THE ARMENIAN
MIRROR-SPECTATOR
SINCE 1932

Volume LXXXXIV, No. 18, Issue 4956 NOVEMBER 14, 2026 $2.00

Armenia, Azerbaijan, US Launch Technical Planning Groups to Advance Trump Route

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

YEREVAN (OC-Media.org) — Armenia, Azerbaijan and the US have announced the launch of trilateral technical planning groups to advance the Trump Route. In a statement released on November 7, the three countries said the move was a "crucial step" towards resolving complex technical issues ahead of implementing the massive infrastructure project.

The three nations agreed to establish the Trump Route, a planned multi-use infrastructure project intended to connect mainland Azerbaijan to its exclave of Nakhchivan through Armenian territory, during the Washington Summit in August 2025. A bilateral document with the US and Armenia described the route as being "expected to generate reciprocal benefits for international and intra-state connectivity for the Republic of Armenia."

Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Vahan Kostanyan, Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Elnur Mammadov, and US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Brendan Hanrahan launched the group.

see TRIPP, page 5

Pashinyan Repeats Plans For EU Membership Bid

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan reiterated on November 5 that he wants to keep Armenia part of a Russian-led economic bloc despite planning to formally apply for its membership in the European Union.

The Russian Foreign Ministry was quick to scoff at his remarks and accuse him of continuing to mislead Armenians.

"It is clear to me that the process is heading towards us officially applying to the European Union in 2027 or 2028 to initiate the process of becoming its full member, especially given that we have a law currently in effect," Pashinyan told reporters.

The law enacted by Pashinyan's political team in April 2025 declared the "start of a process of Armenia's accession to the European Union." Russia maintains that it is at odds with the South Caucasus nation's continued membership in the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

Moscow has been pressuring the Armenian government to quickly choose between the two blocs. Yerevan remains reluctant to make such a choice now, mindful of the Armenian economy's heavy dependence on Russia.

In May, the presidents of Russia as well as Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

see EU, page 6

Firebird Brings Armenia into The Forefront of Global AI

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

YEREVAN/HRAZDAN — As you approach the Firebird AI site in Hrazdan, you ride over uneven roads and reach a large expanse of land still raw from construction efforts. The weather is cooler than that of Yerevan, because as you travel north of the Armenian capital, though it is only a distance of some 54 km., you are also ascending to higher elevations. After you pass through a security checkpoint outside the center, you approach a huge building holding Nvidia graphics processing unit (GPU) chips, with cooling equipment extending outside. It is like a giant rectangular Amazon warehouse, but you can hear a humming or buzzing noise. Nearby, a lot of earth has been piled up from excavations as the work for a second, much larger set-up begins. Apartment buildings in the city of Hrazdan can be seen in the distance, but the Firebird complex is in an isolated area with nothing else immediately surrounding it.



Razmig Hovaghimian (courtesy Firebird website)



Officials tour the Firebird facility on August 8, 2026: from left, Alexander Yesayan, Nikol Pashinyan, Davit Tadevosyan (courtesy primeminister.am)

This site holds what is called an AI factory, as opposed to a traditional data center, which engages in general purpose computing. This means that the equipment at Firebird is primarily dedicated to artificial intelligence work: AI training (after data is collected for this) and inference (running AI models or products). Moreover, Firebird's compute (computing power) is sold over the Internet.

Firebird CEO and cofounder Razmig Hovaghimian declared that this AI factory is per capita possibly the largest AI

see FIREBIRD, page 3

Pashinyan at MaskOff Says Genocide Should Be off Foreign Policy Agenda

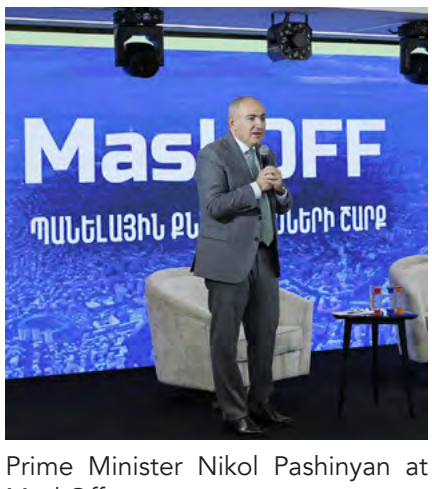
YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on November 7 said that international recognition of the Armenian Genocide is entirely absent from Armenia's foreign policy agenda, calling for the country to abandon the pursuit.

Speaking at the MaskOFF discussion organized by the Restart Foundation in Yerevan, Pashinyan said recognition was not simply a lower priority but was no longer on the agenda.

He also characterized international recognition as a bargaining chip used by foreign powers in their relations with third countries.

The declaration follows earlier statements by Pashinyan and members of the ruling Civil Contract party concerning the Armenian Genocide.

see MASKOFF, page 2



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at MaskOff

The Vahan Tekeyan Awards: The Spiritual Harvest of 2025

YEREVAN — Since 1992, the annual Vahan Tekeyan Awards have been held in Armenia to recognize and encourage intellectuals, artists and creative individuals from Armenia, Artsakh and the Diaspora. This year, on November 2, the Vahan Tekeyan Awards were presented in three categories: Literature, Armenian Studies and Fine Arts.

For the last 20 years, the Tekeyan Awards have been financed entirely by the Tekeyan Cultural Association Central Board of Directors of USA and CANADA through its Akabi Shake Gazarian Trust Fund.

see AWARDS, page 2

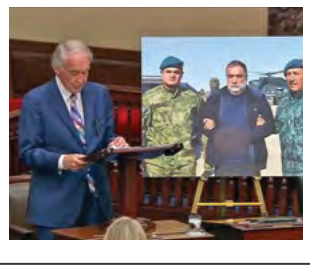


The four awardees, from left, Suren Safaryan, Amb. Henri Cuny, Alin K. Gregorian and Artak Maghalyan

NEW JERSEY
Bishop Mesrop Joins Oriental Orthodox Churches in Prayer For Unity & Peace
Page 7



WASHINGTON, DC
Armenian Caucus Members Overwhelmingly Re-elected, Two Move From House to Senate
Page 10



YEREVAN
Composer Hodian Debuts New Group, Hnar
Page 13



ARMENIA

NEWS *from* ARMENIA

Hakobyan Takes Aim At Mayor over Traffic

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Anna Hakobyan, the wife of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, has taken a swipe at Yerevan Mayor Tigran Avinyan, criticizing the city's worsening traffic congestion and mocking the authorities' handling of the problem.

In a video posted on social media on November 10, Hakobyan said Yerevan was rapidly becoming one of the least pedestrian- and commuter-friendly cities, adding that getting from one part of the capital to another now required "an astronaut's level of physical endurance, particularly a strong cardiovascular and nervous system".

She questioned what measures should be taken to prevent traffic congestion from spiraling further out of control as high-rise construction continues apace and the city's population and tourist numbers grow.

Hakobyan said she did not know the answer, nor was it her responsibility to find one.

"But there are people for whom finding an answer to this question has long been part of their job," she said.

She added that tackling the problem was apparently a more demanding responsibility than granting construction permits to companies investing millions of dollars in the capital.

Samvel Karapetyan Detained in ENA Corruption Case

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenia's Investigative Committee has initiated public criminal prosecution against 36 individuals in a case involving abuse of official authority, large-scale embezzlement and money laundering at Electric Networks of Armenia (ENA). Businessman Samvel Karapetyan is among those targeted in the criminal proceedings and has been detained.

They allege criminal activity took place between 2016 and 2024 under the organization and direction of Samvel Karapetyan. Investigators have obtained evidence indicating that several individuals committed four episodes of abuse of official authority in the private sector, large-scale embezzlement of entrusted property and money laundering.

The group included certain members of ENA's Board of Directors, the company's CEO and deputy CEO, as well as other responsible officials.

Investigators allege that, with the intention of embezzling the company's assets, the group abused its authority by raising loans in amounts exceeding the company's actual operational needs and subsequently transferring funds to shareholders as dividends, as well as providing unjustified loans and advance payments to affiliated and other companies.

Criminal Investigation Launched After Violent Brawl in Parliament

By Arshaluys Barseghyan

YEREVAN (OC-Media.org) — Armenian authorities have launched an investigation into a violent brawl in parliament on October 29, involving MPs from the ruling Civil Contract party and the opposition Strong Armenia faction. No one has been charged so far. Under Armenian law, the MPs involved are protected by parliamentary immunity so in order to bring charges against the MPs, Armenian law enforcement agencies would need to get parliamentary consent to lift the immunity.

While scuffles are not uncommon in Armenia's Parliament, the fracas in question was unusually violent and widespread.

The case was launched around two weeks after the incident and is being investigated under charges of group hooliganism and violence committed against an official for the purpose of interfering with their lawful official or political activities.

Under both articles, those found guilty could face up to five years in prison.

The brawl, the most violent since the parliament convened following the June elections, saw MPs throw bottles and nearly overturn tables and chairs.

As the conflict intensified, Deputy Speaker of Parliament Vahagn Aleksanyan, a member of Civil Contract, threw a chair towards opposition MPs, while MP Taron Chakhoyan, again from the ruling party, was seen pouring a glass of water on an opposition MP.

Several MPs were later seen leaving the chamber with injuries and torn clothing.

The incident began during a speech by Chakhoyan, who accused the opposition, including Strong Armenia, of being "steeped in corruption."

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan later defended his party's actions, saying that throwing a chair was "proportionate and right."

Meanwhile, Strong Armenian MP Narek Karapetyan, described the incident as "a normal Armenian-style man-to-man fight."

In turn, Parliamentary Speaker Ruben Rubinyan accused Karapetyan of starting the fight.

Following the incident, around a dozen civil rights groups in Armenia expressed their "deep concern and condemn[ed] the acts of physical violence and hooliganism" in parliament, calling them "unacceptable and contrary to the principles of parliamentary democracy."

"Citizens did not give MPs a mandate to engage in violence or acts of hooliganism, resolve political disagreements through physical force, or enjoy impunity for such conduct. A parliamentary mandate is an expression of public trust and responsibility, not a privilege that places MPs above the law or the rules of ethics," the groups said.

They called on the parliament's Ad Hoc Committee on Matters Related to Parliamentary Ethics to initiate an examination of the incident, "focusing on the conduct of the MPs involved."

They also urged the relevant authorities to "conduct a proper investigation [...] into possible criminal acts committed during the incident."

The rights groups further expressed "deep concern" over Pashinyan's response, "which encouraged and condoned the incident," as well as the "positions taken" by Rubinyan and Karapetyan, who "treated the incident as normal and justified it."

The Vahan Tekeyan Awards: The Spiritual Harvest of 2025

AWARDS, from page 1

The awards ceremony opened with a prayer and the blessing of Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, conveyed to those present by the Very Rev. Asoghik Karapetyan.

The works submitted in the Fine Arts category of the annual Vahan Tekeyan Awards were on display in the exhibition hall of the Tekeyan Center. The jury reviewed works by various artists and selected the winning piece: *Rhythms of Silence*, a painting by Suren Safaryan.

Henri Cuny, former ambassador of France to Armenia, has always demonstrated a particular affinity for Armenian culture and Armenia. He was selected for the honor for his novel about Komitas, titled *Death Does Not Exist*, which received the Vahan Tekeyan Prize.

In the Armenian Studies category, the jury selected Artak Maghalyan's scholarly work *The Melikdoms of Artsakh in the 17th–19th Centuries* as the best entry.

The organizers of the Vahan Tekeyan Awards place particular emphasis on strengthening the bridge between Armenia and the Diaspora, as well as recognizing the individuals and institutions that help reinforce these ties.

In recognition of its significant contribution to the maintenance of Armenian identity, the promotion of national values and the strengthening of Armenia–Diaspora ties, a special award was presented to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* newspaper.

Editor Alin K. Gregorian presented the history of the newspaper, explaining that its founding vision was to connect Armenian communities throughout the Diaspora and bring Armenians living abroad closer together. As the oldest English-language Armenian newspaper in the US, she explained, the founders tried to adapt to the new realities of the immigrants and their children, many of whom did not know how to read or write in Armenian, and yet were deeply Armenian in their hearts and minds.

Each year, the Vahan Tekeyan Awards recognize outstanding intellectual, spiritual and cultural achievements, honoring the finest contributions with awards. Their purpose is to encourage the continuation of activities that serve the Armenian people and inspire future generations to follow in their footsteps.



Dr. Ruben Mirzakhanyan

Henri Cuny has studied not only the life and work of Komitas but also those of Vahan Tekeyan.

The ceremony concluded with a screening of the fourth installment of the documentary film "Shushi: Undeniable Facts."

A festive reception followed the program.

Pashinyan at MaskOff Says Genocide Should Be off Foreign Policy Agenda

MASK OFF, from page 1

At the event, Pashinyan noted that, from his perspective, the most significant challenge he must address for the youth is the signing and ratification of a peace agreement.

"I must hand over the Republic of Armenia to the youth, with its internationally recognized territories and open borders. In my view, this is the starting point for resolving the fundamental issues. This, along with the subsequent actions that will follow, will determine the realization of the agenda you mentioned. Especially now, considering that we are deepening our relations with the European Union, and I hope we will have secured a decision on visa liberalization with the EU by 2029, the Academic City project will become irreversible. A peaceful country with open borders. Do you know what this implies, in my view? It means that, in such a setting, young people face no limitations in realizing any of their ambitions, goals, or projects," he said.

Pashinyan added, "Of course, economic stability and energy independence are also crucial components for completing the picture I have described, and I am currently focused on addressing these issues. First is peace, the institutionalization of peace. As for how confident I am that this objective can be achieved — well, as is customary to say, no one can offer 100-percent certainty. However, I believe that while the task is quite complex, a solution is realistic. A significant factor within this complexity is the need for a roadmap, a political discourse, and an ideology that will prove convincing to the public at large, and to the youth in particular. Therefore, from this perspective, and for the sake of achieving this goal, engaging with the youth is absolutely essential and important''.

In his concluding remarks, he added: "Education is the most crucial factor for perceiving and assessing reality, devising solutions, and seeing those solutions through to completion. This is why the Government has declared education the 'strategy of strategies.' This, in general, is our vision for the future and for the tasks ahead. Furthermore, as I mentioned, it is our objective to pass on the state, the Republic of Armenia, to the next generation as a peaceful, secure, developing, and prosperous nation; one with clearly delimited and demarcated borders, and with open borders. This is where the vision of the state's perpetuity arises — the idea that the process of passing the state from one generation to the next must continue indefinitely. Armenia, as a state, must exist in perpetuity. This is the overarching agenda that, in my view, we all must serve."

ARMENIA

Firebird Brings Armenia into the Forefront of Global AI

FIREBIRD, from page 1

actory in the world and certainly already the largest in the region. "Our vision is to make Armenia home to one of the five largest AI computing clusters in the world in 2027," he added. Cofounder and president Alexander Yesayan in a September 2026 press conference declared that with its three-phase expansion, Armenia would eventually rank among the top 10 countries globally in terms of relevant computing resources.

Aside from Firebird, Armenia also has a smaller-scale AI factory run by the Armenian company Eleveight AI in Gagarin (Gegharkunik Province), which opened in June 2026, with 512 advanced Nvidia chips and a power capacity of 1.5 MW. A small supercomputer and artificial intelligence center is located at Yerevan State University, using older Nvidia Hopper series chips (64 H100 computing cards) suitable for educational and scientific research and development purposes.



From left, prior Minister of High-Tech Industry of the Republic of Armenia Mkhitar Hayrapetyan, Firebird CEO and cofounder Razmig Hovaghimian, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan Jaslan Madiyev, Minister of High-Tech Industry of the Republic of Armenia Davit Tadevosyan, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Vice President of Physical AI Simulation at Nvidia Rev Lebaredian, Firebird cofounder and president Alexander Yesayan, Senior Director of Global Specialty Sales (GSS) for Dell Technologies Murray Irvine, and David Allen, Chargé d'Affaires, ad interim of the US Mission in Armenia, at the official opening of the Firebird AI factory in Hrazdan on August 8, 2026 (courtesy primeminister.am)

Firebird's Origins and Model

Arpine Chalkian is Firebird's chief operating officer in Armenia, which means that in addition to managing all operations currently, she is also managing the design process. She had worked in the field of information and communications technology, including in telecommunications (at Lycos, Orange and Ucom) since 2006. Prior to Firebird, she had worked for about ten years with Alexandr Yesayan, cofounder of Team Holdings, which operates both technology and non-technology companies. Chalkian declared that when the idea of Firebird AI emerged, Yesayan proposed that she join to help start this project together.

The idea of Firebird in Armenia was finalized at the joint Digitec Expo and World Congress on Innovation and Technology (WCIT) in October 2024, in Yerevan, Chalkian related. Yesayan had been talking with Rev Lebaredian, vice president of Physical AI Simulation at Nvidia, the world's leading supplier of hardware and software for AI and accelerated computing, about building a data center in Armenia.



At Nvidia's GPU Technology Conference (GTC) in Paris in June 2025, from right to left, Razmig Hovaghimian CEO Firebird, Gevorg Mantashyan First Deputy Minister of High-Tech Industry of the Republic of Armenia, Alexander Yesayan Co-Founder Team Group and President Firebird, Rev Lebaredian Vice President at Nvidia, and Noubar Afeyan CEO of Flagship Pioneering

In parallel, Armenian-American entrepreneur Hovaghimian, founder of companies including Embrace, streaming platform Viki (acquired by Japan's Rakuten), and machine learning company Pixel Labs (acquired by Nextdoor), had helped Elon Musk bring Starlink to Armenia as part of his efforts to establish the infrastructure for an AI cloud company in the country. Hovaghimian, who had known Alex Yesayan for years, approached inventor and businessman Noubar Afeyan of Flagship Pioneering and Moderna fame with the idea. When the three came together at WCIT, the vision took shape, and Firebird was born.

Lebaredian's connections at Nvidia (Chalkian gave him the nickname "kavor," which means godfather or sponsor of a wedding, due to his important role), Yesayan's deep infrastructure and execution experience and access to talent in Armenia, Afeyan's vision and support as an investor and founding partner, and Hovaghimian's Silicon Valley connections, which helped bring together the technology, capital, and long-term customer commitments, all came together to bring this ambitious project to Armenia.

Chalkian became involved from the getgo, from site selection to building the team in Armenia. The founding team also included Kent Liu, the CFO, who had worked with Hovaghimian for 15 years; Juan Saez, who came from McKinsey's energy practice; and CTO Harut Martirosyan, who had previously co-founded Intent.ai with Yesayan.

Two main motivations for the project, Chalkian said, were the desire to achieve something unique and to help Armenia develop by bringing this knowledge to Armenia and from Armenia expand to reach the world. (Of course, the profit motive is also there.)

Afeyan recalled that his initial connection was around six months prior to Digitec with Hovaghimian, who knew Afeyan worked with AI at the latter's company, Flagship Pioneering, creating a number of new AI companies every year. Crucially, Afeyan had some 20 years of experience working with the private sector and the government in Armenia, and had also worked with Nvidia in the past, so he could potentially help both with putting together a partnership with the latter as well as equity investment in a potential Armenian AI venture. Afeyan spoke with Yesayan several times in this early formative period about the same possibility. However, he confirmed that the turning point was the more extensive discussions at Digitec.

Hovaghimian, in a separate interview, recalled that during the Digitec discussions, he was thinking about energy and infrastructure possibilities in Armenia, especially with operational nuclear and geothermal sources as well as dormant plants, while Yesayan was approaching it from the fiber and telecommunications side.

