically protect a stone from erosion, destruction or disappearance," Karamian said. "It can, however, preserve a record of what existed at a particular moment. A photograph can travel where the monument cannot. It can enter a library, museum, university, classroom,



From left: Ani Kartalian, Parsegh Kartalian, Aleen Yadegarian, Archpriest Fr. Manoug Markarian, David Karamian, Shahnour Hovsepian, Talene Hachikian, and Mihran Toumajan (photo Karine Armen)

church, archive, or home. It can introduce Noratus to someone who may never have the opportunity to walk among its stones."

Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, praised Karamian's *Eternal Armenia* book. "We especially appreciate that the *khatchkars* of Noratus are presented not only as works of art and historical monuments, but also as living witnesses to Armenian identity

and Christian faith," Archbishop Derderian wrote. "Through your work, the reader is invited to understand more deeply the richness of Armenia's spiritual heritage and the responsibility we bear to preserve it and pass it on to future generations," he said.

For Karamian, bringing attention to Noratus and its Armenian Christian heritage means taking the work beyond the book's pages, before Armenian and non-Armenian audiences, and into libraries, museums,

universities, churches, and cultural institutions. Through presentations, publications, and public conversations, he hopes to draw greater attention to Noratus and to the broader importance of Armenian cultural preservation.

"We have already seen the destruction of Armenian *khatchkars* at Julfa, and most recently the destruction of historic Armenian cemeteries and medieval *khatchkars* in Shushi," Karamian said. "Noratus still survives. We have a responsibility to protect it while we still can."

After Karamian's presentation, TCA Metro LA Chapter board member Talene Hachikian and Yadegarian gifted a book to the author, published by the late, eminent historian, Prof. Richard Hovannisian, titled *Armenian Communities of Persia/Iran: History, Trade, Culture*.

Representing Derderian, Rev. Manoug Markarian complimented the author, his project, and the importance of introducing Noratus to Armenians worldwide. He reminded the audience that "people with faith preserve the cemeteries and the *khatchkars*."

The program concluded with a book blessing (kinetson). Markarian and TCA Metro LA Chapter board member Mihran Toumajan sang the hymn (sharagan) Vork Zartaretseen, which is the Hymn for the Holy Translators. Participants in the book blessing included longtime TCA Western USA leaders Parsegh and Ani Kartalian, as well as Aleen Yadegarian, and TCA Metro LA Chapter board members Shahnour Hovsepian and Talene Hachikian.



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian



Lemon, Coconut, and Pistachio Cake

Lidey Heuck is the author of *Cooking in Real Life: Delicious & Doable Recipes for Every Day*. The Pittsburgh native began her career in food working as Ina Garten’s assistant, a job she got as a college senior after cold-emailing the Barefoot Contessa. Since then, she has carved out a delicious space of her own, contributing to New York Times Cooking and sharing everything from recipes to ideas on home decor, entertaining, and travel on her Lidey Likes blog and Instagram.

Heuck grew up in Pittsburgh, where her uncles owned four restaurants and her grandfather entertained the family with big Italian dinners, reports the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. While Heuck helped bus tables at the restaurants and cooked for fun in high school, occasionally trying new dishes at restaurants around town after she got her driver’s license, her interest in food was mostly casual. She’d watch the Food Network, look through her mom’s cookbooks, and eat lots of spaghetti and roast chicken. “I’m a cook, writer, and creator based in New York’s Hudson Valley. I’m a recipe contributor to New York Times Cooking and the creator of this very website. I began my career in East Hampton, working as Ina Garten’s assistant. In 2020, after seven years with the Barefoot Contessa family, I was ready for my next adventure and spent a summer season working for Erin French at The Lost Kitchen in Maine, where I appeared on The Lost Kitchen Show on Magnolia Network.”

“The idea for this cake came to me when I was thinking about Easter desserts. I associate lemon and coconut (and jelly beans) with Easter -- especially big towering cakes covered in shredded coconut. Big deal cakes. I wanted to create a cake that incorporated my favorite Easter flavors but was a little more casual. The kind of cake you can keep on the counter and cut little pieces off throughout the day. The kind of cake you can tell yourself counts as breakfast food.”

“This is a hearty cake that travels and keeps really well. Wrap it with plastic wrap and store at room temperature or in the refrigerator, but bring the cake to room temperature before serving for optimal flavor. It is dangerously good with



Lidey Heuck (Photos courtesy <https://lideylikes.com/lemon-coconut-and-pistachio-cake/>)

a cup of hot coffee or tea. And while this is meant to be a casual cake, it would still make a great Easter or holiday dessert. Serve it with whipped cream and fresh raspberries and no one will mind that you didn’t spend all weekend constructing a four-layer cake with an ornate coconut birds’ nest on top. Maybe next year.”

“This cake has been a consistently popular recipe on my site. But it’s always bothered me that the center of the cake sunk. So, as a January baking project, I decided to see if I could fix that once and for all. Five cakes later, and I figured it out. The cake is as moist, fluffy, and lemony as ever, it just stands a little taller. I updated the recipe below, but wanted to list the changes I made to avoid any confusion,” says Lidey.

I increased the baking powder from 1/2 teaspoon to 1 teaspoon.

I decreased the eggs from 3 to 2.

I increased the flour from 1 1/4 cups to 1 1/2 cups.

I added one extra tablespoon lemon juice and one extra tablespoon coconut milk to the soak.

Whether you’ve made this cake before, or it’s your first time trying it, you’re in for a treat.

INGREDIENTS:

For the cake:

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter at room temperature, plus more for greasing the pan
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup + 1 tablespoon unsweetened shredded coconut, such as Bob’s Red Mill, divided
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/3 cup shelled unsalted pistachios
- 1/2 cup full-fat coconut milk (See Note)
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest (2 lemons)
- 3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla or almond extract
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature

For the soak (syrup):

- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons full-fat coconut milk

PREPARATION:

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease a (8 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 2 1/2-inch) loaf pan, then line the bottom with parchment paper, leaving an overhang on 2 sides.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, 1/4 cup of the shredded coconut, the baking powder, salt, and baking soda. Coarsely chop the pistachios, then remove 2 tablespoons and set aside. Finely chop the rest of the pistachios and add them to the bowl with the flour.

In a separate, small bowl, whisk together the coconut milk, lemon zest, lemon juice, and vanilla extract. In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the butter and granulated sugar. Beat on medium speed for 3 to 5 minutes, until light and fluffy. With the mixer on medium speed, add the eggs, one at a time, scraping down the bowl after each addition.

