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House Passes Rep. Pallone Amendment To Investigate Azerbaijani War Crimes

WASHINGTON — Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr.'s (NJ-06) amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) passed the U.S. House of Representatives on Friday, December 10. The amendment would help advance human rights around the world by requiring the Department of Defense to review existing requirements for conducting human rights training of foreign national security forces participating in security cooperation programs like the Section 333 Building Partner Capacity Program. It also calls for a review to the current Department of Defense (DOD) data collection practices and procedures for accessing, monitoring, and evaluating human rights training programs. The amendment will ensure compliance with U.S. law that prohibits use of funds for assistance to foreign security forces that have committed gross human rights violations.



Rep. Frank Pallone

The NDAA also includes language from an amendment led by Rep. Adam Schiff (CA-28) that Pallone co-sponsored and calls for the immediate release of the prisoners of war, including civilians, who Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev continues to hold hostage as bargaining chips. This language further requires a report from DOD on the deadly 44-day war initiated by Azerbaijani and Turkish forces in the fall of 2020. The report will include an assessment of U.S. weapons systems or technology used in

see NDAA, page 11

Annual Mirror-Spectator Christmas Vacation

WATERTOWN — *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator* will take its annual Christmas break starting December 27.

The last issue will be that of December 25; that issue will feature the annual Christmas Greetings.

The first issue back will be that of January 8, 2022.

We wish our readers a safe and happy 2022.



Azerbaijani (left) and Armenian checkpoints at the Sotk gold mine on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, Geggarkunik province, June 18, 2021

Fresh Fighting Reported on Armenian-Azeri Border

By Robert Zargarian

YEREVAN/BAKU (azatutyun.am) — Armenian and Azerbaijani forces have again exchanged fire along some sections of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border amid lingering tensions between the two states.

The two sides blamed each other for the latest skirmishes that reportedly began on Wednesday, December 9, continued overnight and resumed on Thursday afternoon.

The Armenian Defense Ministry said in the evening that Azerbaijani troops “opened intensive fire from firearms of different calibers” at Armenian military positions in Geggarkunik province bordering the Kelbajar district west of Nagorno-Karabakh.

It said two Armenian soldiers were lightly wounded as a result. The ministry reported similar Azerbaijani ceasefire violations in the same area on Wednesday.

The mayor of Verin Shorzha, a border village in Geggarkunik, told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service that he heard automatic gunfire “from one o’clock to around five o’clock in the morning.”

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said that one of its soldiers “was killed overnight as a result of a provocation by Armenia’s armed forces” at a Kelbajar section of the border. It said later on Thursday that Armenian army units again fired on Azerbaijani military positions there.

see FIGHTING, page 4

Armenia, Turkey To Name Special Envoys For Dialogue

By Tatevik Sargsyan and Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Turkey and Armenia have said that they will soon appoint special envoys for bilateral negotiations on normalizing their relations.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu was the first to announce the planned talks in Turkish parliament on the evening of December 13. The special negotiators will be named as part of “steps to normalize relations with Armenia,” he said without giving any other details.

Çavusoglu also stressed that Turkey consulted with Azerbaijan before making the decision. “We will be taking every step together with Azerbaijan,” he said.

Armenia confirmed and hailed Çavusoglu’s statement on December 14. The Foreign Ministry spokesman, Vahan Hunanyan, said “the Armenian side will also appoint a special representative for the dialogue.”

“Armenia has always been and remains ready for a process of normalizing relations with Turkey without preconditions,” Hunanyan said in written comments to the media.

Ankara has for decades refused to establish diplomatic relations with Yerevan and kept the Turkish-Armenian border closed out of solidarity with Azerbaijan. It provided decisive military support to Baku during last year Armenian-Azerbaijani war over Nagorno-Karabakh.

In August this year, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan spoke of “positive signals” sent by Turkey, saying that

see ENVOYS, page 4



Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo (photo Jean Eckian)

Paris Loves Armenia

Inauguration of Esplanade d'Arménie

By Jean Eckian

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

PARIS — On Friday, October 15, 2021, the Council of Paris voted unanimously to adopt the name of the “Esplanade d’Arménie” in the prestigious 8th district of the French capital. It is a vast green space of several hundred meters, where the imposing statue of Komitas is located between the Invalides Bridge and the Alma Bridge overlooking the Seine River.