Meanwhile, Nvidia's CEO Jensen Huang, in meetings with Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, suggested that $5 million should be invested in AI for Armenia, but Hovaghimian said he thought why stop at $5 million? Why not $500 million? If they were going to build this and put Armenia on the map it had to be done at this level.

Hovaghimian said that the other part of the puzzle was if they were able to do a $500-million project, how could the US government be persuaded to give its permission for the export of the necessary technology. Firebird's first application went in during the Biden administration, but the process moved faster after the beginning of the Trump administration. The Commerce Department began to think strategically about which markets made sense for it, Hovaghimian said.

Afeyan praised the Armenian government's assistance in helping secure US support. An important step in strengthening cooperation between the two countries was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the US and Armenia on AI and semiconductors on August 8, 2025, which laid the groundwork for closer collaboration on advanced technology and export controls.

Without the geopolitical shift taking place in Armenia towards the US, this would not have been possible.

In terms of its business model, Firebird provides an alternative to traditional AI cloud companies. Both types of companies sell computing resources over the Internet (i.e. cloud services), but traditional ones are called hyperscalers, which offer all-purpose enterprise IT (storage, databases, emails, etc.) with added AI subsystems. The hyperscalers are huge companies like Google, Microsoft or Amazon that operate data centers on a global scale. Firebird's AI factory would be considered a neocloud AI provider, which means its infrastructure (the "factory"), especially GPUs, is specialized for AI.

According to technology writer Paul Smith, the neocloud sector largely exists because Nvidia has funded it and gives its operators preferential access to the products it manufactures which are in short supply. Nvidia thus ensures a market for itself. In fact, Firebird announced in August 2026 that Nvidia itself intends to invest in Firebird.

Hovaghimian said that Firebird can provide bare metal services (meaning directly running AI workloads on dedicated GPUs without an intermediary virtualization layer, which offers greater efficiency), or it can offer virtual machines, which are basically a software layer completely isolated and protected ("ring fenced" in the AI lingo) so the client's data is safe. Bare metal is easier to get investment-grade customers to purchase, thus helping financing the project initially, before opening up to smaller-scale customers.

For the latter customers, Firebird can provide full stack services. This means that it has set up everything from infrastructure and power all the way through the software layer and user interface. Firebird uses US physical technology, including GPUs from Nvidia, Dell servers and Vertiv cooling systems, as well as an electrical distribution framework from Schneider Electric in Europe. All this must be securely deployed in emerging markets like Armenia, Hovaghimian said, and operated by Firebird, itself a US-based company.

While Firebird is not therefore offering sovereign AI to countries like Armenia (i.e. it is not like the Saudi government building AI factories for Saudi Arabia and thus providing national control), it is what Hovaghimian called quasi-sovereign in that it will provide up to 20 percent of compute capacity to the local country, with perhaps 5 percent allocated to government and research universities, while another 15 percent go to local startups. The remaining 80 percent is open for sale to the rest of the world.

It may also use any unused computing power to find new applications itself to model, Hovaghimian said, which is another distinction compared to what hyperscalers do.

Hovaghimian said that the AI revolution is taking place, and Firebird's vision is to help it decentralize to a certain extent and provide equal access. He said that computing power shouldn't be concentrated in just a few countries or accessible only to a few big companies. What Firebird is doing, he said, is a sort of equalizer, providing equal access to the best minds regardless of country.

He said, "I think it's a pretty unique model on multiple levels. For one, it is purely focused on the frontier markets." It is not competing with hyperscalers for slices of the pie but is expanding the pie. In every market Firebird enters, it will be the first to set up AI supercomputing, Hovaghimian said. As first movers, Firebird works very closely with governments, both the US and the local government, and it knows how to build at industrial scale while conforming to US restrictions. Its supply chain, he emphasized, is not for the faint of heart.

He said that naturally, his dream was to start it in and for Armenia. "Why shouldn't an Armenian scientist be able to make the next major AI breakthrough right here in Armenia?", he asked. Talent and ideas are everywhere, he declared, but what is missing is equal access.

Firebird is building intellectual property and the software layer to enable local researchers making discoveries, startups to build new products, and businesses to

see AI, page 4

ARMENIA

Firebird Brings Armenia into the Forefront of Global AI

AI, from page 3

create opportunities that encourage talent to stay or return home, he said. The goal, he says, is not simply to bring investment into a country, but to help create lasting economic value within it.

Establishment and Expansion

Firebird was registered in the US as a company in February 2025, headquartered in San Francisco and incorporated in Delaware. It was publicly announced at Nvidia's GPU Technology Conference (GTC) in Paris in June 2025, and right after that, the process to register the company in Armenia began. Yesayan, CEO, became the first employee of Firebird AI, followed by Chalkian. They then began to build the Firebird team. Firebird AI Armenia was registered as a company in Armenia in August 2025.

Firebird AI has already expanded from Armenia to a second location, Kazakhstan, where it set up a subsidiary. Each subsidiary pays taxes to the country in which it is located. It is also looking to expand to other emerging markets.

Kazakhstan is already in the design stage, Chalkian said. On October 23, Firebird announced that it has secured a US export license for 45,000 Nvidia Grace Blackwell (B300) GPUs for the first phase of its AI factory there, which is beginning construction. Launch is planned for the third quarter of 2027, and the first phase would have a capacity of 109 MW. A second future phase would create a total AI infrastructure capacity there of about 500 MW, with even greater capacities possible later.

As in Armenia, Firebird is going to allocate a percentage of its total capacity in Kazakhstan to local companies and government agencies. It will create hundreds of permanent jobs, but, more importantly, as Zhaslan Madiyev, deputy prime minister and minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Development of Kazakhstan declared, "The real value of this investment will be measured in the companies it helps create, the productivity it brings to our industries and the opportunities it opens for our people." It is, of course, the same for Armenia.

Hovaghimian said that one of the important contributions to the field in general that Firebird makes is its intellectual property concerning power usage, especially clean energy. One reason Armenia was an appropriate location was its geothermal and nuclear power. Similarly, it looks for access to energy in other potential locations.

Rapidly Building an AI Factory

In Armenia the earthwork for the site was started in December 2025, at the end of May 2026 the building was up; the AI factory has been operational since mid-July, when testing and commissioning equipment took place. By September, clients began to be served, Chalkian said. This is considered fairly fast, she said.

Everything for the factory had to be imported, including electrical and mechanical equipment, and even the pipes and valves, Chalkian said. There were more than 15 contractors and subcontractors for the construction and engineering, with their own crews, all overseen by a general contractor, plus several vendors covering all the engineering systems.

After everything was set up, a 40-person engineering team continued to work round-the-clock on a shift basis to maintain operations. Including security, cleaners and other employees onsite and in a Yerevan office, at present Firebird employs 93 permanent full-time people in Armenia.

When asked why the security was necessary, Chalkian pointed out that according to the US Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security license, there are specific requirements on physical security, including mobile guards and checkpoints.

Yesayan in a September 2026 press conference said that in all, thousands of people are involved in the construction, design and other aspects of Firebird's implementation.

Chalkian emphasized that while much of the conversation focuses on challenges such as power availability, cooling infrastructure, and environmental considerations, what matters most to her is the hundreds of people who have worked tirelessly, around the clock, to bring this project to life — and the remarkable can-do spirit that made it all possible.

The full capacity of the Firebird AI factory at present has already been sold, Chalkian said. According to a CivilNet interview with Yesayan, 95-97 percent of its customers are based outside Armenia at present.

The Ministry of High Tech Industry and Artificial Intelligence of the Armenian government also has a contract with Firebird AI for five years at $5 million yearly, which is at a somewhat discounted rate, Chalkian said, to use AI compute internally or give to various startups, educational institutions and researchers. The ministry is working to decide how to distribute this computing power.

The Armenian government is not, however, an investor in Firebird AI, though it has expedited permits and provided some exemptions from customs duties. All the money invested so far has been raised by Firebird as equity plus loans, Chalkhian said. According to Yesayan, the US equity investors included Armenian Americans (e.g. Afeyan), while debt financing was raised locally, including from Armenian banks.

Six Armenian banks and asset management institutions provided $300 million of loan financing in March 2026, including Fast Bank, Ardshinbank, ACBA Bank, Evocabank, C-Quadrat Ampega Asset Management Armenia, and Amundi-ACBA Asset Management Fund. Ameriabank separately in the same period provided $60 million in further financing.

The total raised for Firebird's phase one is approximately half a billion dollars.

At present, Firebird Armenia operates at a 12 MW IT load, and the next phase will have 280 megawatts, which makes the total load almost 300 MW, Chalkian said. Right now Firebird is using Nvidia B200 chips, but Firebird also received approval, announced at a February 2026 press conference during an official visit of US President JD Vance to Armenia, to get Nvidia's B300 chips for the second phase in Armenia. Firebird hopes to get an even more advanced technology, Nvidia's Vera Rubin architecture, for Armenia.

Yesayan in his September 2026 press conference announced that phase two, to be launched within two years, will include 45,000 GPUs and raised the estimate of the cost from $4 billion to $7-8 billion. He estimated an annual turnover of at least $2 billion after phase two launched. A third phase is planned which will add another 60,000 Vera Rubin GPUs, for a grand total of over 100,000 GPUs.

The lifespan of the Nvidia chips is roughly five to eight years, Chalkian said. If a company like Firebird wants to buy more advanced technology to replace them, it would have to apply to the US for a new license.

Ripple Effects in Armenia

Some of the benefits to Armenia from the building of the AI factory in Hrazdan includes the construction jobs and permanent staff positions created, and the tax revenue flows to Armenia. Hovaghimian declared, "That's why, before we even launched, we already were one of the top 10 taxpayers in the country."

The ripple effect included contributing to the upgrading of Moody's credit rating of Armenia to positive from stable on July 28, 2026, Hovaghimian said. Moody's cites the investment in creating Firebird's AI center as a contributory factor.

In addition, Firebird is planning to help the Hrazdan community develop through other projects. It is working at present with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the latter's community development program, Chalkian said. It is working with the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies to see if the latter can open up a site in Hrazdan and its surrounding areas. Firebird is exploring together with the Armath Engineering Laboratories, an initiative of the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises (UATE), to see if there might be a need for an engineering college in Hrazdan under the Firebird umbrella.

Up to 20 percent of Firebird's capacity will be reserved for local Armenian companies to help develop the local technology sector. With most compute reserved at present for outside usage, as noted above, the local allocation presumably will increase over time.

One part of this is through Firebird Labs, an effort of the company to invest directly in and incubate local startups in Armenia in four fields: AI for the environment — environmental research, robotics and physical AI, life sciences, and space. Hovaghimian said, "We're building an ecosystem so all these companies can grow and keep hiring and increase the size of the pie." He noted that in building these new models for life sciences, Noubar Afeyan is an expert, Rev Lebaredian in robotics, and there are many other experts worldwide who may be brought in.

As integral to these efforts, Hovaghimian stated that at the end of September Firebird, with OpenAI as a partner, held the largest hackathon in the country, with over 200 teams applying from Armenia, Georgia, the UAE, Sweden and various other countries to explore AI applications in the four fields Firebird Labs focuses on. It was organized by the Union of Advanced Technology Enterprises. Hovaghimian said that now we could imagine people coming to work and create in Armenia because of the availability of computing capacity. He said that he spoke with his former Stanford professor about PhDs there fighting over 2 GPUs. Imagine if there are thousands available, and what that would mean for Armenia, Hovaghimian posited.

He added, "Just having that kind of availability and building this bridge between Silicon Valley and Armenia, I think is a good thing. So this is not just about compute — it's also about our access from the diaspora (and Boston in the case of Noubar). As this company scales [up], you have access [and] growth. The same is true for every market."

In the US and globally, concerns have risen about the effects of AI factories and data centers on the environment and resources, including the large amount of energy they require to operate. Armenia, and in Firebird's case, Hrazdan, has some natural advantages in this arena.

Hrazdan was an industrial city during Soviet times, and a crossroads of power generation since all the main electric power lines go through Hrazdan. Hrazdan contains Armenia's largest thermal power plant, and the Hrazdan Hydroelectric Plant, one of seven such plants in the Sevan-Hrazdan Cascade. Its energy infrastructure was one reason Firebird chose to locate its center there. In addition, Hrazdan enjoys a cooler climate which is more energy efficient for heat-producing AI factories than warmer regions.

At present, Chalkian said, there is more energy produced in Armenia than Firebird needs. She said that means that with the first phase, Firebird is actually helping the country by using the surplus energy. For the second phase, she said that Firebird is in discussions with the national government about all possible resources, as this cannot be done without state help. She said that the country does have additional potential energy resources, including power plants that are not at present operational.

Hovaghimian observed that in particular, there is a lot of solar energy capacity, perhaps over a gigawatt's worth, in Armenia, though there are some operational restrictions at present. Some of these could be removed through developments in battery technology. Nuclear energy may also increase, if there is a second reactor put into operation, he said.

Data centers create noise pollution, which is a kind of humming sound. However, the Firebird center is about 1.5 kilometers from the city in an undeveloped location, and at least during this author's visit, the sound appeared to dissipate rapidly as one left the Firebird site.

Another concern for data centers is the need for a large amount of water for cooling purposes. In Firebird's case, Chalkian said that a closed loop is used for the cooling system, meaning that it is filled once, and then will operate without additional fluid for up to eight years.

As far as the effect that the current backlash against AI data centers in the US might have on Firebird, Afeyan speculated that it could actually work to the benefit of AI factories abroad in places like Armenia, which could then be in a sense playing a more prominent role if less capacity would be created in the US.

When asked how long Armenia's advantage in AI might exist if other countries in the region build their own data centers or factories eventually, Chalkian said that while other countries might build AI infrastructure, they need to be sure first that they will be getting clients. She pointed out this is not a kind of ice cream factory that you just build and then sell your product. It is not that easy to line up AI compute clients.

Furthermore, these centers are not that easy to build, she said. There are many countries which lack the electrical power, for example, she said. Just constructing the building with the engineering required is a difficult task. For example, she said, the Firebird project involved pulling on over 100,000 meters of cabling and installing pipes during an awful snowy winter.

Finally, Chalkian noted that the United States does not grant export licenses for advanced technologies to every country, as such decisions are subject to national security and foreign policy considerations

Nvidia's Lebaredian summed up the hopes for Firebird AI's endeavors when he declared in April 2026, during the announcement of Firebird's five-year contract with the Armenian government: "The goal of this initiative is to bring the country to the global forefront by leveraging the power of AI supercomputing. The deployment of high-performance computing resources in the first phase will enable Armenia to reach the level of countries such as Germany, and by the end of the year, with the completion of the second phase, the country is expected to rank among the world's top five in terms of total computing capacity. This infrastructure, built through effective collaboration between the public and private sectors, will give Armenia capabilities and productivity comparable to countries with populations in the billions."

Some six months later, CEO Hovaghimian said, "We dream for Firebird to be the technology layer that power the next generation of discoveries globally that positively impact the world." To that end, he said they are quietly planning to be in four markets by the end of 2027.

Azerbaijani Authorities to Go House-to-House to Count Personal Tech Devices Starting in 2027

By Rafig Shahbazov

BAKU (OC-Media.org) — Azerbaijan will begin recording the number of computers, laptops, and tablets in households, as well as their access to the internet, from January 2027 as part of its existing household registration system. It is unclear why the authorities intend to log electronic devices in households or how they intend to use this information.

The updated forms, approved by the State Statistical Committee in October, will also record whether households have internet access and the type of connection they use. The annual household registration is governed by a 2024 Cabinet of Ministers resolution and covers information about household members, housing conditions, and property.

The registration will not involve recording every electronic device in a home. Instead, officials will record whether a household has a computer, laptop, or tablet, and specify the type and number of these devices.

The forms will also record whether a household has internet access and how it connects to the internet. Connections through telephone lines, cable television networks, or optical cables will be classified as fixed access, while connections through mobile phones, data cards, or USB modems will be classified as wireless access.

The new requirements are part of an existing household registration system established under a government decree adopted on 22 May 2024.

Under the resolution, household registration is conducted annually between January 1 and 30 by local executive authorities. Officials are required to visit households and collect information from the head of the household or another legally capable adult member.

The information is recorded according to the situation on 1 January of each year, meaning that even if an official visits a household later in January, the information must reflect its situation at the beginning of the month.

The system covers people living alone as well as groups of people who share a home and combine all or part of their income and property and jointly consume



certain goods and services.

The registration covers considerably more than electronic devices. Officials also collect information about household members, including their names, personal identification numbers, dates of birth, citizenship, education, employment, social benefits, and disability status.

Other information includes the size and number of rooms in a home, access to utilities, vehicles, agricultural machinery, land, crops, livestock, poultry, and beehives.

The registration is conducted electronically, and local executive authorities must submit information about the number of households and their members to the relevant municipalities and statistical authorities by 10 February.

The updated forms do not provide a specific explanation for why the number of computers, laptops, and tablets has been added to the household registration system.

However, economist Razi Abbasbeyli told AzPolitika that the process was related to measuring the country's level of digital development and was not an entirely new mechanism.

According to Abbasbeyli, collecting information about computers and internet access can help identify differences between regions and social groups in terms of access to digital technology.

He also said that the information could be used in international statistical reports to provide a more accurate picture of computer and internet availability in Azerbaijan.

Abbasbeyli argued that the process should not be understood as an inventory of citizens' private property, but rather as a form of statistical data collection.

He added that the information could help authorities identify areas where internet access and digital infrastructure need improvement.

However, the State Statistical Committee already publishes data on household access to computers and the internet in its digital development statistics.

Its 2026 statistical yearbook, covering data for 2021–2025, includes information about the availability and use of computers, internet access, and digital skills among the population.

According to the committee's figures, the share of households with computers increased from 62.4% in 2015 to 76.8% in 2023.

The committee also publishes a breakdown of household computers by type. Its data for 2025 showed that laptops accounted for 43% of computers in households, while desktop computers accounted for 19.5% and tablets or similar devices for 37.5%.

Personal Data Protection

The expanded household registration has also raised questions about the collection and protection of personal information.

Under the existing rules, local authorities collect information not only about household assets and living conditions but also about individual household members.

The household registration instructions state that personal data must be collected, processed, protected, disseminated, and transferred in accordance with Azerbaijan's Law on Personal Data and other relevant legislation.

Abbasbeyli said that further clarification was needed about which government bodies would have access to the collected information, whether it would be stored in individual household databases or as anonymised statistical data, and what safeguards would prevent its transfer to third parties.

The updated instructions do not require households to report every subsequent purchase of a computer, laptop, or tablet separately. Instead, the information is collected as part of the annual registration.

The rules also do not give registration officials the authority to forcibly enter homes or inspect the contents of electronic devices. Under article 33 of Azerbaijan's constitution, entry into a home against the will of its occupants is prohibited except in cases established by law or by court order.

Armenia, Azerbaijan, US Launch Technical Planning Groups to Advance Trump Route

TRIPP, from page 1

"This forum brings together policymakers and technical experts from our three countries to work collaboratively and contribute to long-term stability, economic vitality, regional connectivity, and commercial prosperity across the region, underscoring the landmark August 8, 2025, Peace Summit Declaration brokered by President Trump," the statement read.

The parties further agreed to inaugurate the first two trilateral planning groups, which are focused on transport and electricity transmission.

"These technical planning groups represent a crucial step toward resolving complex technical issues and moving to the next phases of implementation, including connection with other regional infrastructures," the statement read.

The last months have seen some progress in regards to the Trump Route.