With the mixer on low, add half the flour mixture to the batter, then the coconut milk mixture, then the rest of the flour. Scrape the sides of the bowl with a spatula to make sure the batter is well-mixed. Transfer to the prepared pan and bake for 45 to 50 minutes, until the cake is golden brown and a cake tester comes out clean. Set aside to cool for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the soak: In a small saucepan, combine the sugar, lemon juice, and coconut milk. Bring to a simmer, stirring to dissolve the sugar, then remove from the heat. Pour the syrup evenly over the warm cake, then sprinkle with the reserved pistachios and the remaining 1 tablespoon shredded coconut. Cool completely, then lift the parchment paper to remove the cake, cut it into slices, and serve. This cake will keep for up to 3 days, wrapped-well and stored at room temperature.

Note: When working with canned coconut milk, Lidey likes to pour the can into a bowl and whisk to combine the top cream layer and the milk before measuring.

For this recipe, see: <https://lideylikes.com/lemon-coconut-and-pistachio-cake/>
Other recipes by Lidey Heuck: <https://cooking.nytimes.com/author/lidey-heuck>
Visit her food blog at: <https://lideylikes.com/recipes/>

Cooking in Real Life is a collection of simple, delicious recipes for all the different reasons we cook – busy weeknights, family holidays, quiet nights in, and every moment in between. To purchase, go to: <https://lideylikes.com/>

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ARTS & CULTURE

Books

Don't Give Up, Please. Not Yet: Dana Mashoian Walrath's *The Book of Genocides*

By Arpi Sarafian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

While a history lesson long overdue, Dana Mashoian Walrath's *The Book of Genocides* (Harvard University Press, 2026), the graphic history in comic book format of 10 genocides spanning the past 500 years, is also very much about our current reality. Walrath's is a deliberate attempt to expose, in its stark nakedness, the savagery that continues to plague mankind to this day. The ethnic cleansing of Artsakh in 2023 and the ongoing blockade and bombardment of Gaza are only two recent examples. "But our dreams can be different," asserts the visionary who believes that getting the truth out will bring us a step closer to reclaiming our humanity. Even if it should take the millennia, the attempt to reform the world is worth the try, had declared that other visionary, Virginia Woolf, a century earlier.

Text and graphics intermingle in Walrath's narrative to depict the full horror inflicted upon indigenous peoples by colonial settlers who forcibly remove local populations from the area they have called "home" for millennia so they can grab the land themselves. "Genocide is always a land grab," writes Walrath, who minces no words to bring to light Australia's history of convict settlement — the British government's policies of forced assimilation and sterilization of the Natives — or the Ottoman government's carefully planned and systematically executed deportations and the mass killings of the Armenian population living within its boundaries, in 1915, in its attempt to exterminate a whole people.

Also included in the book are the genocides of the First Peoples of the Americas, the Genocide of Black Americans, the Genocide of Jews in the Holocaust, the Palestinian Genocide, the Cambodian Genocide, the Tutsi Genocide in Rwanda, the Bosnian Genocide and the Rohingya Genocide.

Each chapter begins with a "History of the Genocide," followed by an interactive section where Walrath invites the reader to actually engage in an act of violence herself, by cutting pages across dotted lines, with a pair of scissors, "to create a Turn-The-Flap Book that can generate thousands of ways human beings can dehumanize each other." "The act of cutting is not one of desecration. Instead, I invite you to consider it a form of Liberation," writes Walrath.

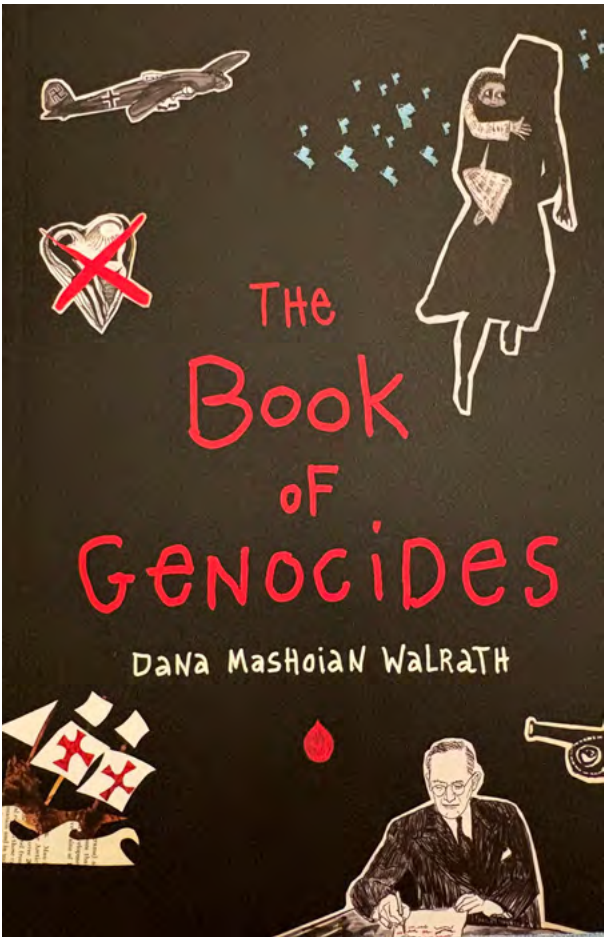
The Book of Genocides is not an easy book to read. The gut-wrenching facts — the accounts of the slaughters and the mutilations, the tortures, the lynchings, the neck-chaining, the use of fellow human beings as chattel,

or the policies promoting the forced removal of children from their families are extremely distressing. Yet, at no point does one get a sense that the content is intended to sensationalize or to thrill. What shocks is witnessing the unimaginable and the unutterable made into historical truth. The challenge for Walrath must have been bringing the fiction, her story, closer to the reality of the cruelties she has made her mission to uncover. The barbarity is real.