The inauguration was conducted on Friday, December 10, by Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo and her deputies, including Arnaud Ngatcha, in the presence of the Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ararat Mirzoyan and many public personalities, including the Ambassador of Armenia in France Hasmik

see PARIS, page 7

NEW YORK

Back on the couch
With Nora Armeni



Page 12

NEW JERSEY

AAHPO Marks
Decade of Activity
With Benefit for
Continuing Education



Page 10

YEREVAN

Pictures at
Exhibition Raise
Profound Issues



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ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Sarkissian Sends Congratulatory Message to Raisi for Birthday

YEREVAN (News.am) — President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian sent a congratulatory message to President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ebrahim Raisi on the occasion of his birthday on December 15.

The President's message read: "Your Excellency, I cordially congratulate you and convey my best wishes to you on your birthday. I am certain that our neighbor and friendly Islamic Republic of Iran will achieve significant successes in terms of economic advancement and ensuring of welfare thanks to your experience and skillful management. I must state with satisfaction that Armenia and Iran are consistent with the development of the multilayered interstate relations. Our countries are linked by close friendship, and I welcome the fact that the bilateral ties are being expanded in various sectors.

"Armenia attaches importance to bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Iran which is a major condition for ensuring prosperity of our countries and security and stability in the region."

Syrian Mercenaries Offer New Testimonies from Karabakh War

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — In a recent TV report, several Syrian mercenaries recruited by Turkey and Azerbaijan to fight against the Armenians of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) have raised the fact that Baku has not paid them for their services more than = one year after the completion of hostilities.

According to a report from the Public TV of Armenia, some of those deployed in the region were used as cannon fodder while those who managed to survive have not been paid.

"We fought with the Turkish state in Karabakh. We have people who were injured and people who were killed. Sultan Suleiman Shah, Abo Amsha stole our rights, and stole the salaries of the injured and dead, and people are dying from hunger," one mercenary is filmed saying.

Azerbaijani Officers Collected \$1.1 million in Customs Payments on Goris-Kapan Roadway

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Over the past two months Azerbaijani customs officers have collected 2 million manats (\$1.1 million) in customs payments at Goris-Kapan roadway which passes through Armenia's Syunik region. According to Regnum news agency, the head of the country's State Customs Committee Safar Mehdiyev announced this week.

Azerbaijan, which has intruded into the sovereign territory of Armenia, set up customs checkpoints by acquiescence of the RA leadership, levied sums as fees and transferred them to its bloody budget, now cynically reports about it.

Armenia Prosecutes Freed POWs

By Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Law-enforcement authorities have brought criminal charges against five of the ten Armenian soldiers who were freed and repatriated by Azerbaijan last week.

Two of them were arrested on Friday, December 10. An Armenian court did not allow investigators to detain another serviceman.

The Investigative Committee was understood to be seeking arrest warrants for the two other suspects as well. They too were charged with a "violation of rules for performing military service" that resulted in "severe consequences."

The ten soldiers were taken prisoner during the November 16 fighting on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border which left at least 13 troops from both sides dead. The Armenian military said it also lost two border posts in what Yerevan condemned as an Azerbaijani incursion into Armenian territory.

The Investigative Committee has already arrested two other soldiers in connection with the territorial loss later in November.

The law-enforcement agency indicted the five soldiers, freed by Baku on December 4, amid a scandal sparked by Parliament Speaker Alen Simonian's disparaging comments about Armenian POWs.

Simonian was caught on camera saying during a recent trip to Paris that many of them "laid down their weapons and ran away" during fighting with Azerbaijani forces. In a secretly filmed video published on Tuesday, he claimed that their relatives have not protested lately because they realize that the soldiers are deserters.

Many of those relatives responded by staging angry protests in Yerevan and Gyumri. Simonian, who is a senior member of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's Civil Contract party, met with some of them on Wednesday.