In late October, the Armenian Parliament ratified a framework agreement with the US on strategic cooperation concerning the Trump Route. The agreement was adopted with only the ruling Civil Contract party's support.

The opposition voted against the agreement, with the Armenia Alliance faction arguing that the document reflects Azerbaijani interests over Armenia's own.

The largest opposition party in parliament, Strong Armenia, insisted that the Trump Route launch and the signing of a peace treaty with Azerbaijan should be interconnected. Otherwise, they warned that Azerbaijan could lose its incentive to sign the treaty once the route becomes operational and then introduce additional conditions.

Under the framework agreement, the US is set to hold a 74-percent stake in the TRIPP Development Company — the company responsible for developing and managing the project — while Armenia will hold the remaining 26%.

In October, delegations from Azerbaijan and Armenia met in the Armenian city of Goris to discuss the construction of power transmission lines as part of the Trump Route project. Earlier, on 8 September, the US Chargé d'Affaires in Armenia David Allen visited Baku for talks with Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Mammadov and Amy Carlon, the US Chargé d'Affaires in Azerbaijan. According to the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry, the meeting was organized to discuss the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process and the Trump Route.

(This story originally appeared on https://oc-media.org/armenia-azerbaijan-and-us-launch-technical-planning-groups-to-advance-trump-route/)

INTERNATIONAL

Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia, Bulgaria Sign Energy Agreement

YEREVAN (news.am) — Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia, and Bulgaria have signed an agreement on strategic partnership in clean energy, Azerbaijani media report.

The document was signed on the sidelines of the COP31 climate conference in Antalya, Turkey, and envisages the development of a green energy corridor between the aforementioned four countries.

The development of this corridor should contribute to the transfer of electricity produced from renewable sources from the South Caucasus to European markets via Turkey. The project is aimed also at strengthening energy cooperation between the countries.

Armenia Has no Plans to Leave CIS, Chief Says

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenia has not signaled any intention to withdraw from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), despite having effectively frozen its participation in the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), CIS Secretary-General Sergei Lebedev said on Tuesday, November 10.

Speaking to Russia's TASS news agency on the sidelines of an international forum on collective security, Lebedev said Armenian officials had repeatedly assured him that the country intended to remain in the CIS.

"No. The prime minister himself has told me, as have many others, that Armenia intends to remain in the CIS. We have not heard a single statement indicating that the country plans to withdraw," Lebedev said when asked whether Yerevan had expressed any desire to leave the organization.

Blue Mosque Hall Named after Charents

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The ceremonial hall of Yerevan's Blue Mosque has been named after Armenian poet Yeghishe Charents, whom the Iranian Embassy in Armenia described as "a friend of Iranian culture and literature."

Iranian Vice President Seyyed Hamid Pourmohammadi, who was in Armenia on a working visit, attended the ceremony marking the renaming of ceremony on November 10.

Pourmohammadi unveiled the hall's new nameplate.

"The initiative aims to pay tribute to Charents' literary legacy, his particular interest in Iranian culture and literature, as well as his contribution to the preservation of Yerevan's Blue Mosque. Yeghishe Charents was a prominent figure in modern Armenian literature. He was deeply interested in Iran's cultural and literary heritage, particularly Ferdowsi's epic poem Shahnameh, and also contributed to the preservation of Yerevan's Blue Mosque as one of the symbols of Iran's and Armenia's historical and cultural heritage," the Iranian Embassy said in a press release.

Armenia, Iran Discuss Regional Transport Links Ahead of Bilateral Commission Meeting

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Iranian Vice President Seyed Hamid Pourmohammadi discussed regional transport links and opportunities arising from their unblocking during a meeting in Yerevan on Monday, November 9, ahead of the joint Armenian-Iranian intergovernmental commission's session.

According to the Armenian government's press service, the two officials also discussed the development of border infrastructure, joint road construction projects, and cooperation in energy, agriculture, and other sectors.

Pashinyan reportedly welcomed Pourmohammadi's visit and stressed the importance of the effective work of the Armenian-Iranian intergovernmental commission, whose session was scheduled for November 10. He said the two countries were successfully implementing joint projects in various fields, contributing to the development and expansion of bilateral ties.

Pourmohammadi, in turn, conveyed the greetings of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and emphasized the importance of expanding cooperation with Armenia, the Armenian government's press office reported.

Earlier on November 9, Pourmohammadi also met with Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan. The two discussed regional connectivity and said that strengthening stability, developing economic ties, and unblocking transport links would create new opportunities for countries in the region, according to the Armenian government's press office.

The Iranian vice president's visit comes days after Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, sharply criticized Pashinyan over the Armenian government's efforts to implement the Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP), a US-run transit corridor for Azerbaijan along Armenia's border with Iran.

In an article published in the Iranian newspaper *Ettela'at* last week, Velayati accused Pashinyan of increasing Armenia's dependence on the West and said the project could open "a new chapter of hostility and tensions in the South Caucasus." He also likened TRIPP to an extraterritorial corridor sought by Azerbaijan and opposed by Tehran.

The criticism contrasts with recent statements by Iranian government officials, notably Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. Visiting Yerevan on October 16, Araghchi said the Iranians "trust our Armenian brothers" on TRIPP and believe "they are doing nothing that would compromise Iran's security."

On November 9, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei also said that Armenia had assured Tehran that TRIPP would not involve the deployment of US military forces in the region.

"Armenia has given assurances that there would be no changes to the borders and that only Armenian companies would participate in the implementation of the project," Baghaei said, according to Iran's Tasnim news agency.

He said Iran supported the removal of transport restrictions in the region but opposed geopolitical changes and alterations to countries' borders. Tehran would closely monitor developments despite its good relations with Armenia, he added.

Armenian Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Minister Davit Khudatyan, meanwhile, said on Monday that Iran had no concerns about the implementation of TRIPP, citing his contacts with Iranian counterparts.



IranArmenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan receiving Iranian Vice President Seyed Hamid Pourmohammadi in Yerevan, November 9, 2026

"We work with our Iranian partners in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Judging by that work, I am confident that they have no concerns," Khudatyan told reporters.

Macron Meets with Pashinyan in Paris

PARIS (Azatutyun) — French President Emmanuel Macron and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan discussed bilateral cooperation, joint projects, and the development of Armenia's ties with the European Union during a meeting in Paris on November 10, a statement issued by the Armenian prime minister's office said.

The meeting took place at the Elysee Palace, where Macron described it as a good opportunity to discuss the agenda of French-Armenian strategic relations, he added.

The two leaders reportedly discussed progress on joint projects in infrastructure and other areas, as well as ways to further develop EU-Armenia cooperation. The latter included the ongoing process of liberalizing the EU's visa regime for Armenian citizens and reforms being implemented with EU support.

They also exchanged views on regional developments and ongoing processes, the statement said.

Pashinyan emphasized the high level of relations between Armenia and France, stressing the importance of developing and expanding ties in all areas, he added.

Pashinyan is in France to attend the 9th Paris Peace Forum, which is being held on November 10-11. Entitled "From Sovereignty to Cooperation," the forum addresses international conflicts, security challenges, economic cooperation, new technologies, and climate issues.

The French and Armenian leaders last met in France in September when they discussed the diversification of Armenia's economy. At the time, they described economic cooperation as one of the priorities of their strategic partnership and highlighted Armenia's efforts to diversify its economy and export markets.



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Emmanuel Macron in Paris on November 10

Pashinyan Repeats Plans For EU Membership Bid

EU, from page 1

effectively gave Pashinyan's government until December to call a referendum on the issue or face Armenia's expulsion from the EEU. The issue is expected to be high on the agenda of the next EEU summit also slated for December.

Pashinyan again dismissed the calls for the referendum and said the authorities in Yerevan "do not intend to withdraw from the EEU."

"I have stated previously that at the moment there is no subject matter for such a referendum," he said. "Before holding a referendum on Armenia's accession to the European Union we would, at the very least, need to go through certain established [EU] procedures."

The Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, dismissed Pashinyan's comments. She said that the Armenian premier is engaging in "linguistic gymnastics" in order to "mislead Armenia's population."

"Official Yerevan's line of reasoning remains incomprehensible to us," Zakharova told a news briefing in Moscow. "After all, even the most basic, common-sense logic dictates that one should first ask for the opinion of one's own population before taking any action, not the other way around."

Various Russian officials have emphasized in recent months that Yerevan will no longer be able to "sit on two chairs" to take economic advantage of Russia while siding with the West. Armenia's main opposition groups also see Pashinyan's pro-Western foreign policy as reckless, saying that he is needlessly antagonizing Moscow without having a real prospect for EU membership in the foreseeable future.

Russia remained Armenia's number one export market even after blocking imports of Armenian food products and mineral water earlier this year. Armenia also buys the bulk of its natural gas from Russia at a significant discount.

CSTO May Suspend Armenia's Voting Rights over Unpaid Dues, Lavrov Says

MOSCOW (Pan.am, Panorama.am) — The heads of state of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) will review a draft decision to suspend Armenia's voting rights in the organization's bodies over unpaid membership dues, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said this week.

"Alongside constructive issues, we were also compelled to discuss Armenia's failure to meet its CSTO Charter obligations to pay annual contributions to the organization's budget," Lavrov told reporters following a joint meeting of the CSTO Council of Foreign Ministers, Council of Defense Ministers and Committee of Secretaries of Security Councils, TASS reported.

"Yerevan has not transferred its membership fees for more than two years , in connection with which the issue of applying the provisions of Article 25 of the CSTO Charter to Armenia has been raised. The corresponding draft decision envisages suspending the right of Armenian citizens to nominate candidates for positions provided for by quota in the organization's bodies and depriving them of the right to vote until the debt is fully repaid," Lavrov added, according to Interfax.

According to him, the document will be discussed at the Collective Security Council meeting scheduled for November 11 .

"However, I want to emphasize: even after the adoption of that decision, the Armenian partners will in fact maintain all the basic rights stipulated by the Collective Security Treaty , including the right to collective security itself," Lavrov explained.

The foreign minister noted that there is no room for ambiguity on the matter.

Armenia is not taking part in the joint meeting.

Ahead of the meeting, officials from CSTO member states and other alliance representatives gathered for a group photograph. No Armenian representatives were present, leaving the Armenian flag without an official standing alongside it.

Earlier, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan told parliament that he favored Armenia's withdrawal from the CSTO and would welcome such a move.

Community News

Dadrian Digital Archive: A Lifetime Of Scholarship, Now Open to the World

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — The Ararat-Eskijian Museum and Research Center (AEMRC), in collaboration with the Armenian Genocide Research Program (AGRP) of the Promise Armenian Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and the Armenian Film Foundation, is pleased to announce the official launch of the Vahakn N. Dadrian Digital Archive on Sunday, November 15, at 4:00 p.m. at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum in Mission Hills, California, with online participation via Zoom.

Professor Dadrian (1926–2019) was a pioneering scholar of the Armenian Genocide and played an instrumental role in establishing the broader field of genocide studies. Throughout his distinguished career, he devoted decades to uncovering and documenting the history of the Armenian Genocide, conducting research in archives across the world. He assembled an exceptional collection of historical evidence from Ottoman, German, British, French, American, Armenian, and other sources. His archive includes official documents, correspondence, newspapers, unpublished manuscripts, research notes, and other materials of immense scholarly value.

For the first time, this extraordinary collection will be freely accessible worldwide through a pioneering AI-powered digital platform. Going far beyond conventional digitization, the platform transforms the archive into an interactive research resource, opening new possibilities for historical investigation.

At the heart of this innovation is "Ask Dadrian," an AI-powered feature that allows researchers to ask questions directly of the archive in natural language, as though consulting Professor Dadrian himself. Users can explore historical questions, locate relevant documents, and discover connections across thousands of pages through an interactive dialogue with the collection.

The digital archive represents a breakthrough in the preservation and accessibility of this historical collection. Comprising more than 100,000 pages organized in hundreds of folders and over 660 gigabytes of digitized material, it is the result of sixteen years of dedicated work. Transported from upstate New York to Los Angeles over ten cross-country trips, the collection underwent an extensive process of preservation, organization, scanning, and digitization.

The initiative began in 2009 under the leadership of the Ararat-Eskijian Museum and Research Center, following Professor Dadrian's decision to entrust his personal archives to the Museum. Recognizing the historical importance of the collection, Museum Chairman Martin Eskijian initiated the preservation effort, with Museum Director Maggie Mangasarian Goschin overseeing the long and

see DADRIAN, page 12



Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan joins several other church leaders.

Bishop Mesrop Joins Oriental Orthodox Churches in Prayer For Unity & Peace

HAWORTH, N.J. — On Saturday, November 7, Diocesan Primate Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan joined fellow hierarchs of the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches (SCOOCh) for their annual concelebrated Divine Liturgy, held at Mor Gabriel Syriac Orthodox Church here.

The service was hosted and led by Archbishop Mor Dionysios John Kawak of the Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese of the Eastern United States. Joining him and Bishop Mesrop at the altar were Archbishop Mor Titus Yeldho of the Malankara Archdiocese of the Syriac Orthodox Church; Bishop David of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of New York and New England; and Bishops Makarios and Sinoda of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church Diocese of North America and its affiliated regions.

Also participating were clergy representing Archbishop Mor Silvanos Ayub of the Knanaya Archdiocese of the Syriac Orthodox Church, and Archbishop Petros of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Bishop Gabriel of the Coptic Orthodox Archdiocese took part in the post-liturgical ceremonies.

Bishop Mesrop was accompanied by Diocesan Vicar Fr. Simeon Odabashian, Fr. Armash Bagdasarian (St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Armenian Church, Wynnewood, PA), and Fr. Voskan Hovhannisyan (St. Mary Armenian Church, Livingston, NJ).

see PEACE, page 9



The participants celebrated the 95th birthday of Bishop Makarios of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church

ArmenianDC: A Digital Hub for Armenian Life in Nation's Capital

By Haykaram Nahapetyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WASHINGTON — "Pari Galust," a welcome greeting that blends Eastern and Western Armenian spellings, is among the first things visitors see on ArmenianDC.org, a new online portal serving the Armenian community in the greater Washington area. Launched earlier this year by Anna Andriasova-Seferian, the website aims to bring the community together.

"People think I have misspelled 'Pari Galust,' but I did it on purpose," she explained. "It shows that the website is for every Armenian, regardless of their Eastern or Western Armenian background or other affiliations."

Born in Baku, then part of Soviet Azerbaijan, Anna was forced to leave amid violence against Armenians and eventually made her way to the United States. "I have always been a diaspora Armenian," she said, adding that her experience as a diasporan Armenian has shaped much of her perspective.



Anna Andriasova-Seferian

After living in the nation's capital for some time, Anna recognized the need for a shared online gathering place for Armenians locally. Community organizations have their own newsletters, websites, social media accounts and calendars, but there was no central platform bringing all that information together.

"What about people who have just moved to the area? They don't know anything; they don't know where to start. There has been no one-stop shop showcasing community life," Andriasova-Seferian noted. She decided to fill that gap by creating a hub for Armenian life across Washington, DC, Maryland, and Northern Virginia.

Launched in January 2026, ArmenianDC.org features a wide range of Armenian institutions and organizations, from the Armenian Embassy, the Armenian Assembly, and ANCA to university student clubs, churches, philanthropic organizations, and Sunday schools. Its events calendar highlights concerts, food festivals, dance classes, and lectures—including talks on Armenian manuscripts at the Library of Congress and on Armenian queens at the Surp Khach church hall.

"I made sure this was not an initiative of one church or one organization I am associated with. It is broader than any one of them," she said.

see HUB, page 8

COMMUNITY NEWS

COAF's 23rd Annual Holiday Gala to Celebrate Heritage and Honor Leaders in NYC

NEW YORK — The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) will host its 23rd Annual Holiday Gala, "Honoring Heritage. Building Tomorrow," on Saturday, December 12, 2026, at Cipriani 25 Broadway in New York City. Bringing together philanthropists, community leaders, and advocates from across the Armenian diaspora, the evening will celebrate Armenian heritage, recognize distinguished honorees, and raise critical funds to expand opportunities for children and families in rural Armenia.

Building on the momentum of last year's landmark Gala, which raised over $8 million, this year's event will highlight COAF's expanding impact and its ambitious vision for the future, including the development of a second COAF SMART Center in Armavir and plans for additional centers in Armenia's southern Syunik region.

This year's Gala will recognize extraordinary individuals whose contributions to



Sev Ohanian

philanthropy, culture, and the Armenian community reflect COAF's commitment to creating lasting change.

Pamela Avedisian and her late husband, Edward Avedisian, will be honored with COAF's Empowering a Generation Award in recognition of their extraordinary generosity and longstanding commitment to advancing opportunities for Armenia's children. Among COAF's earliest and most dedicated supporters, the Avedisians have helped strengthen transformative initiatives that provide young people and families in rural communities with access to education, essential services, and pathways to a brighter future. Their philanthropic legacy continues to inspire generations of Armenians.

Sev Ohanian, the Academy Award-nominated and Golden Globe-winning producer and screenwriter, will receive COAF's Lifetime Achievement Award, recognizing his accomplishments in the entertainment industry and his commitment to celebrating and elevating Armenian identity. Known for his work on critically acclaimed films including Sinners, Judas and the Black Messiah, and Creed III, Ohanian has emerged as an influential voice in contemporary filmmaking while remaining deeply connected to his Armenian heritage.

"Our annual gala is a powerful reminder of what we can accomplish when the Armenian community comes together around



Joe Manganiello & Caitlin O'Connor at the 2025 Gala

a shared vision," said Dr. Garo H. Armen, Founder and Chairman of COAF. "As we honor individuals whose achievements and generosity inspire us, we also look ahead toward the future — bringing transformative opportunities to more children and families across rural Armenia. The continued support of our community makes that vision possible."

The gala will feature moving stories from young people whose lives have been transformed through COAF's programs, musical performances by talented young artists from Armenia, and special guest appearances celebrating the enduring connection between Armenia and its global diaspora.

The evening will be co-hosted by Araksya Karapetyan, Emmy Award-winning anchor of "Good Day LA," and Haig Boyadjian, COAF's Vice President of Development.

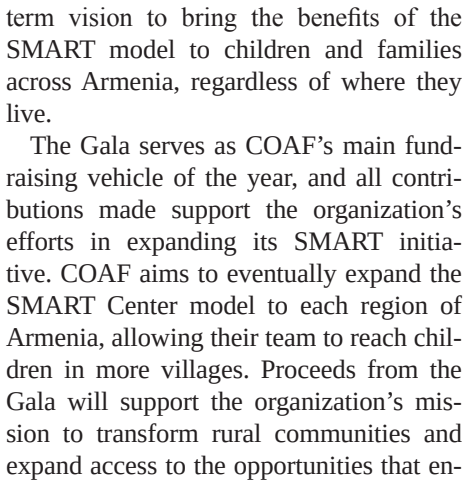
For over more than two decades, COAF's Annual Holiday Gala has brought together distinguished figures from philanthropy, entertainment, and the Armenian community, becoming a signature celebration of collective impact and commitment to Armenia's future. Last year's event at The Plaza featured Emmy and Tony Award-winning actress and COAF Ambassador, Andrea Martin; actor and COAF Board Member, Joe Manganiello; Armenian comedian, Kev Orkian; and Grammy Award-winning Motown legend, Thelma Houston. Honorees included the Tacorian Family of Los Angeles who received the Empowering a Generation Award for their advocacy and support of COAF over the years. Notable guests from previous Galas include Leonardo DiCaprio, Vanessa Williams, Steve Martin, Gloria Gaynor, and more.