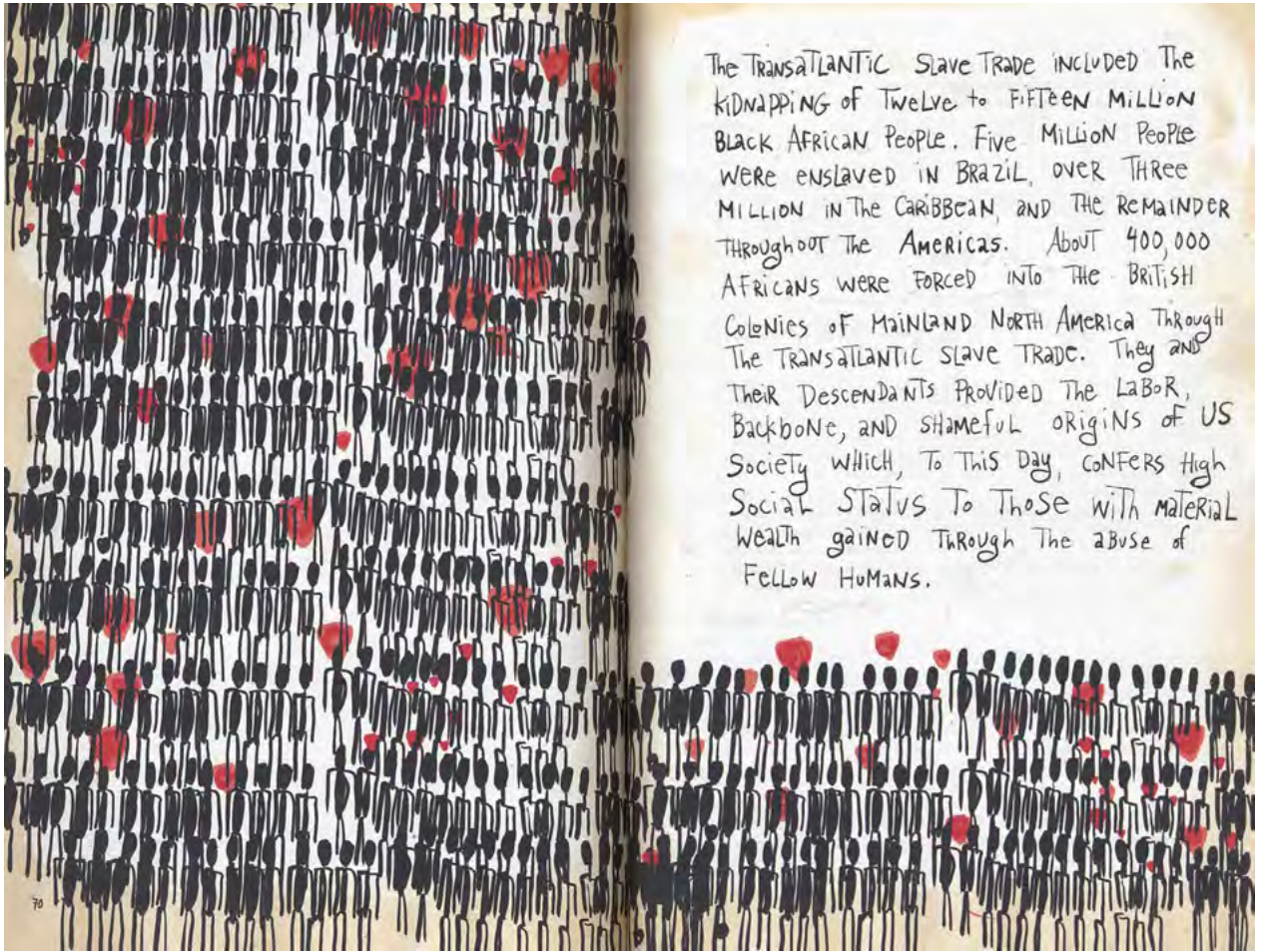
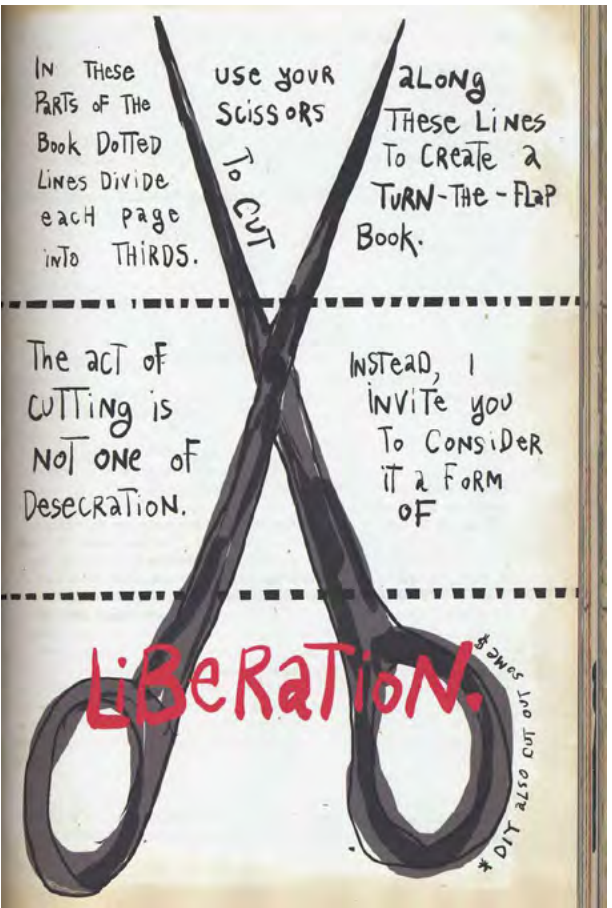
"How come we don't know?" has inevitably been my non-Armenian students' response when introduced to the realities of the Armenian Genocide. The recognition of evil, any evil, is unsettling, but learning about scientists at leading research universities using Aboriginal children as laboratory rats in their medical experimentation is downright horrifying. If one could classify the cruelties committed by governments into tiers, shaming indigenous children into internalizing their biological and cultural inferiority would probably be in a higher grade than gun violence.

While no genocide is more important than the others, Walrath's own connection to the Armenian Genocide — she is the granddaughter of survivors of the Genocide — adds the power of personal testimony to her story: "I know the anger, fear, and despair."

Walrath aligns Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term "genocide" and was the primary architect behind the United Nations' 1948 Genocide Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Geno-



award-winning writer and artist. The predominance of the color black in the book conforms to the grim subject matter. The red color of the pages that introduce each of the 10 chapters, with sketches of abstract patterns in black, reinforces its bloodiness. The reader's engagement with the horrifying details is further heightened by Walrath's stylized sketches of the maps, the indigenous figures and the animals. "I drew from my heart," confides the artist.



cide, with the 1921 trial in Berlin of Soghomon Tehlirian who shot and killed Mehmet Talaat Pasha, the orchestrator of the Genocide, in broad daylight.