Opposition leaders and civic activists also strongly condemned Simonian and demanded his resignation.

By contrast, neither Pashinyan nor other

any member of his political team publicly criticized or disavowed the speaker's controversial comments. The prime minister said on Wednesday that law-enforcement authorities must investigate circumstances in which Armenian soldiers were captured by Azerbaijani troops.

Eduard Aghajanyan, a senior pro-government lawmaker, denied any connection between those political statements and the charges brought against the five former

POWs.

Former Defense Minister Seyran Ohanyan, who leads the parliamentary group of the main opposition Hayastan alliance, acknowledged the need for thorough investigations into such instances.

"But I believe that it is the people who created conditions for that captivity in the first place who must first and foremost bear responsibility," Ohanyan said, referring to Armenia's political leadership.

Relatives of Armenian POWs Stage Protests

By Robert Zargarian and Astghik Bedevian

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Angry relatives of Armenian soldiers remaining in Azerbaijani captivity have taken to the streets to protest against what they see as offensive comments made by parliament speaker Alen Simonian.

Simonian was caught on camera saying during a recent trip to Paris that many of the prisoners of war (POWs) "put down their weapons and ran away" during fighting with Azerbaijani forces. In a secretly filmed video published on Tuesday, he claimed that their relatives have not protested lately because they realize that the soldiers are deserters.

The speaker, who is a key political ally of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, essentially stood by his remarks when he spoke with journalists on Tuesday. Opposition leaders and civic activists strongly condemned him and demanded his resignation.

The remarks infuriated friends and relatives of the POWs. Several dozen of them blocked streets adjacent to the prime minister's office in Yerevan late in the evening. Dozens of others rallied outside a government building in Gyumri.

The protests resumed on December 8 outside the Armenian parliament building. The protesters blocked an adjacent street, demanding that Simonian meet with them

and explain his statements. They also accused the Armenian government of misleading them about its stated efforts to secure the release of the POWs.

Riot police used force to unblock the street. Several demonstrators were detained on the spot.

Simonian's spokeswoman, Tsovinar Khachatryan, said the speaker is ready to receive representatives of the protesting relatives. She complained that they all want to attend the meeting.

Meanwhile, opposition lawmakers continued to demand Simonian's resignation.

"Judging from similar statements made by Nikol Pashinyan at various times, it looks like this is a state policy," said Artsvik Minasyan of the opposition Hayastan alliance.

"Their primary objective must be to bring back our citizens," he said. "Our laws regulate what must happen after that. Why are [the authorities] declaring the latter instead of carrying out the former?"

Khachatryan dismissed the opposition demands. "The authorities have not discussed with Alen Simonian the issue of his resignation, and he is not going to step down," she told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

Pashinyan's Civil Contract party, of which Simonian is a senior member, did not publicly criticize or disavow the speaker's controversial comments.

Border Demarcation in Voskepar Will Be Painful

By Gevorg Gyulumyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Discussions about border demarcation are increasingly heated. According to some experts, the demarcation may turn unfavorable for Armenia if the latest Soviet-era maps are used. Tavush Province, for example, will be a part of this process, as there are some Azerbaijani enclaves there. Voskan Sargsyan, a journalist from Tavush who is an authority on this topic, recently gave an interview.

He related that on December 7, the head of one of the road construction companies of Tavush came to Voskepar Village and revealed that an alternative road through the mountains was planned between Kirants and Voskepar.

"They were looking for vacant homes in Voskepar in which road construction workers might live. Voskepar administrative head Serop Makhsudyan said that he had heard about the building of a new road but did not know anything definite. Let me add that a Russian Federation Demarcation Committee has arrived in Armenia, which under the leadership of General Muradov is going to carry out demarcation of the border," specified Sargsyan.