Expanding Opportunities Across Rural Armenia

Since 2003, COAF has worked to strengthen rural communities through comprehensive initiatives in education, healthcare, child and family services, and economic development.

Central to this mission is the innovative COAF SMART Center model, which provides children and youth with access to free, high-quality educational programming and opportunities often unavailable in rural communities.

Established in 2018, COAF's flagship



Pam and the late Ed Avedisian

SMART Center in Lori serves approximately 2,000 students weekly from surrounding communities, offering 19 programs including technology, languages, arts, science, and sports.

Building on the success of the Lori Center, COAF is advancing the development of its second SMART Center in Armavir, with an anticipated opening in 2028. The organization is also planning future expansion into the Syunik region, with proposed SMART Centers in Goris and Kapan.

Together, these efforts represent a long-term vision to bring the benefits of the SMART model to children and families across Armenia, regardless of where they live.

The Gala serves as COAF's main fundraising vehicle of the year, and all contributions made support the organization's efforts in expanding its SMART initiative. COAF aims to eventually expand the SMART Center model to each region of Armenia, allowing their team to reach children in more villages. Proceeds from the Gala will support the organization's mission to transform rural communities and expand access to the opportunities that enable children and families to thrive.

For Gala tickets, sponsorship opportunities, or to make a donation in support of COAF's mission, visit www.coaf.org/appeal/2026-gala.

Governor Newsom Announces Judicial Appointments, Including Arpa Stepanian

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom announced his appointment of 23 Superior Court Judges: one in Alameda County, one in Fresno County, five in Los Angeles County, one in Mendocino County, one in Merced County, one in Orange County, four in Sacramento County, one in San Bernardino County, one in San Diego County, one in San Joaquin County, one in San Mateo County, one in Santa Clara County, one in Stanislaus County, one in Ventura County, one interim appointment in Los Angeles County, and one interim appointment in Sacramento County.

Notably, Arpa Stepanian, of Los Angeles County, has been appointed to serve as a judge in the Los Angeles County Superior Court. Stepanian has worked as a partner at Weiss and Stepanian since 2015. He was the owner of the Stepanian Law Firm from 2012 to 2015. Stepanian was a partner at Stepanian and Donath from 2010 to 2012. He served as a Deputy Public Defender at the Riverside County Public Defender's Office from 2006 to 2010. Stepanian worked as a staff attorney at the Inland Counties Legal Services from 2004 to 2006. He worked as a sole practitioner



Arpa Stepanian

from 2003 to 2004. Stepanian worked as a Hearing Representative at the Law Offices of Dennis Hershewe from 2002 to 2003. Stepanian received a Juris Doctor degree from San Fernando Valley College of Law. He fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Maurice Leiter. Stepanian is registered without party preference.

Digital Hub for Armenian Life in the Nation's Capital

HUB, from page 7

Since the launch, she has received encouraging feedback from community members.

Initially, Andriasova-Seferian reached out to community organizations to gather updates. Now, increasingly, organizations submit their events directly to the portal. "ArmenianDC is featured in the newsletters of both churches. Both priests were very supportive," she said.

The website is also developing a directory of local Armenian-owned businesses. "We are all consumers, and we all hire businesses for our needs or look for partners. Why don't we support our own?" she asked.

Another initiative under development will spotlight members of the community and their achievements. "We have people who have written books, made films, or distinguished themselves professionally," Andriasova-Seferian added.

As the platform grows, so does the workload. She is now seeking an intern to assist with social media and the portal's day-to-day logistics.

(An accompanying video on www.mirrorspectator.com features an interview with Anna Andriasova-Seferian and a look at ArmenianDC.org.)

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

Bishop Mesrop Joins Oriental Orthodox Churches in Prayer For Unity & Peace

PEACE, from page 7

Together, the hierarchs, clergy, and faithful offered a visible expression of the common faith and fellowship uniting the Oriental Orthodox churches.

This year's Divine Liturgy was dedicated especially to prayers for peace, healing, and reconciliation within the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church. In 2023, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian of the Armenian Church (the Diocesan Legate and Ecumenical Director of the Eastern Diocese) and Bishop David, leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church in America, helped facilitate the restoration of communion between two major Eritrean Orthodox jurisdictions in the diaspora, following five years of dialogue.

While the united Eritrean communities remain separated from their Mother Church in Asmara, Archbishop Mor Dionysios emphasized in his homily that the Oriental Orthodox hierarchs continue to pray for reconciliation, without passing judgment on either side, and remain committed to dialogue in a spirit of brotherly love.

Following the Divine Liturgy, the assembled bishops, clergy, and faithful gathered for a fellowship meal and reception honoring Bishop Makarios of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, on the occasion of his 95th birthday and 75 years of dedicated service as a clergyman. Speakers representing several sister churches offered congratulations and expressions of gratitude for his remarkable life of faith and spiritual leadership.



The members of the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches (SCOOCh)

For Bishop Mesrop and his fellow hierarchs, the annual concelebration was a meaningful affirmation of the spiritual bonds uniting this church family. "This gathering is a beautiful reminder that, despite differences in language, culture, and liturgical traditions, the Oriental Orthodox churches remain united in our common faith in Jesus Christ — and our common calling to bear witness to His love," said Bisop Mesrop.

The gathering offered a visible expression of that unity, and of the commitment of the Oriental Orthodox churches to pursue peace, reconciliation, and Christian fellowship.

OBITUARY

Dr. Oscar Papazian

Outstanding, Award-Winning Pediatric Neurologist

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — Dr. Oscar Papazian, of Coral Gables, died October 31, at Doctor's Hospital. He was 84 years old.

Born in Regla, Havana, Cuba, he is survived by his daughters Varsenik, Nevart and her husband David, and granddaughters, Varsenik, Annik, Sylvia, Maria, Clara and her husband Justin.

Oscar was a devoted husband, father, and physician. He celebrated 60 years of marriage to Maria Del Carmen who preceded him in death in 2022. He spent 50 years devoted to his patients as a pediatric neurologist.



Oscar used his skills and abilities in the medical field as a physician, teacher and a leader and lived a life of service to help educate professionals and families, enhancing the lives of children with neurological conditions.

During his highly decorated career he received numerous awards including the Miami Children's Hospital Hall of Excellence Award, Santiago Ramón y Cajal Award from the Iberoamerican Academy of Pediatric Neurology (AINP), and Child Neurology Society's Arnold P. Gold Foundation Humanism in Medicine Award.

Dr. Oscar Papazian was an active member of the Child Neurology Society for more than 40 years. Dr. Papazian received the 2016 Arnold P. Gold Foundation Humanism in Medicine Award presented at the 45th Annual Meeting of the Child Neurology Society in Vancouver, BC.

He and his family moved to Miami in 1971, where he completed the first two years of Pediatric Residence at Variety Children's Hospital (currently Nicklaus Children's Hospital), under Professor Robert B. Lawson, followed by three years of Neurology Residency with Special Competence in Child Neurology at the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Hospital (UM/JMH) under Professor Peritz Chambers† and Professors Stuart B. Brown and Robert F. Cullen, Jr. His mentor, Dr. Robert B. Daroff, introduced him in the field of Myasthenia Gravis.

At the end of Oscar's pediatric neurology residency, in 1976, he was contracted by Professor R. F. Cullen, Jr., Director of the Neurology Division, Variety's Children's Hospital (currently Nicklaus Children's Hospital) and joined Drs. R. F. Cullen, Jr. and Danilo Duenas, and thus he began his practice in Miami. He was granted his request to open a neurology clinic in order to follow-up on his staff patients from UM/JMH at Variety's Children's Hospital. He also was granted his request to evaluate, pro bono, patients with special needs, such as Cerebral Palsy and Muscular Dystrophies, at his private office. He also evaluated the Spanish speaking patients with seizures disorders through the Epilepsy Foundation on a monthly basis. He also had a Cerebral Palsy Clinic at the Miami Union Cerebral Palsy bi monthly.

For his humanitarian services, Oscar was recognized by the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the South Florida Epilepsy Foundation, the Miami Union Cerebral Palsy, the Costa Rica Neurodegenerative Disease Association and the Panama Neurodevelopmental Association (NEURODINA), and Miami Children's Hospital (MCH) (currently Nicklaus Children's Hospital) Medical Staff in acknowledgement of his "Many Years of Dedicated Service to the Children of South Florida".

At MCH, he founded and was the director until 2012 of the Clinical Neurophysiology Laboratory, Spasticity Clinic and Movement Disorder Clinic. Oscar also became the director of Neuromuscular Disorders Clinic after Dr. Danilo Duenas retirement from MCH. Oscar was among the first in the USA to apply continuing evoked potentials of central and peripheral nervous system during surgery to prevent injuries in children. His clinical areas of interest are Cerebral Palsy, Brachial Palsy, Neuromuscular Disorders, Myasthenia Gravis, Neurodevelopmental disorders and lately Executive Function Disorders.

Because of his medical services, he was recognized and named an Honorary Member of Venezuelan Pediatric Society, APRONEP from Costa Rica, Ecuadorian Pediatric Society and Spanish Pediatric Neurology Society. He has also received the Miami Children's Hospital Hall of Excellence Award and Santiago Ramón y Cajal Award from the Iberoamerican Academy of Pediatric Neurology (AINP).

His lifelong goal was to educate the Latin American Pediatric Neurologist community to follow and practice the teachings, values and principles of the Child Neurology Society. To reach that goal, he founded the Ibero-American Child Neurology Academy which to this day has enrolled most of the Spanish and Portuguese speaking Pediatric Neurologists in the world.

In lieu of flowers, contribute to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital at https://www.stjude.org

A memorial service was held in his honor on November 5 at the Van Orsdel Funeral Home in Miami.

Nardolillo Funeral Home
Est. 1906
John K. Najarian, Jr.
Rhode Island's Only Licensed Armenian Funeral Director
1278 Park Ave. Cranston, RI 02910 **(401) 942-1220**
1111 Boston Neck Rd. Narragansett, RI 02882 (401) 789-6300
www.nardolillo.com

Telephone (617) 924-7400
Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Inc.
Continuous Service By The Bedrosian Family Since 1945
558 MOUNT AUBURN STREET
WATERTOWN, MA 02472
MARION BEDROSIAN
PAUL BEDROSIAN
LARRY BEDROSIAN

James "Jack" Giragosian, CPC **Mark J. Giragosian**
Giragosian
FUNERAL HOME
576 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472, Tel: 617-924-0606
www.giragosianfuneralhome.com

COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Caucus Members Overwhelmingly Re-elected, Two Move from House to Senate

WASHINGTON — With the results of the 2026 midterm elections coming in, the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) welcomes the overwhelming re-election of Members of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, congratulates Armenian Caucus Members Representatives Chris Pappas (D-NH) and Kevin Hern (R-OK) on their election to the U.S. Senate, and looks forward to working with the newly elected Members and leadership of the 120th Congress.

At the time of press, 76 of the 92 Armenian Caucus Members seeking re-election to the House had won, an 82.6 percent success rate. Historically, incumbents are rarely defeated: over the last five election cycles, an average of 94 percent of House incumbents seeking re-election were returned to office, according to the Brookings Institution's Vital Statistics on Congress.

The Assembly congratulates Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Representatives Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), and Brad Sherman (D-CA) on their re-election. Co-Chair David Valadao's (R-CA) race in California's 22nd District had not been called at press time.

"The Assembly congratulates Members of the Armenian Caucus on their election



Governor Kathy Hochul, right, receives framed award from Souren Israelyan of the Armenian Bar Association. Photo: Armenian Mirror-Spectator.

day victories, and especially Representatives Pappas and Hern on their election to the Senate," said Assembly Congressional Relations Director Mariam Khaloyan. "Securing the release of the Armenian hostages held in Baku, upholding Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, and strengthening Armenia's security and energy independence will be at the top of our agenda in the 120th Congress. The bipartisan leadership of the Caucus has been crucial to advancing US policy on these issues as we look forward to building on that record with returning and newly elected Members alike."

In New Hampshire, Armenian Caucus Member Rep. Chris Pappas (D-NH), a consistent supporter of Armenian issues in the House, defeated former Senator John E. Sununu (R-NH) in the U.S. Senate race. Sununu's financial disclosure listed a personal holding of up to $5 million in Anglo Asian Mining, a company that operates in Azerbaijan. In Oklahoma, Armenian Caucus Member Rep. Kevin Hern (R-OK) was elected to the U.S. Senate.

In Michigan, Abdul El-Sayed (D-MI) was elected to the U.S. Senate, succeeding retiring Senator Gary Peters. During the campaign, El-Sayed publicly criticized open-ended U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan and pledged to stand up for the peace, security, and self-determination of the Armenian people. The Assembly looks forward to working with Senator-elect El-Sayed.

?The Assembly also congratulates returning Senate friends on their re-election, including Senator Ed Markey (D-MA), who has repeatedly raised the plight of the Armenian hostages held in Baku, including on the Senate floor and in person at the COP29 climate summit in Baku in 2024, and Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ), a longtime supporter of Armenian issues. The Assembly further welcomes Senator-elect Sherrod Brown (D-OH), a strong supporter of Armenian issues during his previous tenure, back to the U.S. Senate.

The following Armenian Caucus Members won their respective House races:

Mike Rogers (R-AL), Paul Gosar (R-AZ), Nanette Diaz Barragán (D-CA), Salud Carbajal (D-CA), Judy Chu (D-CA), Lou Correa (D-CA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Vince Fong (R-CA), Laura Friedman (D-CA), Robert Garcia (D-CA), Josh Harder (D-CA), Jared Huffman (D-CA), Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D-CA), Ro Khanna (D-CA), Mike Levin (D-CA), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Tom McClintock (R-CA), Kevin Mullin (D-CA), Scott Peters (D-CA), Linda Sánchez (D-CA), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Lateefah Simon (D-CA), Mark Takano (D-CA), Juan Vargas (D-CA), George Whitesides (D-CA), Jason Crow (D-CO), Joe Neguse (D-CO), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Jim Himes (D-CT), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Nikema Williams (D-GA), Nikki Budzinski (D-IL), Bill Foster (D-IL), Mike Quigley (D-IL), Brad Schneider (D-IL), Jake Auchincloss (D-MA), Katherine Clark (D-MA), Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Jim McGovern (D-MA), Richard Neal (D-MA), Ayanna Pressley (D-MA), Lori Trahan (D-MA), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Debbie Dingell (D-MI), John Moolenaar (R-MI), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), Betty McCollum (D-MN), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Deborah Ross (D-NC), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Rob Menendez (D-NJ), Donald Norcross (D-NJ), Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Christopher Smith (R-NJ), Susie Lee (D-NV), Dina Titus (D-NV), George Latimer (D-NY), Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY), Gregory Meeks (D-NY), Grace Meng (D-NY), Joseph Morelle (D-NY), Paul Tonko (D-NY), David Joyce (R-OH), Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), Brendan Boyle (D-PA), Madeleine Dean (D-PA), Mary Gay Scanlon (D-PA), Gabe Amo (D-RI), Seth Magaziner (D-RI), Joaquin Castro (D-TX), Pat Fallon (R-TX), Don Beyer (D-VA), Rick Larsen (D-WA), and Adam Smith (D-WA).



Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) on the Senate floor, June 2024, calling for the release of the Armenian hostages held in Baku

While Armenian Caucus Members were overwhelmingly re-elected, several Members — Representatives Tom Kean, Jr. (R-NJ), Kevin Kiley (I-CA), Mike Lawler (R-NY), Max Miller (R-OH), and Bryan Steil (R-WI) — did not win re-election. The Assembly thanks them for their support of Armenian issues during their service in the House and looks forward to meeting with Representatives-elect Rebecca Bennett (D-NJ), Richard Pan (D-CA), Cait Conley (D-NY), Brian Poindexter (D-OH), and Mitchell Berman (D-WI).

Armenian Caucus Co-Chair David Valadao (R-CA), Dave Min (D-CA), Luz Rivas (D-CA), Tom Suozzi (D-NY), and Joe Wilson (R-SC) were certified a winner a few days after election day.

The following Armenian Caucus Members' races had yet to be called at the time of press: Doris Matsui (D-CA), Mike Thompson (D-CA), and Jay Obernolte (R-CA).

Rep. Jimmy Gomez (D-CA) was defeated.

Following Proposition 50 redistricting, Armenian Caucus Members Representatives Young Kim (R-CA), a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Ken Calvert (R-CA), a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee, faced each other in California's new 40th District. That race seems to have gone to Calvert.

The Assembly extends its appreciation to the following Armenian Caucus Members, who are retiring from public office this year and who have strong records on Armenian issues: Representatives Julia Brownley (D-CA), Darrell Issa (R-CA), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Danny Davis (D-IL), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Nydia Velázquez (D-NY), Lloyd Doggett (D-TX), and Michael McCaul (R-TX). The Assembly especially thanks Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), who, as Speaker, brought H.Res.296 affirming the Armenian Genocide to the House floor in 2019 and led the first-ever visit to Armenia by a sitting Speaker in 2022. The Assembly likewise thanks former House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD), who has stood shoulder to shoulder with the Armenian American community throughout his nearly five decades in Congress.

The Assembly thanks Caucus Members Representatives Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Seth Moulton (D-MA), and Haley Stevens (D-MI), who sought election to the U.S. Senate, and Rep. David Schweikert (R-AZ), who sought election as Governor of Arizona, for their support during their service in the House. The Assembly salutes Rep. John Larson (D-CT), who was defeated in a primary election earlier this year, for his long record of support on pro-Armenian legislative priorities, and remembers Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ), who passed away in March 2025.

The Assembly also congratulates Governor Kathy Hochul (D-NY) on her re-election. Governor Hochul has a strong record on Armenian issues: at the Armenian Bar Association's Public Servants Dinner in New York on April 30, 2025, where she was honored, she issued a proclamation declaring April 24 Armenian Remembrance Day in New York State.

The Assembly further congratulates Governor Maura Healey (D-MA) and Governors-elect Xavier Becerra (D-CA) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), all of whom have records of support on Armenian issues,



Governor Maura Healey headlines the Assembly's Celebration of Service, Boston, June 6, 2026.

along with Governors-elect Phil Weiser (D-CO) and Amy Acton (D-OH). Governor Healey, who headlined the Assembly's Celebration of Service gala in Boston this June, has reaffirmed the Commonwealth's commitment to teaching the Armenian Genocide in Massachusetts schools and urged an end to Azerbaijan's blockade of Artsakh.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian and Iranian Economic Report More Than Numbers

A Legacy of Love, Sacrifice, And Opportunity

By Kelvin Dickerson

GLENDALE — In both Armenian and Iranian cultures, there is a small word that carries a lifetime of meaning. "Jan": a term of endearment expressing love, warmth, and belonging. A reminder that even when years pass or conversations become infrequent, the bonds of family and community endure. Some connections never need explaining. They are simply felt.

That spirit filled the room on October 20 at Shiraz in Glendale, where community leaders, families, partners, and Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC) staff celebrated the release of the *Armenian & Iranian Economic Report*.

What began as a celebration of research became something deeply personal: recognition of families who made Los Angeles their home, built businesses and careers, raised children, and established institutions that keep their cultures alive. For first-generation immigrants, the evening acknowledged the challenges of starting over. For their children, it illuminated the determination behind the opportunities they inherited. For both generations, it was a chance to see their family's story become part of Los Angeles County's economic story.

A Lifetime in Los Angeles: A Legacy Worth Recognizing.

For Halé Behzadi, former LAEDC Board Chair and BMO (Bank of Montreal)'s Vice Chair for California, the evening was deeply personal: "This report is deeply personal to me."