"Soghomon testified that his mother's corpse came to him in a dream demanding that he avenge the slaughter of his entire family," recounts Walrath. The court set Tehlirian free.

It is the uniqueness of the specifics of each genocide that brings awareness to the universality of the crime. The tiny graves of the Myanmar children slaughtered in the Rohingya Genocide bring into Walrath's consciousness — who actually visited all ten countries where the genocides took place — the story of her great-grandmother Zartar Troshagirian who, while hiding from the Ottoman soldiers with her four youngest children, stifled her baby's cries so the rest of her children could survive the genocide. "Every time we connect our own pain to the suffering of others we take one step toward ending, preventing, and healing from genocide," writes Walrath.

An anthropologist by profession, Walrath is also an

If history is any indication, the darkness may be here to stay. The Convention has proven to be utterly useless in redressing current barbarities. It may in fact be getting harder and harder to reconcile our creativity with the reality of oppressive governments that have the greater power to destroy what has taken millennia to accomplish. Once again, the erasure of the cultural and religious heritage of Artsakh, the traditional Armenian homeland, or the razing of Gaza, the Palestinian homeland, to rubble come to mind. Notwithstanding, "We can change this. It is not inevitable," writes Walrath with confidence. If humans created the existing institutions, humans can also change them, she reasons. Indeed, her audacity to indict governments and to condemn the horror while it is ongoing awakens the reader to the urgency of doing something about it.

A human being stripped of her dignity is a cruelty impossible to fathom. One can only hope that laying bare the facts will bring mankind a step closer to making "our dreams" reality.



ARTS & CULTURE

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

OCTOBER 24 — The New England Couples Ministry, Saturday, at 5 p.m., will hold a special program, titled “Willing the Good of the Other: Marriage Through Every Season,” which will offer encouragement, practical wisdom, and Christ-centered teaching for building stronger, healthier relationships. Beautiful evening of dinner, music, fellowship, and inspiring teaching with Rev. Nareg Terterian. Whether you are married, engaged, dating, or single, all are welcome. Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, 200 Lexington St., Belmont. \$50 per person. To RSVP or more info, call 617-229-9294.

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

OCTOBER 25 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church International Food Festival, 12 noon to 3 p.m., Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Sample cuisine from Armenia, Brazil, China/Taiwan, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Italy and Iran. Adults \$25, children 12 and younger \$10. Wine and beer will be sold.

OCTOBER 25 — “Voices Across Time: Armenian Piano Music: A Homage to Robert Mirak,” Piano Recital and CD Launch by Alessandra Pompili. Works by Stephen Minas, Alan Hovhaness, Emanuel Melik-Aslanian, Loris Tjeknavorian, Komitas, George Gurdjieff, Diane Goolkasian Rahbee, Aram Khachaturian, and Koharik Gazarossian. Armenian Cultural Foundation, Arlington, Sunday at 5 p.m. Free and Open to the Public - Reception to follow.

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

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

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

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

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

NOVEMBER 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 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church's Dr. Michael and Joyce Kolligian 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

RHODE ISLAND

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

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

Prof. Shemmassian Publishes Illustrated Book on Musa Dagh Immigrants to US

NORTHRIDGE, Calif. — Prof. Vahram Shemmassian, director of the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Northridge, has published a new book, titled *Armenian Immigrants from Musa Dagh in the United States: A Photographic Collective Biography* (Yerevan, 2026). Its cover design and layout is the work of Lusine Matevosyan. This album, in a way, is a birthday gift to the American people on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the independence of the United States (1776-2026).

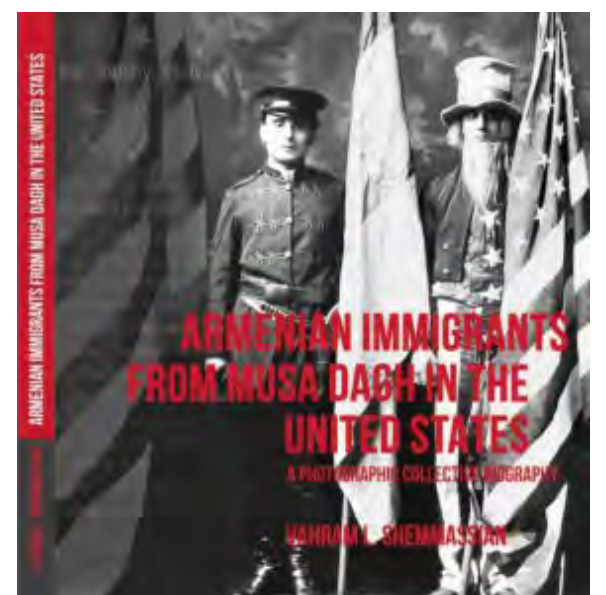
The idea of publishing an illustrated volume about Armenians who emigrated from Musa Dagh to the United States before, during, and after World War I was born out of a concern that they would be forgotten with the passage of time. In fact, they were already forsaken, when Dr. Shemmassian



Prof. Vahram Shemmassian

decided to trace their lives in the New World. It was not an easy task as there were not any published sources dealing with the topic. This fact compelled him to obtain information by other means: correspondence, interviews, seeking family collections, revealing manuscript memoirs and autobiographies, researching newspapers, etc. In the process, he discovered numerous pictures not seen before.

The several hundred vintage photographs and ephemera in the author's possession reminded him that they deserved a separate treatment, hence this album that weaves the immigrants' collective biography through visible evidence. In addition to an introductory essay, the 200-page book includes various sections dealing with early immigrants, families, individuals, children, social life, rug and silk business, celebration of the 1915 Musa Dagh resistance to the Genocide, soldiers in the US Army, and embroidery that Musa Dagh women carried with them — some as dowry items — and/or produced in America. For inquiries, you may contact the author at vahram.shemmassian@csun.edu.





COMMENTARY

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



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Iran, TRIPP, and the Geopolitics Of Regional Security

By Suren Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Last week, Iranian Foreign
Minister Abbas Araghchi vis-
ited Yerevan to participate in

the 17th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Bi-
ological Diversity (COP17). During a brief exchange with jour-
nalists, he made a particularly interesting statement about the
Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP).

Araghchi stated that Iran is concerned about any US presence
in the region but trusts Armenia and is confident that Yerevan
will not take any steps that threaten Tehran's security. "We do
have concerns about any US presence in the region and around
us. However, we are in close contact with our Armenian friends
on this issue and trust them. We know that they are not taking
any steps against Iran's security," Araghchi stated. On the one
hand, this serves as a warning to Armenia not to take any steps
that could run counter to Iran's interests.