Forty-one years ago, Behzadi arrived in Los Angeles for a professional opportunity. She met her husband here. Together, they built a family and a life rooted in community: "I've built my family here."

Her journey reflects something statistics cannot capture: Los Angeles is more than a place to find work. It is where newcomers become neighbors. Where uncertainty becomes possibility. Where a new beginning becomes a family's history.

Behzadi described the report as a source of pride, validating contributions long recognized within the community but now documented through research.

She also emphasized the importance of identifying one's heritage so communities are represented in decisions affecting their futures: "It's like not being in the room when a decision is made for you."

Her message was clear: Being counted means having a voice in decisions that shape the future.



Front cover of the Armenian & Iranian Economic Report. Standing, from left, Atosa Naezmi, Levon Zorabian, Seta Shaghoian-Zorabian, Senior Manager-Institutional Partnerships and Industry Development, LAEDC; Seated, from left, Arman Koohian, Research Analyst, LAEDC, Sara Zorabian, Liana Zorabian.

The Stories Our Parents Carried

Dr. Narineh Makijan, an Armenian immigrant from Iran who grew up in Glendale, helped advocate for the research: "The reason why I was pushing wasn't for any other reason but to give us a voice." That voice belongs to generations of families who built livelihoods, preserved traditions, and created opportunities for their children.

LAEDC research analyst Arman Koohian reflected on growing up second-generation, without facing the same challenges his immigrant parents experienced. His hope is to honor those experiences, preserve cultural identity, and expand opportunities for younger Armenians and Iranians. One generation made the journey. Another carries the responsibility of remembering why.

The Economic Power of Belonging

LAEDC's report identifies approximately 191,800 Los Angeles County residents reporting Armenian ancestry and 87,600 reporting Iranian ancestry. These estimates overlap and should not be added together. It also finds that 21.5 percent of Armenian workers and 29.6 percent of Iranian workers are self-employed, compared with 13.5 percent countywide.

Behind those figures are businesses sustaining livelihoods, neighborhoods, traditions, and generations. Though Armenian and Iranian Angelenos have distinct histories and identities, both communities demonstrate how cultural connections strengthen economic opportunity. A familiar language spoken across a shop counter. A mentor helping a newcomer find work. A family business creating opportunities for the next generation. These connections are part of the economic fabric of Los Angeles.

LAEDC President and CEO Stephen Cheung captured the importance of preserving these stories: "When you don't tell the story, it gets washed over." The report makes these contributions visible while identifying opportunities to strengthen entrepreneurship, workforce pathways, access to capital, and community investment.

But its greatest promise lies in what happens next. Will more families build secure futures? Will young people discover opportunities their parents never had? Will community voices shape decisions affecting generations to come?

Because the most meaningful way to honor yesterday's sacrifices is to create tomorrow's opportunities. Perhaps that is the enduring spirit of *Jan*: a connection reaching beyond one person, one family, or one generation.

Download the Full Report here: https://laedc.org/download/armenian-iranian-economic-report/

10 Ամեակ
Բարեկամ

TCA Friends of Baikar Weekly
Invites You to Join Us for a
10TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER DANCE
Celebrating a Decade of Journalistic Excellence

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 2027 | 6:30 PM
ST. LEON ARMENIAN CHURCH HALL
12-61 Saddle River Road • Fair Lawn, New Jersey

MASTER OF CEREMONIES
Taleen Babayan

LIVE BAND FEATURING
Hooshere Bezdikian - Vocals • Haig Buchakjian - Oud
Steve Vosbikian - Clarinet • David Hoplamazian - Violin
Christopher Vosbikian - Dumbeg • Sevan Simonian - Guitar
Music by DJ Shant

$125 pp

FULL DINNER + WINE INCLUDED

RAFFLE & SILENT AUCTION

For complete event information,
scan the QR code or contact

Marie Zokian 201-745-8850

Proceeds will support the continued publication of Baikar Weekly

COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Museum of America Begins Major Exterior Renovation

WATERTOWN — The Armenian Museum of America is entering a new chapter as it begins major improvements to the exterior of its historic building. Contracts for the first phase of exterior façade work were signed in October, with construction beginning this fall.

The project represents an important investment in the museum's future, preserving and enhancing its historic building while creating a more welcoming and visually compelling presence for visitors, neighbors and the broader community.

The museum is working with SMMA (Symmes Maini & McKee Associates), a Cambridge-based architecture and design firm, along with Alpha Weatherproofing and W.T. Kenney Painting. Ara Krafian, who served as chairman and CEO at SMMA until he retired last year, is a Lifetime Member of the Museum and he generously volunteered his time and expertise as a professional advisor throughout the project.

The initial work will focus on improvements to the building's exterior façade, including new and updated signage. The first phase of the project is expected to be completed in 2026, and the Museum's galleries are open throughout the renovation period.

"This is an exciting moment for the Armenian Museum of America," said President Michele M. Kolligian. "Our building is not only an important part of our identity; it is considered a part of our collection. For this reason, it is extremely important that its Brutalist design not be compromised and at the same time allow for the architectural integrity of the building to reflect the vitality, creativity, and significance of the galleries inside. These improvements will help us honor its architectural legacy while creating a more welcoming and recognizable presence for the community."

For the museum, the project is about more than addressing the physical condition of the building. While the exterior has served the institution for decades, its current appearance does not fully convey the energy and quality of the exhibitions, collections, programs, and experiences taking place inside.

"This is an important project for the Museum and our community," said Ara Krafian, who was enlisted by Kolligian to help guide the vision and planning for the exterior restoration. The care that the Armenian Museum leadership team has taken to ensure that decisions are thoughtful and considered is impressive, particularly given the many moving pieces involving signage, tenant coordination, building system challenges, and ongoing museum operations. This project will provide permanence and beauty to the museum's exterior allure."

Improving the façade and overall architectural presence will create a stronger connection between the institution and the surrounding community, encouraging those who may be unfamiliar with the Museum to notice the building, recognize it as a cultural destination, and come inside.

"We want the museum to feel welcoming from the moment someone encounters it," added Kolligian. "The work we are undertaking will give the building a renewed presence while helping us introduce the Museum to new audiences. Our goal is for people walking or driving along Main Street — which has been designated an official Cultural District by the Mass Cultural Council — to see the Museum, become curious about what is happening inside, and come through its doors."

The Stephen Papken and Marie Graves Mugar Building in Watertown Square stands on the site of the former Town Hall and fire station. Originally built by Coolidge Bank and Trust in 1971, the building was designed by Ben Thompson Associates, whose notable projects also include Faneuil Hall Marketplace and the Design Research building on Brattle Street in Cambridge. It was acquired by the Armenian Museum in 1988 when Coolidge Bank relocated to downtown Boston.

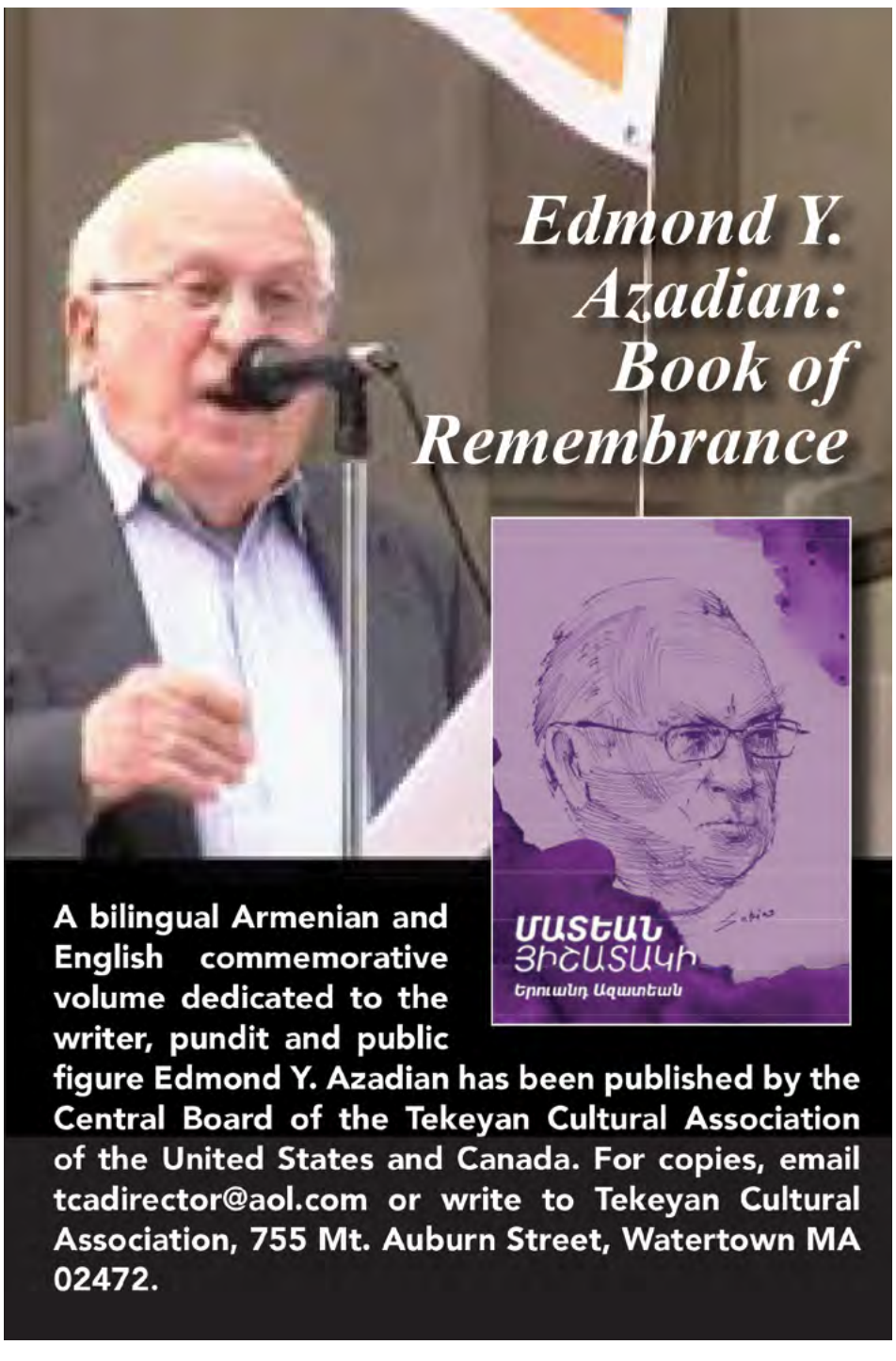


Façade improvements and new signage will mark the beginning of a broader investment in the Armenian Museum of America's historic building and visitor experience as the institution celebrates its 55th anniversary

In 2018, the museum began paying renewed homage to its Brutalist architecture. Derived from béton brut, the French term for raw concrete, Brutalism is characterized by cast-concrete forms and repeated modular elements. While sometimes considered austere, the style was envisioned as a monumental expression of the importance of civic spaces and public institutions.

The exterior improvements come at an especially meaningful time for the Armenian Museum of America as it celebrates its 55th anniversary. Founded in 1971, the museum is marking more than five decades of preserving, presenting, and sharing Armenian history, art, and culture. Over the years, it has continued to expand its exhibitions, public programs, educational offerings, membership, digital initiatives, and community partnerships, welcoming thousands of visitors and presenting exhibitions that connect Armenian history and culture with contemporary artistic and cultural conversations.

As one of the largest Armenian museums in the diaspora, the Armenian Museum of America is home to more than 25,000 objects spanning centuries of Armenian history, art, culture, and heritage. Its Watertown building serves as a vital gathering place for exhibitions, education, performances, lectures, community events, and cultural exchange. As the Museum celebrates its 55-year legacy, this renovation represents an investment in its next chapter — ensuring that the building's physical presence reflects the vibrancy of the institution and its enduring role as a cultural destination on the East Coast.



Dadrian Digital Archive Now Open to the World

DADRIAN, from page 7

demanding process of transporting, organizing, and digitizing the materials.

The project subsequently developed into a major collaborative undertaking involving the Armenian Genocide Research Program at UCLA, with the dedicated efforts of scholars, technical specialists, volunteers, and partner institutions, as well as the generous support of donors and patrons. The digitization process was completed in December 2025, followed by the development of the online platform that will now make the collection accessible worldwide.

The launch program will feature remarks by Museum Director Maggie Mangasarian Goschin, Carina Goschin, and Prof. Taner Akçam, director of the Armenian Genocide Research Program, all in person, alongside Dr. Anna Alexanyan, joining by Zoom, and a recorded address by Dr. Hayg Demoyan. Garegin Chookaszian, joining by Zoom from Germany, will offer a 12-minute guided tour of the website, navigating its main features for the audience. The program will also include a 12-minute film, prepared by Dr. Carla Garabedian, celebrating the many people who contributed to the project, and a three-minute video of Dr. Wolf Gruner's recorded remarks on the USC library. Dr. Garabedian will serve as Master of Ceremonies.



Vahakn Dadrian

The launch marks a new chapter in Armenian Genocide research, ensuring that Professor Dadrian's scholarly legacy remains accessible to future generations and that his invaluable collection can support historical research around the world.

Ararat-Eskijian Museums' Sheen Chapel is located at 15105 Mission Hills Road in Mission Hills.

For additional information, call the Ararat-Eskijian Museum and Research Center at 747-500-7585 or email Nanor Hartounian of the Armenian Genocide Research Program, UCLA, at nhartounian@international.ucla.edu.

Arts & Culture

Composer Hodian Debuts New Group, Hnar

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

YEREVAN — American-Armenian, Yerevan-based composer and conductor John Hodian has already established himself with his traditional Armenian music group, the Naghash Ensemble. The group, which this week is embarking on a US tour, performs music, written by Hodian, based on the works of the eponymous poet.

On October 29, at a basement space in the Arno Babajanyan Concert Hall, Hodian debuted his latest effort, Hnar Ensemble.

The room was packed with about 200 friends and musical enthusiasts, who for the first time heard the group's music.

The musicians in the ensemble are Anna Hambardzumyan (*santoor*); Yevgine Melikyan (*qanun*); David Sayadyan (*oud*); Andranik Gasparyan (*duduk*); Tigran Hovhannisyan (*dhol*) and Narek Gasparyan (cello).

Again, they perform original music by John Hodian, but this time without a vocalist.

While the instruments are traditionally Armenian, the sounds they create are not.



Members of the Hnar Ensemble

The dozen songs performed were captivating; while they seemed Armenian at points, they soon went off in different directions, recalling various genres from Flamenco to Jazz and even moody instrumentals like Pink Floyd.

As Hodian said, his aim was just that. "I needed to find people who could do things with these instruments that they don't normally do. Especially with the *santoor* and the *qanun*, I made them do things that they don't like to do, and yet they [the musicians] do it so stunningly well."

Indeed, the two instruments at various points sounded percussive or even like Flamenco guitars.

Before the performers launched into the music, Hodian addressed the assembled in English (translated by Nareg Hartounian). He explained that the music of this ensemble was centered around the *santoor*.

"All I've done for the past 15 years has been to write music based on this one poet, Naghash, and then we have traveled quite a bit with this ensemble," Hodian said. "The Naghash Ensemble has a certain type of sound or

see HNAR, page 14



The members of the Akhtamar Quartet at the Arno Babajanian Hall (photo Gohar Shaboyan)

Akhtamar Quarter Performs Premiere of Composition by Eugénie Alécian in Armenia

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Music lovers in Yerevan were treated to a very special event on October 30 at the Arno Babajanyan Concert Hall, when the renowned Akhtamar Quartet performed the world premiere of *Regards – Mirrors and Transparencies*, the second string quartet by Armenian pianist and composer Eugénie Alécian. And the composer herself was among the guests filling the hall.

Alécian, who lives in Paris, wrote the work specially for the Akhtamar Quartet, an ensemble she has worked with since its inception in 2014. The title refers to the transformative faculty of human sight, the gaze which not only perceives but transforms what it perceives, differently for each viewer. For the composer this applies also to a string quartet, whose members read the same score, each with a different voice, but which transforms the whole. In the *Ouverture*, the separate voices are brought into play, and in the second movement (*Emotions* or *Stirrings*), several emotions appear, emerging, mixing with one another, or interrupting and creating tensions. In the third movement (*Mutations*), the musical material moves without interruption from one instrument to the next and in the process is transformed; or better, the process itself is one of transformation. In the final movement (*Mirrors and Transparencies*), the voices mirror each another, and at times seem to transmit something to the other, at once reflecting but maintaining their own identities. Alécian works with micro-intervals to communicate extreme emotional states that may defy description, just as chromatic progressions defy identification with a recognizable tonality.

The Akhtamar Quartet

The composer has said that she wrote this piece "to the quartet, about the quartet and for the quartet." Considering her career as a pianist, it may come as a surprise that she should, as a composer, write for this ensemble. It turns out that her father was a cellist and chamber musician, so she grew up with string instruments.

The quartet form presented her new opportunities as well as a challenge. In composing an opera, "L'Amazone" (The Amazon), she wrote for the "quartet" as a human instrument of four voices, and through further work, developed a fascination with the interrelationships and inner dialogues that the quartet form offers.

At the same time, she was writing for "*the* quartet" — a very specific ensemble. Like *Quatuor arménien* (Armenian Quartet), the first quartet she composed in 2016, the second was also written for the Akhtamar Quartet. Formed in Paris in 2014, the ensemble has had a relationship with Alécian since its inception, reflected even in its name; she had composed a work for guitar entitled *Akhtamar*, which is the title of a work by Komitas/Aslamazyan. And there is a family connection: the first violin and founder of the quartet, Coline Alecian, is her niece. Jennifer Pio, who plays second violin, has been with the quartet since 2016, whereas Cléo Dahan, viola, and cellist Apolline Lafait, joined more recently, in 2024 and 2026, respectively.

see AKHTAMAR, page 17

'Formidable! Aznavour' to Play Town Hall, NYC, 10 Major Cities

NEW YORK — "Formidable! Aznavour," a live musical tribute to the legendary French-Armenian singer and songwriter Charles Aznavour, will be making its debut in the US, following smashing success in France and abroad. The live band show features Aznavour's famous songs *La Boheme, Formidable! She, Yesterday when I was Young* and more — four of the 800 written and performed by Aznavour, and covered by world-renowned singers, including Frank Sinatra.

"Formidable! Aznavour" was created and produced by the creators of the musical sensation "Piaf! The Show," Directo Productions, and presented by Cherry Orchard Festival. On its first US tour, "Formidable! Aznavour" will stop in Seattle, Los Angeles, Miami, Houston, Boston, and have two performances in New York, at Brooklyn's Oceana Theater and Town Hall in New York City.

Singer Jules Grison will sing.

The dates are:

Tuesday, December 1, 8:00 PM, Seattle, WA, Edmonds Center for the Arts

Wednesday, December 2, 8:00 PM, San Diego, CA, Balboa Theatre

Thursday, December 3, 8:00 PM, San Francisco, CA, Herbst Theatre

Saturday, December 5, 7:00 PM, Los Angeles, CA, Alex Theatre

Sunday, December 6, 8:00 PM, Houston, TX, Cullen Theater at Wortham Center

Monday, December 7, 8:00 PM, Tampa, FL, Straz Center for the Performing Arts

Tuesday, December 8, 8:00 PM, Atlanta, GA, Center Stage Theater

Thursday, December 10, 8:00 PM, Miami, FL, Lauderhill Performing Arts Center

Saturday, December 12, 7:00 PM, Brooklyn, NY, Oceana Theater

Sunday, December 13, 8:00 PM, Boston, MA, Berklee Performance Center

Tuesday, December 15, 8:00 PM, New York, NY, The Town Hall

"Formidable! Aznavour" is a heartfelt ode to the life and artistry of an artist who left an indelible mark on music history and whose voice still resonates with the same intensity, continuing to touch hearts and inspire new generations of admirers.

This production is a true emotional journey through the life and extraordinary career of Charles Aznavour.

The son of Armenian refugees, Charles Aznavour arguably became one of France's greatest exports who enjoyed an exceptional worldwide career. Described by critics as "An inaudible voice and a difficult physique," Aznavour gained the public's unyielding support through his originality. Aznavour worked with Charles Trenet and the "Môme" Edith Piaf, who took young Aznavour along on her tours to the United States and later - Montreal. Becoming an accomplished artist and a keen observer of

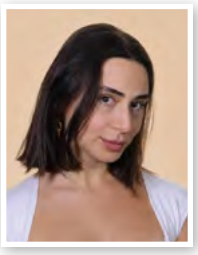
see AZNAVOUR, page 14

ARTS & CULTURE

‘Forgetting Is All I Fear:’ Perla Kantarjian’s You Must Become

By Arpi Sarafian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The poems in Perla Kantarjian’s debut poetry collection *You Must Become Field* (Bad Betty Press, 2026) have an urgency that can only come from a heart that carries within itself the cruelty of a history that killed a million to a million and a half of “us” and brought her family from Historic Armenia to the shores of Lebanon. “Karaman, Anatolia: my great-great-grandfather/a fabric merchant in the local market, Agha they called him/ powerful man, yards of cloth so abundant they named him/for measure itself: Kantarjian. His son, grandfather Haroutioun/fled the massacres with fabric still folded in his hands, the trade/carried across the sea to Corfu, where the air remembers him. . . . Then, Piraeus, shoe-shine boys/until the sea carried them to Lebanon . . . In Bourj Hammoud, exile’s capital in Lebanon, Harutyun’s sons—my father and uncle carried the trade forward . . . . I am feeding you fragments/because that’s all I have. Gather what you can,” writes the poet candidly in “I Will Feed You Fragments,” the prose poem that opens the collection.



In “I Imagine The Writers,” Kantarjian conjures up April 24,1915, the date that marks the beginning of the Armenian Genocide, when Armenian elites in Constantinople were arrested and moved interior to be executed: “Komitas is on the train to Cankin. I am in the cattle-car with him, standing in the stench and crush of familiar bodies. He is humming—did you know that? . . . I watch the mouth move. Watch the humming stop. . . . Komitas hums louder, trying to drown out the screaming, the weeping, the smell of shit and fear and Cankin getting closer.”

With her stunningly bold images Kantarjian depicts the arrests, the forced marches — “Hundreds of miles under a sun/that would not move . . . We smelled our dead/ before we saw them. The thud of bone on bone./Skulls on rocks. Tongues eaten by flies./Children shrieking without sound.” “I left the jar of apricot preserves cooling on the window sill./I left the key under the tile. For the neighbours. For no one,” vividly evokes the disruption to peaceful everyday lives caused by one’s forced removal from one’s land. Equally evocative is the depiction of the September 2023 exodus, more than a century later, from Artsakh:

I am driving every vehicle in the convoy of thousands—
Ladas, buses, flatbed trucks, mattresses roped to roofs.
I am every quilt stacked to the ceiling. I am every fruit jar rattling.
Horns like a wedding but everyone’s weeping. I am the child
clutching a kitten in the backseat. I am the 16 centuries they have to
forfeit.

Perhaps there is too much blood in the poems, as the editor notes circling pomegranate in red. “Again? she margins. Can we find a different fruit?“ But “what else can we do?” when “I don’t know where home is”—Artsakh emptied, “The wedding venue on Google:/permanently closed” — and when drone strikes, evacuation warnings and images of a father pulling his four-year old daughter — “maybe younger” — out of the rubble flashing on television are the realities of her new home.

Nonetheless, the poet embraces her new world, in which Armenian, Arabic, English, even Turkish — “And you will smile when they call your daughter yavrig/as though it does not come from the Turkish yavrum” — mix with the sound of drones and breaking news on TV and WhatsApp of attacks and casualties. Her retort to the editor’s Please not blood again is, in fact, a celebration of who she is.

“Tomorrow is Monday. Mum will probably make fattoush.
She’ll drizzle it with pomegranate molasses the color of
[please not blood again. replace simile. give options]
She’ll send a photo of it. I swear this isn’t a metaphor
for anything. It’s just what we eat”

In her poems she affirms the culture she was born into. There may be much irony and sarcasm in the poems. Survival may even be pretense — “It is eating into me, my hunger/for the life we are unable to live” — yet there is no lamentation. The persona’s engagement with life is unmistakable.

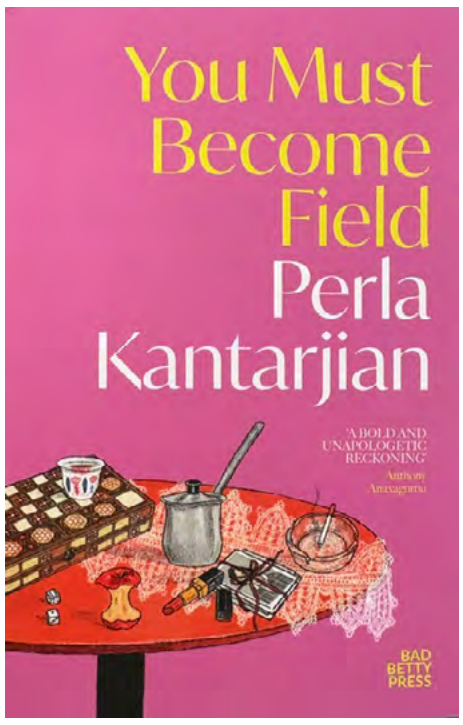
Most remarkable is Kantarjian’s ability to evoke the war and the economic collapse of Lebanon with images seamlessly woven into her and her friends’ everyday lives. “We get red stiletto nails when the Lira dies, microblade/when the cabinet resigns. Loss is an art we’ve mastered/the sugaring of.” “Aluminum Angels” is a brutal evocation of their experiences:

My friend carries pepper spray tucked beside Chanel lipstick
And a small silver Madonna of Harissa. She shows me this
as we’re getting highlights and power cuts mid-foil.
. . . . . .
. Above us, F-16Is, Hermes drones, Heron TPs are buzzing.
But in these black leather chairs, we’re two aluminum angels,
. . . . . .
And laughing in the dark because what else can we do?
We are very good at laughing in the dark.

Balancing the darkness are the father’s *kisher pari, hokees*, and the video calls and the joy of cooking *mjaddara* with mother. “There is no light/that could ever outshine the light . . . [in my mother’s] face,” she writes in “In The Kitchen with Mom I Notice.”

The collection ends with celebrated Armenian poet Silva Kabutikyan’s words, “You must take revenge by continuing to live,” Kantarjian uses as epigraph to “The Nation in Her Hands.” The burden of transforming the destruction into new life rests on the women’s bodies which “must become fields,” she writes, to replace the souls lost to deportations and to massacres. Significantly, You Must Become Field brings the spotlight on the role women play in their society’s survival, a role that goes far beyond the reproduction of the species.

Kantarjian’s is a powerful voice. It is a voice energized by “my ancestors’ . . .



light-hunger, their marrow of fire.” Aramazd, Vahakn. Anahit, Asdghig, the gods and the goddesses of her ancestry, are her muses. Her daughter Nane—named after the Armenian war and wisdom goddess—will dream, yet never forget that her “great-grandmother walked three hundred miles with bread sewn into her hem.” History will always shape the family’s lives. A deep sorrow remains.

You Must Become Field evidences that the genocide continues to fuel our writers’ creativity. Micheline Aharonian Marcom’s groundbreaking Trilogy on the Armenian Genocide and its aftermath — *Three Apples Fell from Heaven, The Daydreaming Boy, Draining The Sea* (2001-2008) — and more recently, Nadine Takvorian’s *Armaveni*, Sarah Ignatius’s *The Kaleidoscope of Destiny* and Dana Mashoian Walruth’s *The Book of Genocides* are only a few examples. One can only hope that the relevance of these works to the ongoing violence and genocides will help advance the cause of justice globally. Will things change?

I would like to add that an invaluable addition to the collection are the Notes that provide relevant historical information on treaties, events, cities, personalities, and so much more, with close to poetic compression.

‘Formidable! Aznavour’ To play Town Hall, NYC, 10 Major Cities

AZNAVOUR, from page 13
humanity, Aznavour was a master interpreter of love and the passing of time, his two favorite themes. Aznavour lived to 94, known as a performer of thousands of songs, an actor in over 80 films and television projects, and an author of more than 800 songs that were covered by artists including Frank Sinatra, Elton John, Ray Charles, Shirley Bassey and Elvis Costello, and sampled by everyone from Dr. Dre and Nas to Bad Bunny and HUGEL.

Tickets and group packages are on sale through CherryOrchardFestival.org.

Composer John Hodian Debuts New Ensemble in Armenia, Hnar



Members of the Hnar Ensemble with John Hodian

HNAR, from page 13
vibe. A couple of years ago, I started hearing a different type of music in my head. It was very different, very technical, had a lot of energy, and was very difficult in terms of virtuosity.”

In addition, he said, “I had become obsessed with the sound of the *santoor*.”

Luckily, he said, one of the first people he approached was Hambardzumyan, who agreed to collaborate.

“She helped me put together this ensemble,” Hodian said.

The two ensembles have one player in common, *dhol* player Hovhannisyan, whom he singled out for his contributions.

In addition, Hodian explained that the cello stands in for the medieval Armenian instrument *bambir*, which is an ancient forerunner.

To find out more about the group or to hear a sample of their songs, visit www.hnar-ensemble.com.

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian



Poet

Recipes from Vartouhi Hachigian (1916 - 2007)

SPRINGFIELD, MA — Vartouhi (Shirvanian) Hachigian, 91, formerly of Bradley Road, Springfield, died on Sunday October 21, 2007 at Wingate of West Springfield. Vartouhi was born in Union City, New Jersey on January 8, 1916, a daughter of the late Mugerditch and Armenouhie (Kantarian) Shirvanian. She was raised in Union City, and was a graduate of Bogota High School. Vartouhi and her husband of 57 years, Popken J. Hachigian, owned and operated Koffee Kup Donuts where she worked for many years.

Her husband was an Armenian civic and cultural leader. Under the leadership of General Karekin Njdeh, Popken Hachigian was one of the founding members of the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) in 1933, and served as one of its first Central Executives. An active member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), Popken was one of the pillars of the Springfield Armenian-American community, a leader and an activist in the pursuit of Armenian causes. He served as chairman of the Armenian National Committee here.

Popken was instrumental in organizing Springfield area 1915 Armenian Genocide commemorations, raising the red-blue-orange Armenian flag at City Hall on April 24 in memory of the over 1.5 million Armenians who died at the hands of the Turks between 1908 and 1917. Springfield Mayor Michael J. Albano proclaimed April 24 Armenian Genocide Recognition Day. His parents were survivors of the Armenian Genocide. He and two brothers owned and operated Koffee Kup Donuts for 50 years; he retired in 1995. He opened Annoushner Candy Store at Eastern Mall. He was a member and a 40-year trustee of St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church in Indian Orchard.

Vartouhi was a devoted member of St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church and the Armenian Relief Society (ARS). Besides her parents Vartouhi was predeceased by her husband Popken who died on July 4, 2000. She was a beloved aunt to several nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews, along with several cousins.

Published by *The Republican* on October 24, 2007.

ONLINE COOKBOOK AVAILABLE: An online Armenian Cookbook featuring over 200 recipes was originally published in 1973 by St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church of Indian Orchard, Massachusetts as a fundraiser. Additional recipes have been added to this online resource as well. Here are a few of Vartouhi's recipes that are posted at this website:

Rolled Filo with Nut Filling (Burma or Boorma)

INGREDIENTS:

1 lb. filo dough, fully thawed
1 cup butter (salt removed) or 1/2 cup butter and 1/2 cup shortening

Filling:
2 cups walnuts, chopped
3 teaspoons sugar
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

Mix filling ingredients together and set aside.

PREPARATION:

Unfold filo dough and cover with slightly damp towel. Take sheets of dough one by one placing narrow end nearest to you. Brush with melted butter, then sprinkle nut mixture over lower half of dough. If dough is very thin, you may use 1/2 or 1/3 of another sheet over top half and re-butter. Fold up about 1" of filo at lower end so dowel stick will not stick to butter. Using a dowel stick (1/2" thick and 18" long), place stick at bottom and loosely roll up entire sheet. With fingers at both ends, crimp toward center like an accordion then gently slide off stick. Place side by side on baking sheet and keep covered with damp cloth to prevent drying.

Rewarm butter occasionally for easier brushing. When pan is full, brush tops with hot butter and bake in a preheated 350°F oven until lightly golden, about 15-20 minutes.

Before serving, cut bourma rolls in half and dip in cool syrup.

Shakar Choor (Syrup mixture)

2 cups sugar
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
1 cup water

Boil sugar and water together for about 15 minutes, stirring. Add the lemon juice, and stir again.

Note: Burmas may be made ahead and frozen before adding syrup.

Makes 40-50 pieces

Hot Yogurt Soup (Tahnabour)

INGREDIENTS:

2/3 cup dzedzadz (hulled wheat)
3 cups plain yogurt
3 cups water
1 egg
2 tablespoons flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 medium onion, chopped
4 tablespoons butter or margarine
1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint
1/3 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

PREPARATION:

Cook dzedzadz in 4 cups of water until tender. Blend the yogurt, water, egg, and flour with beater. Cook until it boils, stirring constantly with wooden spoon. Add salt and the cooked dzedzadz and remove from heat. Sauté onion in butter, add the mint and parsley. Then combine the sautéed onion mixture with soup. Simmer for 5 to 10 minutes. Check seasonings.

Serves 6-8

Cheese, spinach, noodle casserole (BANIR, SPANAGH, YEV YERISHTA)

INGREDIENTS:

4 tablespoons butter or margarine
4 tablespoons flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper
2 cups milk
1/2 lb. American cheddar cheese, shredded
2 cups cooked medium-wide noodles
2 cups cooked frozen spinach, chopped and well drained

PREPARATION:

Make cream sauce by melting the butter in double boiler. Add the flour, salt and pepper, stirring until smooth. Add the milk, and stir. Cook until thickened and smooth. Add 3/4 of cheese and stir until it is melted. Arrange alternating layers of noodles, spinach and cheese sauce in a casserole. (Repeat) End with the noodles. Sprinkle with remaining cheese and bake at 350°F for 40 minutes or until golden brown.

Serves 6-8

For information:

St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church
135 Goodwin Street
Indian Orchard, MA 01151
Phone: (413) 543-4763
Website: https://saintgregoryarmenianchurch.org/

Note: For the church online cookbook, go to: https://armeniapedia.org/wiki/Adventures_in_Armenian_Cooking

Vartouhi Hachigian Obituary: https://obits.masslive.com/us/obituaries/masslive/name/vartouhi-hachigian-obituary?id=13320396

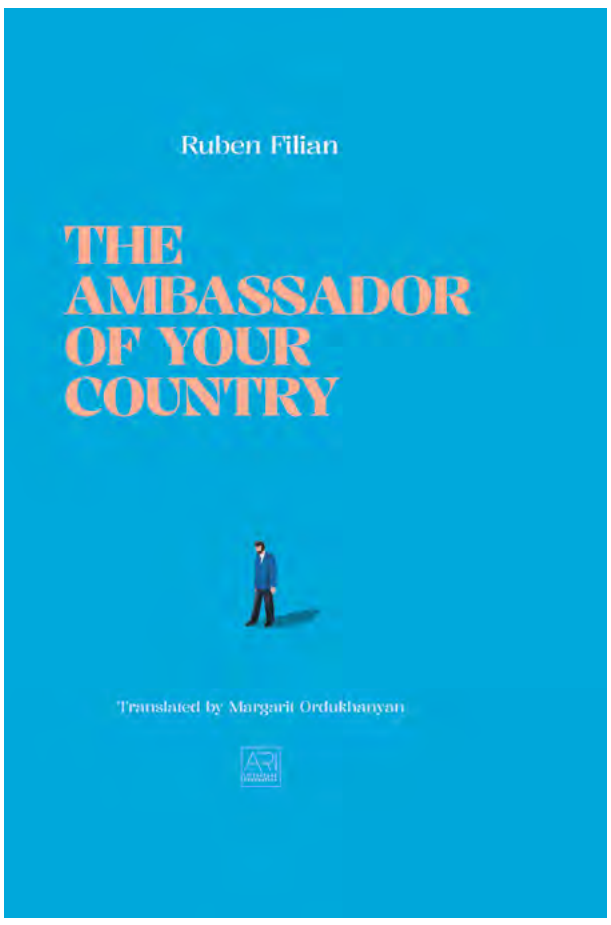
Popken J. Hachigian Obituary: https://www.asbarez.com/ayf-founding-member-hachigian-passes-away-at-86/

Photos: https://saintgregoryarmenianchurch.org/1990s

ARTS & CULTURE

Books

The Ambassador of Your Country: Armenian History on Acid



By Christopher Atamian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Ably translated by Margarit Ordukhanyan, Ruben Filian's 1979 novel *The Ambassador of Your Country* brings Armenian history to life in ways both odd and wonderful. Written by one of Armenian literature's most controversial figures, the work begins at an unspecified date in Winston Churchill's office, where an Armenian delegation, simply named WE, tries to enlist his support for the small Caucasian nation. Churchill instructs his assistant to research The Country, and the resulting document becomes the book that WE is given at the History Museum and reads throughout its subsequent journey — a view from abroad, if you will. Churchill pulls down a map of the world but cannot find Armenia on it and, in calculatingly English fashion, summarily declines to help. Watching this scene unfold, one is reminded of the now-bastardized quote by Lord Palmerston: "We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow." It's something contemporary Armenian governments might do well to remember, and it makes the book doubly relevant to today's reader.

Published by Ari Press in Yerevan, first in Eastern Armenian and now in a limited English edition, the novel offers a unique entry point into Armenia's past. The remainder of this relatively short, 140-page novel is one extended peregrination through Armenian history, as the same group of travelers, WE takes a hallucinatory trip through some three thousand years of history.


Ruben Filian

Its unique style is at once elevated and literary, accessible yet complex. One is reminded of a Monty Python movie, so odd are the images and events described in this sometimes-disturbing pastiche.

Here, the author alludes to Queen Tamar, who waited day after day for the lover she thought would never arrive: "It's impossible to say whether There is an island or a peninsula. It was an island back when every night the Girl waited for her beloved. And the boy, guided by the light of the girl's lantern, swam over from the opposite shore to reach the island. And then one night, loveless and cruel people did their dark deed: they extinguished the lantern (AH!). The Boy got lost in the dark sea, and the girl cried her temporary tears until all the inhabitants of the island, along with their possessions and deeds, drowned in the sea of her tears. And to this day the Girl, lantern in hand, travels the world on bottles and cigarette packs, in legend and song."

The clever prose and rewriting of an ancient Armenian myth meet modern-day pastiche and a sly critique of advertising and contemporary capitalism: Tamar goes from being Queen of Van to the girl on a box for a brand of Armenian cigarettes in just a thousand short years!