On the other hand, however, it may signal a certain softening
of Tehran's position. Whereas Iran previously categorically op-
posed the implementation of the project, it now appears to be
prepared to make some concessions. In July, Iran's ambassador
to Armenia, Khalil Shirgholami, urged the Armenian side to es-
tablish mechanisms to manage potential risks associated with
TRIPP, recalling Yerevan's assurances that the project would not
threaten Iran's security.

In September, Shirgholami again raised the issue of a US
presence along the Armenian-Iranian border and proposed es-
tablishing a mechanism for regular consultations between Yere-
van and Tehran on TRIPP. In August, Armenian Prime Minister
Nikol Pashinyan stated that the project does not envisage any
foreign military or armed presence.

Iran's softened position could mean several things. First, Teh-
ran may seek to include TRIPP in a broader package of negoti-
ations with Washington. US officials understand that Iran could
take any measures it considers necessary to ensure its security,
including on the territory of third countries. This may be one of
the reasons why construction has not yet begun on the Armenian
section of the project.

At the same time, it cannot be ruled out that Iran may even-
tually seek to participate in the project in some form or through
some arrangement. The idea that Iran and the United States will
eventually have to sit down at the negotiating table seems al-
most inevitable. However, neither country can fully trust the
other. Iran considers the war unfinished, and the United States
may also view the current ceasefire as temporary, with military
operations potentially resuming at any time.

Notably, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has an-
nounced that Iran has submitted a seven-day plan to the United
States to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and is currently reviewing
the American side's comments. "Our conditions are clear and
have been presented to the United States as part of a seven-day
plan. The American side has made some comments, which we
are now reviewing," Araghchi said, emphasizing that Tehran's
proposal remains on the table. According to the Iranian foreign
minister, if Washington accepts the proposed conditions, the

Strait of Hormuz will reopen on the sixth day of the plan, and
negotiations will begin on the seventh day.

At the same time, Iran is pursuing a particularly interesting
strategy, taking into account the upcoming US midterm elec-
tions on November 3. A few days ago, Iranian media outlets
called on the country's population to prepare for war. I believe
this statement should be viewed primarily as a calculated strate-
gic maneuver rather than an indication that military operations
are about to resume.

First, it is important to consider that Iran made this statement
at a time when US military equipment and aircraft have been
moving actively throughout the region. American aircrafts con-
tinue to appear in the region and operate around the Strait of
Hormuz. I believe Iran's statement is primarily directed at ex-
ternal audiences although the statement appears directed at the
Iranian population. It calls on people to remain vigilant, exercise
maximum caution in the event of possible military operations,
and prepare psychologically for potential hostilities. Iran may
be seeking to create uncertainty in the international fuel market.
This could drive global fuel prices higher or, at the very least,
prevent them from falling.

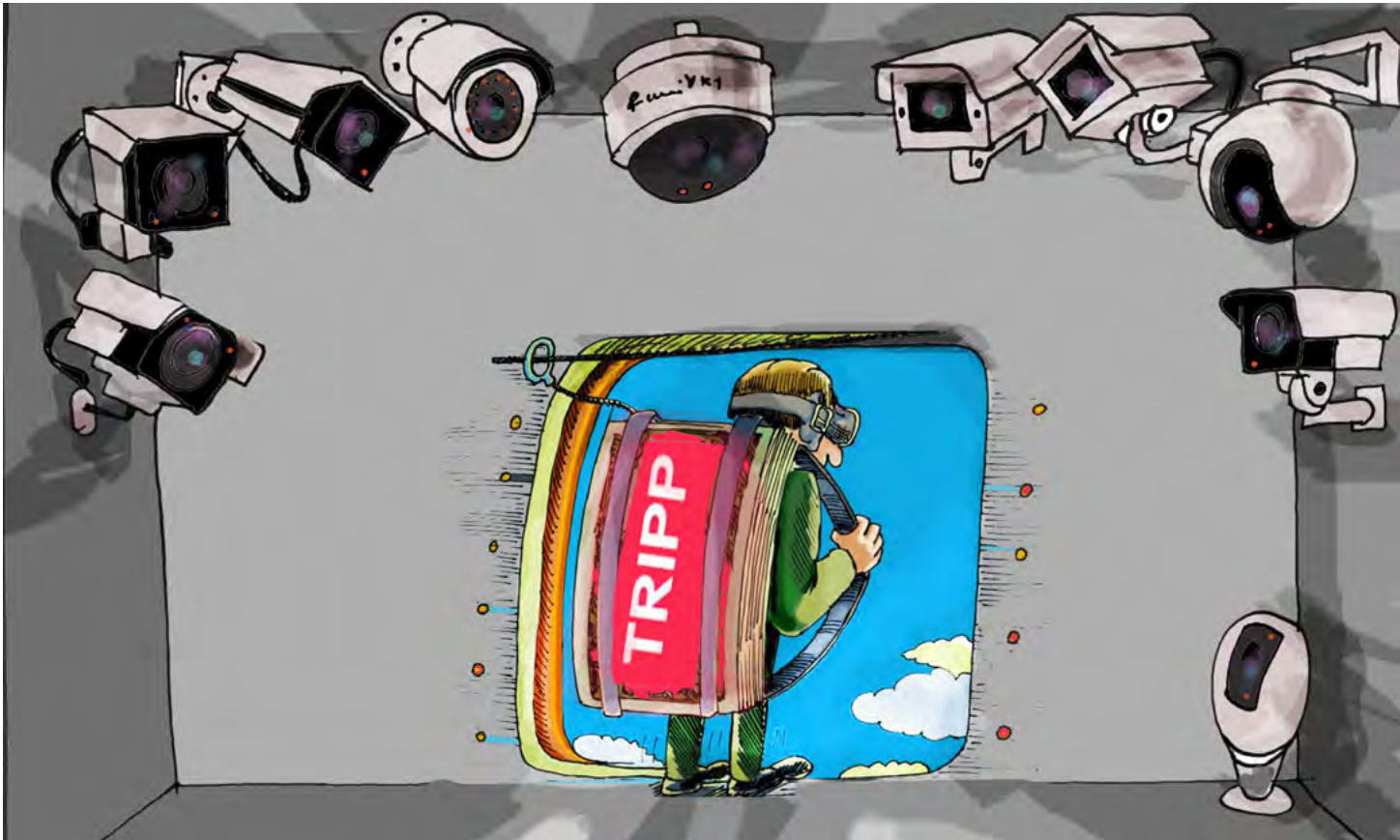
The upcoming US midterm elections on November 3 are an-
other important factor. President Trump's party faces serious
challenges, one of which is historically high fuel prices, largely
driven by the war with Iran. The Trump administration is try-
ing to stabilize the fuel market and bring prices down as much
as possible, to attempt to positively influence American voters'
attitudes. So far, however, these efforts have been unsuccessful.