Note that, as with WE, no one is explicitly named in the text. Armenian readers are left to fill in the missing blanks, while others can draw on their own historical knowledge to fit the paradigm that Filian is critiquing. The "(AH!)" is also a lovely addition: a parenthetical meta-critique of societal cruelty and, in passing, Armenian self-destructiveness. As for the sly and mocking "temporary" tears that Tamar sheds, readers can best interpret what Filian seems to be implying about women and/or aristocratic privilege. Whether riffing on the myth of Tamar, as above, challenging Armenian Christianity's centrality to the nation's identity, or openly critiquing national icons such as Mount Ararat or the great poet and monk Narekatsi, Filian takes few prisoners. Yet by never actually naming the symbols or people in question, and by alluding to mystical paradigms borrowed from the East, Filian places his characters beyond a strictly Armenian context.

Born in 1952, Filian was a Soviet literary dissident who escaped Armenia in the 1970s, at a time when doing so could have grave consequences. Murdered in 1983 in his retreat on the Indian resort island of Goa, Filian was both charming and outspoken. Drugs may have been involved, though a lover's quarrel seems the more probable cause of his demise. Others believe the KGB did him in.

Tragedy seemed almost his destiny, given his background. As the son of *nergakhts*, repatriates and someone born into a Protestant family, he quite naturally questioned mainstream Soviet and Armenian cultural norms.

Filian graduated from Yerevan State University with a degree in journalism and quickly came to blows with Soviet censors: his Bohemian lifestyle and attraction to Eastern philosophies were simply not in keeping with Moscow's cultural directives. His first book, *The Unknown Self Biography*, was published in 1980. He also translated Sri Adi Sankaracharya's *Vivekachudamani* into Eastern Armenian and wrote some well-regarded short stories.

Once he had escaped the confines of the Soviet Union, he embarked on a long series of travels that took him to France, Egypt, Jordan and then Goa, where he taught yoga, karate and Eastern philosophy.

Already forgotten by much of the younger generation in the Republic of Armenia, Filian's work is available to us today largely thanks to the efforts of novelist Aram Pachyan, who continues to champion the writer. Pachyan seems delighted by Filian's work, saying: "What attracted me to this work was its fable-like narrative(s) which he turns upside down. These include anonymous protagonists with their own distinct ways of thinking and behaving — situated within a world of farce, rhythmic shifts, sudden evasive turns, absurdities that abandon themselves halfway through, humorous aphorisms that bring a smile to one's face, and a reality, consciousness and structure that are entirely — and strictly — conventional. Yet later, you will discover that the paths you thought you knew in this 'Filian' forest are, in fact, only just beginning."

Superagent Arevik Ashkharoyan adds: "We published this book on Aram's recommendation as part of a series devoted to forgotten Soviet literature. Although the book first appeared posthumously in the 1990s, this is the first complete edition, reconstructed from the only manuscript he left behind when he fled Soviet Armenia. What struck me most about his writing was its ability to challenge prevailing narratives — some of which remain difficult to question even today. As you read, you must bear in mind the historical circumstances and the country in which the work was written."

As Ordukhanyan writes in her introduction, the novel's strength lies partly in its parodic quality, intended to challenge Soviet norms and free the Armenian pen, held hostage like the nation itself to influences from abroad: "Despite its modest length the novel accomplishes a vertiginous number of literary feats: it engages with scripture, by turns emulating and mocking biblical texts ranging from Genesis to the birth of Jesus; it reflects on the complex topic of repatriation and exile; it ridicules the concepts of historical imperative and the motif of tragic predestination that dominates the pseudo-historical fiction written in Armenia during the 1970s; it explores desire and sexuality while satirizing the hackneyed notion of longing through such stock characters as a 'woman who is always missed'; and, under the guise of a travelogue through time, it pokes fun at a host of sacrosanct Armenian national myths ranging from pagan traditions in Armenian religious rites to the divine origin of the Armenian alphabet." The different rhythms, meters, and levels of language employed make translating the novel particularly challenging, as English and Eastern Armenian can vary greatly, both lexically and syntactically. The translator has acquitted herself well.

As mentioned, the novel's narrator goes simply by the pronoun "WE," which becomes the main character — or characters — of the novel. Yet we, the readers, never find out exactly who WE are or what we/WE are searching for, apart from some eternally elusive sense of human salvation. The novel's prose is deliberately Biblical in style, and the journey WE undertake lasts five days, like Creation in Genesis, though time works backwards in this case, from present to past. The whole is decidedly Pynchonesque in tone. A little later in their picaresque journey, WE encounter a priest who rises from his seat to prophetically announce, in what Ordukhanyan translates as a "revivalesque and ecclesiastical" manner: "You are late my brothers, for the Thing will appear only much later at the very end, when the island once becomes Our island, and when the fickle princess, the red apple of her virginity in her hand, once again asks for only one Thing from all young men — the eternal flame."

Next up for WE/us: King Artavazd, Mesrob Mashtots, Noah and the Ark and the Great Flood. As the children of Armenians who returned from the far-flung diaspora to the supposed "homeland," or *Hairenik*, Filian knew a thing or two about how such people were treated in Soviet Armenia. And as Ordukhanyan explains in her enlightening preface, "like many emigrants returning to indulge in brief and tightly controlled exercises of assuaging their longing for a fictionalized home, the collective narrative voice of this novel is eager to absolve itself of all responsibility for the country and any connection to it."

As in other picaresque or satirical novels, the ludic plays an important role in the writing at hand. Here, the greatest challenge for the translator was the use throughout the novel of the Armenian word *Bahn* (which translates precisely as "train" in German…). "Depending on context," Ordukhanyan explains, the word "means everything from the English 'thing/stuff' to 'divine word,' 'knowledge,' and 'logos.'" Furthermore, Filian's prose "offer[s] a timely example of a literary work in one of the marginal languages of the Soviet Union that forcefully pushed back against the dominant colonial discourse of its time."

A theory of liminality and postcolonial discourse inserts itself into the very language of the novel and the threads that weave it together into a linguistic whole. The novel also seems to parallel contemporary Armenian history. The successive wars over Artsakh and the economic collapse that affected all post-Soviet societies have meant that we have waited some twenty-five years for the novel to see the light of day in both its original Armenian and English translations. We have the work of a remarkable trio to thank for this revival: a passionate fellow writer, a gifted translator, and a resourceful publisher. As the author might write if he were still here among us: *bahn ah, what a flippin' bahn*.

The Ambassador of Your Country can be purchased by sending an email to info@ariliterature.org. The novel was translated in part thanks to a 2026 IALA Israelyan English Translation Grant.

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

CALIFORNIA

DECEMBER 12 — Teach For Armenia launches new umbrella organization, Armenia Education Initiative (AEI) at a forum hosted by the UCLA School of Education and Information Studies. This day-long Forum will feature discussions with leaders in the education space: Larisa Hovannisian, Founder and CEO, Teach for Armenia; Sylva Simonian, Co-Founder, TUMO; Dr. Christina Christie, Dean of the UCLA School of Education and Information Studies; Dr. Georgia Lazo, University Partnership Schools at UCLA; Dr. Li Cai, professor of education and psychology at the UCLA School of Education & Information Studies and Alice Petrossian, Armenian Education Initiative Governing Board Member. 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Breakfast, lunch and wine reception will be included. Free parking available

MASSACHUSETTS

NOVEMBER 15 — Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church invites the community to its Thanksgiving Luncheon at 12:30 PM in Nishan & Margrit Atinizian Hall, 200 Lexington Street, Belmont, MA 02478. Join us for an afternoon of thanksgiving and fellowship. Sunday. Tickets: Adults $40; youth and children $25. Reservations: Parish Office, (617) 489-2280, or Ingrid, (617) 312-0805. Online registration and Venmo payment QR codes are available on the attached flyer.

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

NOVEMBER 15 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church's Dr. Michael and Joyce Kolligian Distinguished Speaker and Performing Arts Series presents pianist Karine Poghosyan, performing works by Liszt and Khachaturian. Poghosiyan 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.

NOVEMBER 25 — Annual Armenian Student Association Thanksgiving Dance. Daron Folk Ensemble will provide free dance lessons from 7 to 8 p.m. and the Yerakouyn Band and a DJ will be featured at the Sheraton Commander Hotel in Cambridge, MA on the night before Thanksgiving. Sponsored jointly by the Armenian Students Association Inc. and a Community Leader. Light appetizers will be served to college students and young professionals. Complimentary admission with RSVP to Missy at 401-487-1515.

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

NEW YORK

NOVEMBER 25 — Singer Lilit Pipoyan to perform live at the National Opera Center's Scorca Hall. 7:20 p.m. on Wednesday, 330 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY. Tickets: Available now at ItsMySeat.

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.

Akhtamar Quarter Performs Premiere of Composition by Eugénie Alécian in Armenia

AKHTAMAR, from page 13

The Akhtamar Quartet has a vast repertoire, comprising works by classical composers Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, as well as modern and contemporary composers, Edward Elgar and John Cage. And like Alécian, the musicians have been active on the humanitarian and social stage. For example, in 2021 they toured Armenia and performed free of charge for audiences of refugees, soldiers and others traumatized by the war and the pandemic.

In addition to the premiere performance the Akhtamar Quartet has given, another of Alécian's compositions was presented in several Armenian cities, titled *Triptyque Artsakh* for violin and piano. This work was commissioned by violinist Jean-Samuel Bez, who has joined pianist Orlando Bass to perform the cycle on a national tour, including at the Komitas State Conservatory in Yerevan. The cycle is made up of three pieces, *Fantaisie Artsakh, Colora me* and *Noir & Blanc*. As the name indicates, the pieces reflect the composer's response to Artsakh, its tortured history and uncertain fate.

A Premiere for the Composer

Following the premiere on October 30, in lieu of an interview, Alécian shared some of her reflections on the experience of attending the premiere of her own work.

What made the event atypical is the fact that, although she had attended rehearsals of the work, she had *not* yet heard the work in its entirety. As a result, she felt "considerable stage fright," normal for a performer, but here she was about to hear her own music. She wondered if it would hold together, or be too sentimental, how it would be received. She even wondered if she would recognize it, or even like it?

When she experienced the performance, she said she was surprised to hear the music as music, without being fully conscious of it as her own… She added she was \ delighted with the musicians' rendering of a *pizzicato* passage that sounded like "butterflies playing together," the image she had suggested.

She concluded that what impressed her the most was the sensation that the performers were making the music entirely their own.

Often audiences break into applause before the last note has faded; sometimes, when particularly moved by the music, an audience will pause, reflect, and then, as in this case, erupt in enthusiastic bravos and ovations. It was a resounding success.

A Musical History with Armenia

What also made this premiere particularly special for the composer was that it had not originally been planned to take place in Armenia, but in Paris. When an opportunity opened up in Yerevan, that took precedence, and a Paris premiere is planned for 2027.

In 1992, shortly after Armenia gained independence, Alécian had been invited to give concerts there. The very first concert in Yerevan took place in what was then known as the "Small Philharmonic Hall," now the Arno Babajanyan Concert Hall, the same which hosted the premiere.

During the 1990s, she devoted a great deal of time and energy to supporting Armenian musicians, organizing concert tours, performances, educational exchanges, and opportunities for young artists. In 2003, she returned with her opera "L'Amazone," based on a text by Jean-Jacques Varoujean, as part of a collaborative effort with local artists. And in 2016, she returned with the Akhtamar Quartet for the premiere of her first string quartet, *Un Quatuor Arménien.* In 2023, she sponsored a gala benefit concert for Artsakh, a cause she has consistently supported.

Music as a Family Tradition

Eugenie Alecién started playing the at a very early age and, improvised, too. One summer she worked with Koharik Gazarossian in Istanbul, who encouraged her to compose. But when her mother enrolled her in music-writing studies with Alain Weber, she lost her ability to improvise, and stopped. Later, she began to "dream music" and, upon waking, wrote it down — "La Musique du rêve" (Music from a Dream), was what she called it.

Music goes back many generations on both sides of her family, the Alécians/ Alalemdjians and Mühendisyans. Her mother used to say that her daughter represented the seventh generation of professional musicians**.** For her as a child, playing music together was simply part of life, piano and chamber music were part of everyday experience.

Alécian's studies led her to Alain Weber and Alain Louvier, as well as Milosz Magin and an extended summer course with Guido Agosti in Siena. Yet, Pierre Sancan holds a special place: she considers him her greatest teacher.

Not only a performer, she is also an educator. Her mother, Aïda Alécian, founded le Jardin du Musique (The Garden of Music) in 1968, a unique music school for very young children, based on group instruction on the piano. Eugénie became director in 1979, and currently her daughter Aurelia is running the school.

Her deep connection to Armenia developed through experience, sporadically in her childhood, and as a tangible reality in 1992, during her first visit there. As she had no experience with photography, she recorded her images in music. The six *Musigraphies* for piano four hands thus became the "musical photographs" of that journey: the almost wild vitality of Yerevan's streets; Aramo, a fighter gravely wounded in Artsakh and already determined to return; Spitak, devastated by the earthquake; children appearing as if from the mountainside at Garni, singing and dancing; Armenian women, whose strength and irreverence she observed in equal measure; and finally *Aeroflop*, a return flight as alarming as it was absurd. Tragedy never extinguishes life, and gravity does not exclude laughter.

Other works would emerge from encounters with Armenia, its history, and its tragedies. Yet this closeness would eventually give rise to an opposing necessity: to rediscover a space for creation that belongs to no particular country or history. Thus the direction and shape of her current works.

THE ARMENIAN MIRROR SPECTATOR
SINCE 1932

An ADL Publication

THE FIRST ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARMENIAN WEEKLY IN THE UNITED STATES

EDITOR
Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR
Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR
Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

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

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

PHOTOGRAPHERS
Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT
Haykaram Nahapetyan

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is published weekly, except two weeks in July and the first week of the year, by:
Baikar Association, Inc.
755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472-1509
Telephone: 617-924-4420
FAX: 617-924-2887
www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com
For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

U.S.A.	$100 one year
Canada	$150 one year
Other Countries	$230 one year

© 2026 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator
Periodical Class Postage Paid at Boston, MA and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0004-234X

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472

Other than the Editorial, views and opinions expressed in this newspaper do not necessarily reflect the policies of the publisher.

COMMENTARY

Armenia in the Changing South Caucasus: New Opportunities and Risks

By Ruben Safrastyan

On November 7, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the United States confirmed the establishment of technical planning groups for transport and electricity connections. The decision moves the discussion of regional routes into a more practical stage, although the most difficult political questions are not yet resolved. For Armenia, it raises a wider problem: how can the country use the changes in the South Caucasus to improve its position, without accepting new risks for its security and sovereignty?

The opportunities are real, but their value should not be taken for granted.

Armenia has spent much of the post-Soviet period with closed borders, difficult relations with two neighbors, Turkey and Azerbaijan, and a security policy that depended heavily on Russia. All three conditions are now changing, though not in the same direction or at the same speed. The opening of communications may bring economic advantages, while the more active involvement of the United States and European Union gives Yerevan additional diplomatic possibilities. At the same time, Armenia must deal with the consequences of the war of 2020 between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the military advantage of Azerbaijan, and the continuing competition among larger regional powers. A new road or railway cannot be considered apart from these political circumstances.

A Regional Balance Still in Transition

The war of 2020 showed serious weaknesses in the security arrangements on which Armenia had relied for many years. In September 2023, Azerbaijan established control over Nagorno-Karabakh, and the great majority of its Armenian population forcefully left the region. The withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers in 2024 completed an important change in the postwar situation, but it did not create a stable new system of security.

Russia remains an important factor. Its military base in the Armenian city of Gyumri, strong economic links with Armenia, and political contacts across the South Caucasus continue to affect the calculations of the regional states. In my 2021 study of Armenia in Turkey's South Caucasus strategy, I examined the difficulties which arise when the interests of more powerful states meet in a small and divided region. That general problem remains, but the balance among these powers has changed considerably. It would be wrong to treat Russia as if it still possessed its former predominance; it would be just as wrong to proceed on the assumption that Moscow has lost all ability to influence events. Armenian policy needs a careful assessment of both tendencies, rather than a choice between these two extreme views.

The change has also widened the field of Armenian diplomacy. The United States took a direct part in the Washington discussions of August 2025, where Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed on a joint declaration. In December 2025, the European Union adopted a new strategic agenda with Armenia, covering several areas of cooperation. These developments can assist the country in investment, state institutions, and international contacts, especially when they lead to practical projects rather than declarations alone. But wider diplomatic contacts should not be confused with security guarantees. Armenia still needs defence capacities of its own, and it must avoid replacing its former dependence on one partner with a new dependence on another.

The reason is not simply that Armenia can choose among a larger number of partners. Different relationships can serve different needs: one may provide access to markets, another technical assistance, and a third a channel for political dialogue. But this approach works only if Armenia can define its own priorities and if cooperation in one direction does not close opportunities in another. Diversification without such a policy may increase external pressure rather than reduce it.

Transport Routes and the Question of Control

There are serious economic reasons for Armenia to support the opening of regional communications. It is a landlocked state, and the long closure of its borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan has limited trade and transport choices. New road and railway connections could reduce costs, help businesses in the Armenian regions, and provide access to markets that are difficult to reach today. Normal trade may also create an interest in maintaining peace, though economic relations alone cannot prevent political conflict.

Still, the construction of a route is not the same as an economic benefit for the country through which it passes.

In a 2025 interview with Armenpress, I explained that Armenia should seek an active place in the new regional communications, not simply provide territory for goods moving between other countries. This distinction is important for the whole economic meaning of the projects. Transit may produce some income, but much greater value could come from links with Armenian producers, transport services, existing roads, and future industrial activities. We should also consider the regions directly affected by new infrastructure. In Syunik, the expectations and concerns of local communities are part of the problem, not a secondary issue to be discussed after the principal political decisions have been made. The route must serve the Armenian economy and society as well as international trade.

The proposed Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity, or TRIPP, gives this question particular importance. The Armenia–United States framework agreement, published in May 2026 and signed in June, envisages a development company in which the proposed American and Armenian ownership shares are 74 and 26 percent. It also provides an initial 49-year period for certain rights connected with land use and infrastructure development, while recognizing Armenia's sovereignty and jurisdiction. These provisions refer to different legal questions. The right to develop or operate infrastructure does not in itself mean a transfer of territory or sovereign power, but the future arrangements for management, customs and border procedures, revenues, and dispute settlement will decide how Armenia exercises its authority in practice. Such details matter greatly when rights are granted for several decades, and they deserve the same attention as the general political declaration of support for the project.

The economic result must also be measured carefully. Transit revenues alone would offer a narrow benefit, particularly if most services were provided outside Armenia. A stronger result would include contracts for Armenian companies, improved connections for local producers, and reliable access to the route for Armenian trade. These effects cannot be assumed in advance; they depend on the final operating rules and on investment inside Armenia.

The technical groups announced on November 7 may help to clarify part of this work. They cannot, by themselves, remove disagreements over political conditions or the future operation of the route.

Local opinion is another element that should not be ignored. Research based on interviews with residents of Syunik has recorded both expectations of economic improvement and fears connected with security and the proposed route. The interviews do not speak for every resident, but they show why a project which looks useful on a regional map can be judged differently by people living close to it. If local interests are not considered from the beginning, infrastructure may be completed without acquiring broad public support. That would also weaken its long-term economic value.