At the same time, if an understanding between Trump and Pu-
tin over fuel supplies could serve as a stabilizing factor and lead
to lower prices in the US fuel market, Iran may be seeking to
prevent such a development through this move. This is particu-
larly relevant given Trump's statement that he does not plan to
launch an attack before November 3.

Iran is signaling that a new attack could come at a higher cost
for the United States and its allies. The consequences would not
be limited to financial costs but would also carry political reper-
cussions, both in the United States and across the region. There-
fore, Iran is not simply preparing its population for a possible
war; it is also taking preemptive foreign-policy measures during
this complex period.

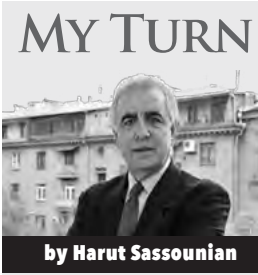
Iranian diplomacy is quite extensive and multifaceted, and the
efforts pursued across different fronts are often interconnected,
even when these connections are not immediately apparent.
Consequently, it cannot be ruled out that Iran may seek to in-
clude the TRIPP project in a broader package of negotiations
with Washington, covering the full range of issues Tehran wish-
es to address in its talks with the United States.

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





COMMENTARY



MY TURN

Turkish Research Center Repeatedly Praises Pashinyan and Criticizes The Diaspora

The Center for Eurasian Studies (AVIM), a research center based in Ankara, Turkey, covers the Caucasus, the Balkans, Central Asia, Russia and Iraq. The Center frequently publishes articles supportive of Pashinyan’s government and critical of the Diaspora. Below are a few articles AVIM published over the past four weeks:

1) “Armenia Caught between Diaspora Ambitions and State Memory” by Aygun Attar, September 14, 2026. Here is how the author summarized the article: “The Armenian diaspora has historically played a significant role in the formation of modern Armenian political identity and in the internationalization of the Armenian question. In particular, the organized lobbying capacity developed in the United States, France, and the broader European political arena has generated a wide field of activity ranging from keeping the events of 1915 on the international agenda to parliamentary initiatives concerning Türkiye, and from the Karabakh question to political pressure and sanctions-oriented demands directed at Azerbaijan. Yet the geopolitical reality that emerged in the South Caucasus after the Second Karabakh War of 2020 has increasingly exposed a divergence between the historical political paradigm maintained by certain organized diaspora circles and the contemporary state interests of the Republic of Armenia. This article conceptualizes that divergence as the ‘state-bearing diaspora paradox.’ It comparatively examines Armenian-American lobbying surrounding Section 907, parliamentary politics in France, European Parliament resolutions concerning Türkiye and Azerbaijan, and selected examples of Western media framing.... The central argument is that although the historical achievement of the Armenian diaspora lay in internationalizing the Armenian question, the continued reproduction of an unchanged conflict paradigm may now generate diplomatic and economic costs not only for Türkiye and Azerbaijan but also for Armenia itself as Yerevan seeks normalization with both states.”

2) “Two Different Approaches to Armenia’s Political Orientation: Territorial Claims and ‘Real Armenia’” by Tuğçe Tecimer, October 9, 2026. Here is how the Turkish author reacted to my column: “An article published on September 20, 2026, in ‘The California Courier’ -- a publication representing the radical, militant segment of the diaspora -- under the headline ‘Pashinyan Makes Anti-Armenian Statements at International Conference in Yerevan,’ harshly criticized the remarks made by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at the ‘Comprehensive Security & Resilience 2026’ conference held in Yerevan on September 17. Focusing on the peace process Pashinyan is conducting with Azerbaijan, debates regarding constitutional amendments, and his approach to historical issues, the article argued that the policies pursued by the Prime Minister contradict Armenia’s national interests. However, the most noteworthy aspect of the article is not the criticism of

Pashinyan’s diplomatic choices, but rather the political vision he articulated regarding Armenia’s future. In particular, the discussion he initiated concerning Mush and Van highlighted the divergence between the discourse on historical rights — prevalent in certain diaspora circles — and Pashinyan’s ‘Real Armenia’ approach. The article’s primary objections center on Pashinyan’s stance regarding constitutional amendments — which are viewed as excessive concessions to Azerbaijan — and his decision to sideline territorial claims. Additionally, the piece highlights an anecdote about a history teacher telling students they must ‘liberate Mush and Van’ when they grow up. The argument advanced through this example is clear: Armenians should not abandon claims to territories they believe were lost in the past, but rather keep alive the possibility that shifting geopolitical conditions could create an opportunity to reclaim these lands.”

3) “Radical Diaspora Criticized by the Armenian Government” by Selenay Erva Yalcin, October 12, 2026. Here is what Yalcin wrote: “Opposition groups have leveled constant criticism following Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan’s declaration of the ‘Real Armenia’ ideal as official government policy -- a vision that prioritizes establishing relations with regional countries based on peace, prosperity, and stability within existing borders, while eschewing historical ambitions. While the primary sources of this criticism within the country are opposition parties and the Church leadership, the external sources are the radical-militant elements of the diaspora known for their anti-peace stance.... As AVİM, we have repeatedly emphasized that the diaspora’s radical and anti-peace stance stems from a malicious approach aimed at undermining the South Caucasus region, the Azerbaijan-Armenia peace treaty process, and the Turkey-Armenia normalization process.”

4) “Following Pashinyan’s New York Engagements: Tensions Rise Between the Diaspora and the Armenian Government,” by Hazel Cagan Elbir, October 15, 2026. Here is how the author reacted to my column: “Nikol Pashinyan’s visit to New York in September 2026 -- beyond his address to the UN General Assembly -- has brought the structural tensions between the Armenian diaspora and the government in Yerevan back into the spotlight. An article by Harut Sassounian, published in the California Courier and the Armenian Weekly — titled ‘Did Pashinyan Come to NY to Address the UN or Split up Armenian University Students?’ — offers a concrete example of this friction. According to Sassounian, rather than engaging in an open dialogue with the broader Armenian community, Pashinyan held a closed-door meeting with a limited number of students belonging to the All-Armenian Student Association (All-ASA); this has been interpreted as a selective attempt to sow division within the diaspora. The core argument of the piece is that the rift between the diaspora and the government is not narrowing; rather, the sense of opposition is deepening.”