Peace with Azerbaijan and Relations with Turkey

For Armenia, a stable peace with Azerbaijan would create opportunities that go beyond any transport project. It could reduce the danger of another war and allow normal relations to develop between two neighbouring states. Nevertheless, the changed military balance makes the practical implementation of agreements especially important. A declaration or a period without fighting should not be treated as proof that all security problems have been resolved. Recognized borders, clear obligations, and the effective exclusion of force are essential if peace is to become lasting.

A useful way to assess the peace process is to separate political agreement from the conditions that make it sustainable. The first can be announced by the governments. The second requires working border arrangements, predictable treatment of incidents, and a reduction in the use of military pressure. Without these elements, even a signed document may leave Armenia facing serious uncertainty.

Relations with Turkey present a related, but different, problem. Opening the land border could give Armenian businesses new possibilities and benefit communities that have lived for decades near a closed frontier. Armenian and Turkish officials met in April 2026 to discuss the Kars–Gyumri railway, which is a useful practical step. Yet railway planning cannot replace the political decisions needed for normal interstate relations. The Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance remains a central factor in this process, and Armenia must consider it without assuming that Ankara and Baku have identical interests in every question.

In an October 2026 interview, I discussed Azerbaijan's stronger position and its growing wish to act independently in regional affairs, including differences that may arise with Turkey. Such disagreements do not mean that their alliance is breaking down. They remind us, however, that two closely cooperating states continue to make decisions according to their own interests. Armenia should therefore assess its relations with each neighbor separately, while maintaining a clear position on territorial control and security.

Why Iran and Russia Still Matter

Iran provides Armenia with a direct connection to the south, and this connection becomes particularly important when other borders are closed. Serious instability in Iran could affect transport, trade, and

continued on next page

COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan's Pointless Speech at the Global Armenian Summit

In his speech at a similar summit in 2024, Pashinyan offended everyone by claiming that the "biggest problem" facing him and his audience was being patriotic. He went on to make the ridiculous claim that foreign powers had instilled patriotism in Armenians. He even claimed that the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide was a tool of Soviet propaganda. He also insulted his Diaspora audience by criticizing and rejecting the humanitarian aid they had sent to Armenia.

At this year's Summit, once again, Pashinyan wasted his own time and that of the hundreds of patriotic Diaspora Armenians who had left their homes and jobs and spent thousands of dollars on airfare, hotels, and meals to visit their homeland.

Pashinyan said nothing new. He repeated his propaganda about "Real Armenia," which is really his "Fake Armenia."

Pashinyan's biggest mistake was speaking for 27 minutes without a written text. He simply said whatever came to his mind at that moment. Most of what he said had nothing to do with the Diaspora or anything else.

He started by saying that Armenians were not the first Christian nation, which momentarily shocked the audience. He then went on to explain what every Armenian knows: that Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity. Next, he minimized the historic significance of Armenia's acceptance of Christianity by saying that Armenians adopted it because of the king's orders.

Throughout his speech, Pashinyan repeatedly explained the difference between the homeland and the state. Most Armenians know that there is no difference between the two. While it is true that Armenians had a much larger country in the past, and hopefully will have one again in the future, what we currently have is both our homeland and our state. They are the same thing.

Pashinyan even wondered whether there were any Armenians before they adopted Christianity. I am glad that he did not claim that there were no Armenians and no Armenia before he came to power in 2018.

For no apparent reason, Pashinyan then delved into a lengthy explanation about Armenian farmers who do not want driver's licenses, license plates, or vehicle inspections. None of these issues concern the Diaspora Armenians, who came to Armenia for a completely different reason.

Pashinyan then foolishly argued that Armenia's borders prevent neighboring Azerbaijan and Turkey from encroaching on Armenia's territory. He apparently hoped that those present would not remember that Azerbaijan's army has occupied parts of the territory of the Republic of Armenia since 2021-2022 and continues to do so.

Near the end of his remarks, Pashinyan falsely announced that Armenia offers "love and respect" to Diaspora Armenians. On the contrary, the Armenian government prevents some Diaspora Armenians from visiting their homeland by placing them on its blacklist, simply because they disagreed with the Armenian authorities and Pashinyan in particular. I recently wrote about the sad experience of an Armenian woman, a US citizen, who was arrested at the Yerevan airport for a critical comment about Pashinyan that she had posted on her Facebook page in the United States a year earlier.

I will not dwell on the arrest of dozens of Pashinyan's local political opponents and the confiscation of their properties and businesses without a trial. But no one dares to charge and arrest Pashinyan for his many violations of Armenia's laws, including his threats to slay his Armenian opponents.

Pashinyan constantly boasts about bringing democracy and peace to Armenia. Regrettably, he has turned the country into a dictatorship and is on the verge of destroying what remains of the homeland.

Pashinyan also praised himself for establishing the High Commission of Diaspora Affairs of Armenia. He does not realize that he and Zareh Sinanyan, the official he put in charge of that office, have burned every bridge between Armenia and the Diaspora.

Pashinyan then spent 22 minutes answering a few questions from his Diaspora audience. The first person expressed his dismay at the recent brawl in the Armenian Parliament. Surprisingly, Pashinyan dismissed the criticism, adding that the brawl was a sign of democracy! He falsely claimed that such brawls never occur in dictatorial regimes and happen only in democratic countries like Armenia. He must not have seen the repeated ugly scenes of brutal fistfights in the Turkish Parliament. No one would call Turkey a democratic country. Pashinyan once again contradicted himself by saying that he does not welcome the brawl in the Armenian Parliament even though a week earlier he praised the members of his party for taking part in the fights.

Pashinyan desperately needs a speechwriter, as leaders in other countries have, to help him avoid delivering such nonsensical remarks. Fortunately, he did not speak as long as he did two years ago.

Despite the flaws in Pashinyan's remarks and the government's excessive $814,000 expenditure on the Summit, I am certain that hundreds of Armenians from around the world enjoyed the opportunity to visit their homeland.

from previous page

security in the Syunik region. The consequences would not remain within Armenian-Iranian relations; they could also influence the plans for opening East–West communications across the South Caucasus.

In a March 2026 interview, I warned that a weakening of Iran might create additional risks for Armenia. A wider conflict could interrupt existing routes, discourage investment, and increase the pressure on the border region, precisely at a time when new economic projects are being discussed. These concerns do not require Armenia to refuse cooperation with the United States or Europe. They require it to maintain useful relations with different partners, even when these partners disagree among themselves. The same general approach is needed toward Russia, though its role and interests are not identical to those of Iran. Moscow has lost part of its former influence, but it has not disappeared from regional politics; a realistic Armenian policy should begin with that fact.

What Would Count as Success For Armenia?

The real test of the present changes will be their effect on Armenia, not the number of meetings or agreements announced. I would put three questions at the center of the assessment. Will the risk of another war be reduced in practice? Will new transport connections operate under Armenian jurisdiction and bring benefits beyond transit fees? And will Armenia retain enough freedom to work with different partners when their interests do not coincide? Each question concerns a different aspect of the same task: to strengthen the country's position without creating another form of dependence.

There is also much to be done inside Armenia. National defense, competent state institutions, and an economic policy directed toward long-term development cannot be supplied by external agreements. A country that lacks these foundations may receive new opportunities and still fail to use them.

The weakening of Russia's predominant position in the South Caucasus has opened the way for a more complex regional configuration, in which Turkey's growing influence is only one of several important factors. Azerbaijan is acting with greater confidence, Iran continues to defend its interests, the United States has become more directly involved, and Georgia follows its own course. Armenia has to make decisions amid these different interests, without expecting them always to work in its favor. The main opportunity is therefore larger than the opening of one transport route: it is the possibility of improving Armenia's security, economy, and regional position. The risks remain substantial, and much will depend on the choices made by the Armenian state itself.

(Ruben Safrastyan is a professor and Full Member of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia. His research focuses on Turkey, the South Caucasus, and regional security. This commentary was originally published on Geopoliticalmonitor.com on November 9.)

Turkey's Four Headaches Are Also Europe's

By Marc Pierini

Turkey has been in the news recently because of an investment-fund scandal, the government's seizure of a pro-opposition TV channel, the country's exclusion from a French-German Made in Europe trade proposal, and a Turkish-Libyan agreement on maritime jurisdictions. These events have fueled heated debates in Turkey and, with other developments, have severe international consequences. There are four critical political domains in which Turkey and Europe face an uncertain future.

The dire state of Turkey's economy has been a serious worry for years. One simple measure of the country's woes over the past two decades is the considerable depreciation of the Turkish lira. At about the time Turkey started its EU accession negotiations in late 2005, it took 1.6 lira to buy €1 ($1.17); today it requires close to 56 lira to buy the same €1. This was already a painful situation, and it just got worse.

In the past few weeks, an embezzlement scandal erupted. More than 130 investment funds together worth around $20 billion had promised miraculously high returns to investors and had to be liquidated by Turkey's financial regulators, affecting about half a million citizens. Pending inquiries and clarifications from the Turkish authorities, Morgan Stanley Capital International declared it was considering downgrading its rating of Turkey from "Emerging Market" to "Frontier or Standalone Market" status unless corrective measures are taken by June 2027.

On the trade front, Turkey's protracted relationship with the EU under the 1995 Customs Union—the only such agreement between the EU and a third country—has come under renewed pressure in the context of the EU's defensive posture against the surge of imports from China, especially in the automotive sector. In March 2026, the EU launched an internal debate on creating a scheme known as Made in Europe that would introduce local-content requirements and restrictions on public procurement. On October 16, France and Germany proposed that for the automotive sector, the scheme should be open to the countries in the European Economic Area (the EU plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway), with possible side agreements for Switzerland and the UK. But Japan, South Korea, and Turkey would be excluded.

In Ankara, industrialists and government officials strongly rejected Paris and Berlin's proposal. They argued that the EU-Turkey Customs Union applies to industrial goods; brands like Bosch, Fiat, Renault, Siemens, and others run large production lines in Turkey. Intense consultations are ongoing at the time of writing. Was this a bureaucratic oversight by the EU or a lack of confidence in Turkey's autocratic governance?

When Turkey started its EU accession process in 2005, this implied an obligation to align with the EU on technical norms and political principles. But Ankara never seriously pursued such alignment because it ran counter to the leadership's fundamental choices—opaque public procurement procedures; the creation of a superpresidential system; and political control of the judiciary, the media, and civil society—as well as the culture of diplomatic trade-offs and the country's national pride.

see HEADACHES, page 20

Turkey's Four Headaches Are Also Europe's

HEADACHES, from page 19

More fundamentally, the political constraints linked to EU accession could not be made compatible with the leadership's authoritarian proclivities. Turkey's nonrecognition of the Republic of Cyprus and its support for the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus resulted in the EU restricting the accession talks, while in 2007, the public positions of the then French president and German chancellor coalesced to hinder Turkey's potential membership. Litigation about Turkey's maritime border with Greece further complicated matters.

This joint failure raises a question: Was accession the best vehicle the EU could have offered a country like Turkey? This debate was never had in the EU.

Security and NATO

In the security and defense domain, the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine triggered an intense debate across Europe on the necessary surge in the continent's production of armaments. In this context, Turkey repeatedly claimed at the highest level that its presence in any new security framework among Western European states was "indispensable." Speaking at the September 2026 UN General Assembly, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said, "A Europe that excludes Turkey from its security architecture cannot possibly be stronger or safer."

The rapid expansion of Turkey's defense industry has resulted in multiple agreements—sales, joint ventures, and acquisitions—though not in Turkey's formal inclusion in security discussions among Western European countries, with the exception of the coalition of the willing in support of Ukraine. In this respect, the 2026 NATO summit in Ankara served as a showcase for Turkey's defense industry, but it did not provide its president with the political recognition he expected in the security domain.

In May 2026, I wrote that "the core question is whether European nations or the EU should entrust their security to a formal partnership with Turkey. . . . While this happens through individual sales and joint projects, it does not and cannot happen in a more structured way under current political circumstances." Among the many reasons for this state of affairs, three stand out: first, Ankara's close relationship with Moscow, even since the invasion of Ukraine, which did not lead to sanctions from Turkey; second, Turkey's equally close relationship with the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump, even since Washington stated its aim to reshape Europe according to U.S. interests, as per the December 2025 U.S. National Security Strategy; and, third and more importantly, the massive degradation of Turkey's rule-of-law architecture.

Debate is heating up on how Turkey could be integrated into a common European defense framework. Commercial and industrial deals offer a better chance at alignment than sweeping political efforts.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, several divergences over maritime borders have widened the gap between Turkey and EU governments. On October 20, Libya's internationally unrecognized eastern administration ratified a new Libya-Turkey memorandum of understanding on the extent of maritime jurisdictions. The deal was firmly rejected by EU authorities and the Egyptian foreign ministry, both of which declared the memorandum "null and void." Bahrain, Cyprus, Israel, and the United Arab Emirates also rejected the memorandum.

More reassuring to Turkey's NATO partners is the country's involvement in the security of the Black Sea area in the face of major drone attacks by Russia on ships exporting Ukrainian agricultural products. Ankara has an obvious part to play here given the strength of its navy, its role as guardian of the Turkish Straits under the Montreux Convention, and its contribution to the 2022 Black Sea Grain Initiative, which allowed exports of Ukrainian grain to third countries over a twelve-month period. Turkey's operational involvement in Black Sea security arrangements would represent valuable proof of its commitment to NATO's actions to contain regional spillover from the invasion of Ukraine. At the same time, such a role may run the risk of Moscow exerting strong pressure on Ankara to limit any defensive operations that might benefit Kyiv.

Outside Europe, the Mecca Pact was signed on August 7 by Pakistan, the only Muslim-majority nuclear power; Saudi Arabia, the guardian of the two major Islamic shrines; and Turkey, the only Muslim-majority member of NATO. This created a degree of surprise among other NATO allies, especially as the pact contains a mutual-defense clause largely similar to NATO's Article 5. For Turkey, the agreement reflects its long-stated willingness to play a major political and security role outside the Atlantic alliance that is not contradictory but complementary. Whether activities under the Mecca Pact will intersect with NATO countries' interests in the Middle East remains to be seen. Of particular importance will be Turkey's possible direct military involvement in the event that Riyadh asks for Ankara's operational support to counter Houthi strikes on Saudi territory.

> OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, IT HAS BECOME ABUNDANTLY CLEAR FROM DOMESTIC OPINION POLLS THAT TURKEY'S INCUMBENT PRESIDENT WOULD NOT WIN A THIRD TERM IN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION—ASSUMING HE IS LEGALLY ALLOWED TO RUN IN THE NEXT BALLOT...

The Rule of Law

In my fourteen years as a Turkey analyst with Carnegie Europe, I have documented countless times the steady degradation of the country's rule of law. This trend has never reversed.

Over the past two years, it has become abundantly clear from domestic opinion polls that Turkey's incumbent president would not win a third term in a presidential election—assuming he is legally allowed to run in the next ballot, which is scheduled for 2028. Even widening his support via a coalition with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) has not provided a guaranteed path to victory, as illustrated by recent polls covering different hypotheses.

Faced with this dire situation, Turkey's leadership has used all available tools. It has detained and put on trial Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, who was leading opinion polls as a potential presidential candidate for the Republican People's Party (CHP); in his trial, prosecutors have requested prison sentences totaling more than two thousand years. Turkey's leadership has also banned the publication of İmamoğlu's book, which is now online for all to read. It has threatened other potential CHP candidates, including by forcefully replacing CHP Leader Özgür Özel and harassing his newly created party. And it has replaced some CHP-affiliated mayors with state appointees while convincing others to join the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

When the investment-fund scandal erupted in early October, the leadership's first reaction was to send police to raid the offices of the pro-opposition news channel Halk TV, whose reporting on the scandal the leadership disliked, and to cut off its broadcasting, with state administrators immediately appointed to manage the channel. This happened just as a Turkish government minister and a large business delegation were visiting the European Commission and the Belgian government to promote trade and investment.

The architecture and practice of the rule of law in Turkey are no longer worsening; rather, the situation has become a textbook case of autocratic governance. The ultimate symbol came on October 18, when philanthropist Osman Kavala marked nine years in jail on a so-called aggravated life sentence for attempting to overthrow the government—a harsh verdict based on an undocumented accusation and following an initial acquittal. Kavala's final sentence was the subject of multiple decisions by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which has declared his conviction to be "null and void" and asked Turkey's authorities to free him immediately. There has been no follow-up from Ankara.

The fear of losing power in a fair election—or simply the prospect of political opponents, the media, civil society organizations, and ordinary citizens exerting their fundamental freedoms—has convinced Turkey's leadership that the best way forward is to hammer the last nails into the country's rule-of-law coffin. It is a strategy that is hard to understand unless the underlying bet is a total collapse of democratic Europe.

A Changing European Landscape

For the past twenty years, Turkey has found its best partners among Europe's center-left parties. Now, as documented by Carnegie's Stefan Lehne, the political map is changing. Between now and the end of 2027, national or regional elections will take place in Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, and Spain. Hard-right parties, many under Russian influence and/or with U.S. encouragement, will make strong progress and may come to power in some countries. Shared by many of these parties is a strong anti-immigration streak, which often hides anti-Muslim sentiments.

In the future, Europe's political landscape will be more fractured, and European politicians may be less inclined to listen to Turkey's admonitions about security policy or requests for particular trade arrangements. Despite affinities between some authoritarian leaders, major divergences will also grow on questions of migration, religion, and EU accession.

Meanwhile, alternatives to Ankara's European ties—on trade, finance, education, research, and culture—will be few and far between.

From his give-and-take approach to relations with Europe to his adversarial statements on Greece and Israel, from his claims to be indispensable for Europe's security to his creation of a security alliance with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and his conclusion of an illegal maritime deal with Libya, Erdoğan has achieved two results during his nearly twenty-four years in power as prime minister and then as president. First, he has shown a tendency to disorient Turkey's Western partners. Second, he has positioned himself as a leader equidistant from China, Europe, Russia, and the United States while pursuing a Turkey First policy.

Equidistance is Turkey's sovereign choice. It is simply incompatible with both the EU accession process and the country's membership in the Council of Europe, which includes the ECHR. The president's February 2022 statement about the ECHR, in which he said Turkey would not respect the European court if it did not respect Turkish courts, is a case in point.

In a wider context, Turkey's relationship with the Western European members of NATO underlines another contradiction in the concept of equidistance. Russia's invasion of Ukraine led to a surge in Western European countries' defense spending and the emergence of an incipient European pillar of NATO. Here, the question is whether Turkey can continue to contribute to the alliance's reassurance operations on its Eastern flank while running a trade policy favorable to Russia and implementing domestic policies that are at odds with the pledge in NATO's Washington Treaty to uphold "the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law."

Two pillars will remain central to Turkey's future policy mix. One is the durable link with Western European markets, industries, education, and research, for which there are no major substitutes. The other is the rule of law, a feature cherished by the country's citizens and a central ingredient of Turkey's place in the world—whether its current leadership is ready to admit it or not.

Ankara's stance presents a quandary for EU leaders and the other members of the Council of Europe. Routinely defending the rule of law in statements at the highest level while taking no action when Turkey fails to align with the EU or implement ECHR judgments sends a signal that fundamental divergences on core issues are acceptable. Behind this attitude are reasons of trade, financial interests, and defense procurement, but is this really a sustainable policy for Western European countries in the current geopolitical context?

Ultimately, a difficult question remains: How will Europe and Turkey organize their future relations, taking into account the policies pursued by China, Russia, and the United States toward the European continent? The coming two years will tell.

(Marc Pierini is a senior fellow at Carnegie Europe, where his research focuses on developments in the Middle East and Turkey from a European perspective. This commentary was originally published on the group's website on November 4.)