The biggest mistake Azeri and Turkish analysts and their government leaders repeatedly make, often inadvertently, is that the more they praise and support Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, the more they reinforce the impression that his policies favor Azerbaijan and Turkey, not Armenia. Nothing better demonstrates that Pashinyan’s positions serve the interests of Armenia’s adversaries.

A Fast Track for Armenia, Now!

By Miłosz Manasterski
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Brussels has shown it can move fast: Canada has just been offered a status found in no EU treaty. Armenia has lived through two wars over Karabakh, Azerbaijan’s 2023 offensive and the exodus that followed. Yet Brussels is still talking to Yerevan mainly in terms of summits and action plans. If any country has earned a fast track, it is Armenia. In her State of the Union address on September 16, Ursula von der Leyen told MEPs: “I would like to work with you on opening the door for Canada to be the first associate member of the EU.” According to a senior Canadian official, Ottawa also wants Canadians to be able to live and work in Europe without visas. Whether the offers to Ottawa and Kyiv are wise is a fair debate. What they prove is simpler: in Brussels, speed is a political choice. Ukraine applied for membership four days after Russia’s full-scale invasion and received candidate status less than four months later. Still at war, it has opened only two of its six negotiating clusters. Yet EU officials this year considered a model informally dubbed “reverse enlargement”, under which a candidate could join before acquiring full membership rights. Most capitals later rejected it. The Commission presented a visa liberalization action plan only in November 2025; Yerevan’s own goal is

visa-free travel by 2029. On August 24, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said Armenia would begin the process of submitting a formal membership application “in the near future”. Two Wars and a Choice Armenia fought two wars over Karabakh, in 1988–1994 and in 2020. In September 2023, an Azerbaijani offensive ended the region’s de facto Armenian administration, and within a week more than 100,000 of its Armenian residents fled to Armenia, a country of about three million. At the time, I argued in the Polish media, including on TVP Info and Polish Radio, that the EU should open its doors to refugees from Karabakh, as it had for those fleeing Ukraine. The appeal went unanswered. Armenia has also paid for its European choice. It froze its participation in the Russian-led CSTO in 2024, and the Kremlin has warned that adopting EU standards would create “deep trade contradictions” inside the Eurasian Economic Union. In June 2026, Pashinyan’s pro-European Civil Contract won 49.7% of the vote. Solidarity is not a competition. But Armenia should not count for less because its war was smaller than Ukraine’s and its economy poorer than Canada’s. A Small Economy Armenia’s economy grew by 7.2% in real terms in 2025, with nominal GDP of about \$29 billion. Ukraine, by contrast, has roughly 37 million hectares of arable land. Bruegel estimated in 2024 that, if the rules of the 2021–2027 Common Agricultural Policy were applied to a fully integrated Ukraine, it could receive about €85 billion over a seven-year budget period. Nor is Armenia a country at war today. Yerevan and Baku initialled a peace agreement at the White House in August 2025, though the treaty still awaits signature

and ratification, and an unarmed EU civilian mission has operated on the Armenian side of the border since February 2023. Why Armenia Matters At the first EU–Armenia summit in May, European Council President António Costa called Armenia a “key pillar” in Europe’s links through the South Caucasus to the Caspian Sea and Central Asia. With Georgia’s accession process de facto halted, and its government refusing to seek the opening of negotiations before 2028, Armenia is the South Caucasus country still moving towards Europe. Armenia adopted Christianity as a state religion in 301 and has been a member of the Council of Europe since 2001. Obstacles exist. Armenia remains a member of the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union; as Pashinyan said in August, simultaneous membership of both blocs “is impossible”. That is precisely why speed matters. A country that would eventually have to leave one economic bloc needs clarity about the path into the other. Now, Not in a Decade When Yerevan applies, Brussels should answer in months, as it did for Kyiv. It should accelerate the visa-liberalization process and open EU programs and parts of the single market step by step. Von der Leyen has shown that a door can be opened with one sentence. Armenia is already standing at it. (Miłosz Manasterski is a Polish journalist and commentator writing on Central Europe, demography, and the political economy of European societies. He is the CEO of Agencja Informacyjna, an independent Polish news agency, and a regular political commentator for leading Polish media outlets. A former Middle East see FAST RACK, page 20

Cop17 at a Glance

Everything You Need to Know About the UN’s Nature Summit

This month, nearly every country on Earth will return to the question of how to stem the rapid destruction of the natural world. Humans are driving it, but so far we have not found a way to stop it.

In late 2022, governments reached an ambitious once-in-a-decade deal to better protect nature amid scientific warnings that the planet is going through the largest loss of life since the extinction of the dinosaurs. Now, they are assessing their progress on the targets for the first time.

What Is Cop17?

Every two years, signatories to the UN convention on biological diversity (CBD) hold a summit. The convention is one of three created at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 alongside climate change and desertification (the latter’s Cop17 having been held in Mongolia in August).

The diversity Cop covers three main areas: conservation of the natural world, its sustainable use, and how to share the benefits of its genetic resources. This year will be the 17th time that signatories have formally met, where the main focus is assessing progress on this decade’s targets such as protecting 30% of land and sea for nature, reforming \$500bn (£375bn) of environmentally damaging subsidies, and restoring 30% of the planet’s degraded ecosystems.

Governments have never met a single UN target on nature since the biodiversity convention was created in Rio in 1992, and there has been a big push to make sure that the next years until the 2030 deadline are different.

When and Where Is It? Who Is in Charge?

Armenia is the host for Cop17, which will take place in the capital, Yerevan, between 19 and 30 October. They are tasked with corralling governments to take action on their weak progress towards the targets.

Ahead of the summit, countries met in Nairobi to discuss their priorities for the summit, concluding that they are off track on every single one of the 23 targets they agreed in Montreal in 2022. In Armenia, environment ministers must decide what they are going to do about it.

But it will be a challenge: the last biodiversity summit, Cop16 in Cali, Colombia, ended in disarray with no clear agreement on key topics after negotiations ran out of time. Another round of talks were needed in Rome to finish the meeting.

Are the 2030 Biodiversity Targets Out of Reach?

Not quite. It may seem like history is repeating itself, but there are signs of progress on some targets. The aim of protecting 30% of Earth for nature is the headline target this decade, inspired by the Harvard biologist EO Wilson’s vision of protecting half of the planet for the long-term survival of humanity.

According to one estimate, governments are close to reaching this number for land, so far agreeing to place 27.5% of terrestrial areas under protection as nature reserves, national parks and other areas. But the target is not about simply creating new protected areas on paper: it

emphasises effective conservation management of areas that are particularly crucial for the healthy functioning of ecosystems, such as wetlands, rainforests, grasslands and coral reefs.

Other targets have seen almost no progress. An aim to reform and repurpose \$500bn of environmentally damaging subsidies has received almost no action from governments. From tax benefits given to fossil fuel companies to state support for destroying rainforests in order to expand agricultural frontiers, governments remain a major driver of biodiversity loss.

What Might an Ambitious Deal at Cop17 Look Like – and What Might Prevent It?

In terms of the latter, in a word: money.

Governments need to do more – and fast – if they want to meet some of this decade’s targets.

“This is a really important opportunity for parties to do a serious course correction,” said Guido Broekhoven, head of multilateral policy at the World Wide Fund for Nature, adding that countries need to commit to concrete actions to get the world back on track.

But the world has changed a lot since the deal was reached in 2022, when there was enthusiastic support for action to better protect nature after the Covid-19 pandemic.

While the US is not a signatory to the UN convention on biological diversity, it was a major funder of conservation through USAID, which has been dramat-

ically cut by the Trump administration. Britain and other European countries have also curtailed their funding for conservation around the world.

Developing countries have long been clear that there cannot be more ambition on conservation without extra resources. Without funding – not just agreed, but delivered – it is unlikely there will be more progress on achieving this decade’s targets.

Some countries – such as Norway and Sweden – have paid up, but others are slower to do so, research has shown. “Japan stands out as a very large economy that is not putting much in terms of international nature finance forward,” said Brian O’Donnell, director of the Campaign for Nature.

Private finance for biodiversity has also been falling since 2022. In 2025, the Cali Fund was launched to encourage private companies that benefit from nature’s genetic resources to contribute to conservation. It remains virtually empty. As on Monday, at the start of Cop17, it has received just \$10,656 in commitments, of which \$7,085 has been deposited – far short of a target to raise \$1bn annually.

Another challenge is the sheer volume of issues negotiators will need to thrash out. “It’s a very busy agenda,” said Catherine Weller, Fauna & Flora’s director for global policy. “There’s a genuine risk that they might not get through it all.”

(This article originally appeared in the *Guardian*. Additional reporting by Rebecca Ratcliffe.)

Protesters Demand Closure of Amulsar Gold Mine as COP17 Opens

AMULSAR, from page 1

and safety, environmental management, and social responsibility. They cite the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for the Amulsar mine that they conducted in accordance with international standards back in 2016.

Following the 2018 Velvet Revolution in Armenia, the issue gained prominence again. While there was a lack of public trust in the assessment ordered by Lydian Armenia, Pashinyan’s government ordered a \$450,000 assessment of the mine from

Earth Link & Advanced Resources Development (ELARD). In 2024, the government greenlit the mine.

The protesters gathered near the entrance to the COP17 Green Zone, one of the conference’s venues, at the Karen Demirchyan Music and Sport Complex in Yerevan. However, police officers asked them to move down to the stairs of the building if they wanted to hold posters, since they did not have a formal permit.

A member of the My Heart Is In The Highlands initiative, Karine Panosyan, told OC Media that they planned to gather in front of the Green Zone, which is a COP17 venue open to the public and then intended to move on to the Blue Zone, which is the official, restricted negotiation area for UN member delegations..

“The police did not let us take our posters and walk from the Green Zone to the Blue Zone, saying it was for safety reasons. But that is very funny because we were all very safe and calm. We were not going to cause any danger or anything else. They forbid us to organize our protest here with our posters and to say what we want to say to the world about the ecological problem in Armenia,” said Panosyan.

She added that they did not apply to get a permit because the law does not oblige them to do so for gatherings under 100 people.

On October 10, Pashinyan, accompanied by government officials and party mem-

bers, opened the mine. In his speech, he described the event as a ‘success story,’ describing the process leading to it as practice the government should adopt in other investment projects.

“We have to talk about why we can organize this event in such a ceremonial environment without protest or similar actions nearby,” Pashinyan said.

He said that the government tried to address public concerns in the past years by raising awareness and showing Armenians that the project was theirs and not something from outside. Lydian Armenia holds a 75.5% share in the mine, while the Armenian government holds 12.5%.

Levon Galstyan, a geographer who has been with the Amulsar movement since the beginning, was also attending the protest. He thinks that the reason the mine opened now is that they could not find funding from their international partners, due to environmental concerns and the results of the assessment.

“Every government in Armenia has been in favor of opening any mine in Armenia, including this one. They [Lydian Armenia] were not restarting after 2020 because there were financial issues and no one wanted to finance the project. The government wanted it so much that they did something unique: they guaranteed a \$180 million budget for the mine, enabling the company to take out a loan of that amount from the bank. If problems emerge and the company

cannot repay the loan, the state has to pay that money from the budget,” he said.

Lydian Armenia announced that it received around a \$150-million-loan from Armenian America Bank under a state guarantee by the Armenian government for the project.

Andrei Ralev, representing the Central and Eastern European Bankwatch network, which monitors public money and the financing of projects by large European banks in Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, claims that there is a risk of cyanide spilling from the mine, which could pollute the Arpa River, or of acid drainage, which could pollute the water that goes to Lake Sevan.

“The Amulsar gold mine has been one of the worst environmental problems for Armenia for more than ten years. There are several issues related to biodiversity. Armenia should follow the rules of international conventions, and it is ignoring them very much,” he told OC Media.

Ralev was also part of a discussion during COP17, where he spoke about the Bern Convention’s position on mining at Amulsar.

“One of the most important issues is that the Jermuk community was not consulted. There are already impacts on local communities and tourism, which has been developed in the Jermuk spa town,” he added.

(This story originally appeared on www.oc-media.org on October 19.)

A Fast Track for Armenia, Now!

FAST TRACK, from page 19

correspondent based in the United Arab Emirates, his work examines how institutions and historical memory shape the long-term future of Europe and its neighbors. He is a recipient of the Knight’s Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta for distinguished contributions to culture and public service, and was awarded a medal under the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) framework for his work on social policy. You can read his work on [Substack](http://Substack.com) (miloszmanaster-ski.substack.com) and connect with him on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/miloszmanaster-ski).)