Alluding to the concession of the enclaves, he concluded, "Demarcation and de-



Voskepar

lineation in Voskepar will be very painful. A few days ago, a cartographer informed me that the administrative area of Yukhari Askipara (Upper Voskepar), in the past an Azerbaijani enclave above the village of Voskepar in the community of Noyemberyan of Tavush Province, comprised 2,650 hectares, while the administrative area of Voskepar Village was 1,250 hectares. Moreover, the most fertile, flat expanses,

the most valuable lands belong to Yukhari Askipara (Upper Voskepar). It is not clear which maps the General Staff of the Russian Federation will use for border lineation and demarcation. The residents of Voskepar at present are engaged in keeping large and small cattle. By handing over the territories of Upper Voskepar, the possibilities for keeping livestock in villages near the border will be severely reduced."



ARMENIA

A Tribute To Ruben Sahakyan

An Exemplary Patriot Who Found His Calling in Law

By Philippe Raffi Kalfayan

Ruben Aramich Sahakyan, 74, passed away on October 17, 2021. He was my friend and my partner on the paths of justice and rule in Armenia. We were driven by the same patriotism and the same objective of defending rights and freedoms. Our pragmatic approach led to the creation of a system of checks and balances within Armenian institutions and civil society. Those principles and values are still in danger.

He was little known in the diaspora, except in legal circles. Some knew only of his case as one of the members of the team representing former President Robert Kocharyan in the recent cases that hit the political headlines. This represented only a small part of his activities, especially when one considers the depth of his ideas.

He was not interested in partisan politics. He had offered his services to the first three presidents of Armenia. He served in the legal division of the Armenian National Movement (ANM) in 1988, but distanced himself after the political repression of the early 1990s. At the forefront of several judicial cases, he was physically attacked in his own office by the henchmen of Vano Siradeghyan, the then-powerful minister of internal affairs. He held a deep grudge against the first president, Levon Ter-Petrosian, because of that.

Beyond the man and his career, this tribute aims to draw some lessons from the partnership we formed, not only as people but as people who worked to benefit Armenia and the diaspora.

Many “experts” try to develop patterns of Armenia-Diaspora cooperation, while the simplest ingredients of the formulation are ignored. Whatever the model, the cooperation rests above all on human relations and the sharing of values and principles. People in the field who have had similar experiences will recognize themselves in this description.

Language of Truth and Courage

Ruben Sahakyan, born in 1947 (and descended from Vanetsi ancestors), studied law at the Volgograd Law School in Russia, from which he graduated with a specialized degree in criminal law. He began his career as an investigative detective, then as a judicial police commissioner in the Ministry of the Interior of Soviet Armenia. He spoke of this work with enthusiasm, because he had lived through fascinating times both professionally and personally. Out of respect for the principles ruling our friendship, he confessed to me that he had done some things in his career during the Soviet period of which he was not proud. I didn't question him; his conscience had spoken.

In 1985, he joined the College of Lawyers of the Soviet Republic of Armenia. Immediately after the Sumgait pogroms in Azerbaijan in February 1988, he became the representative of the injured parties. He went to Sumgait then Baku to organize their defense and stayed for five months.

Ruben Sahakyan was courageous; his public speaking skills and his determination pushed forward that courage.

Helping New Generations

His competence as a criminal lawyer and criminologist was unanimously recognized by all in the field of justice. In meetings with judges, prosecutors, and police officers, which I witnessed firsthand, he received a noticeable level of respect and deference.

That did not affect his humility. When solicited for consulting in other branches of the law, he offered the names of other jurists. He was not looking to be the sole star, but rather wanted to delegate so that the best person possible could take on a case.

He always wanted to impart the knowledge he had acquired. In 1997, even before our school of advocates'

project, he took the initiative to gather and train 15 young lawyers in criminal law. These people have become prominent criminal lawyers. Until recently, they would come to see him at his home when they encountered difficulties on cases. They are now bereft of their master.

We completed the reforms of the legal practice, in particular the revision of the laws regulating the profession and its ethics, their compliance with European core principles, its consolidation through the reunification of advocates in a single Chamber of Advocates, and the establishment of the institutional training school for lawyers which was so dear to us, between 2005 and 2013. Once all those tasks completed in 2013, not only had Ruben Sahakyan negotiated the move of the Chamber offices into a more functional building but he had also prepared the transition of his power to a new bar leader.

Serving National Interests and Principles

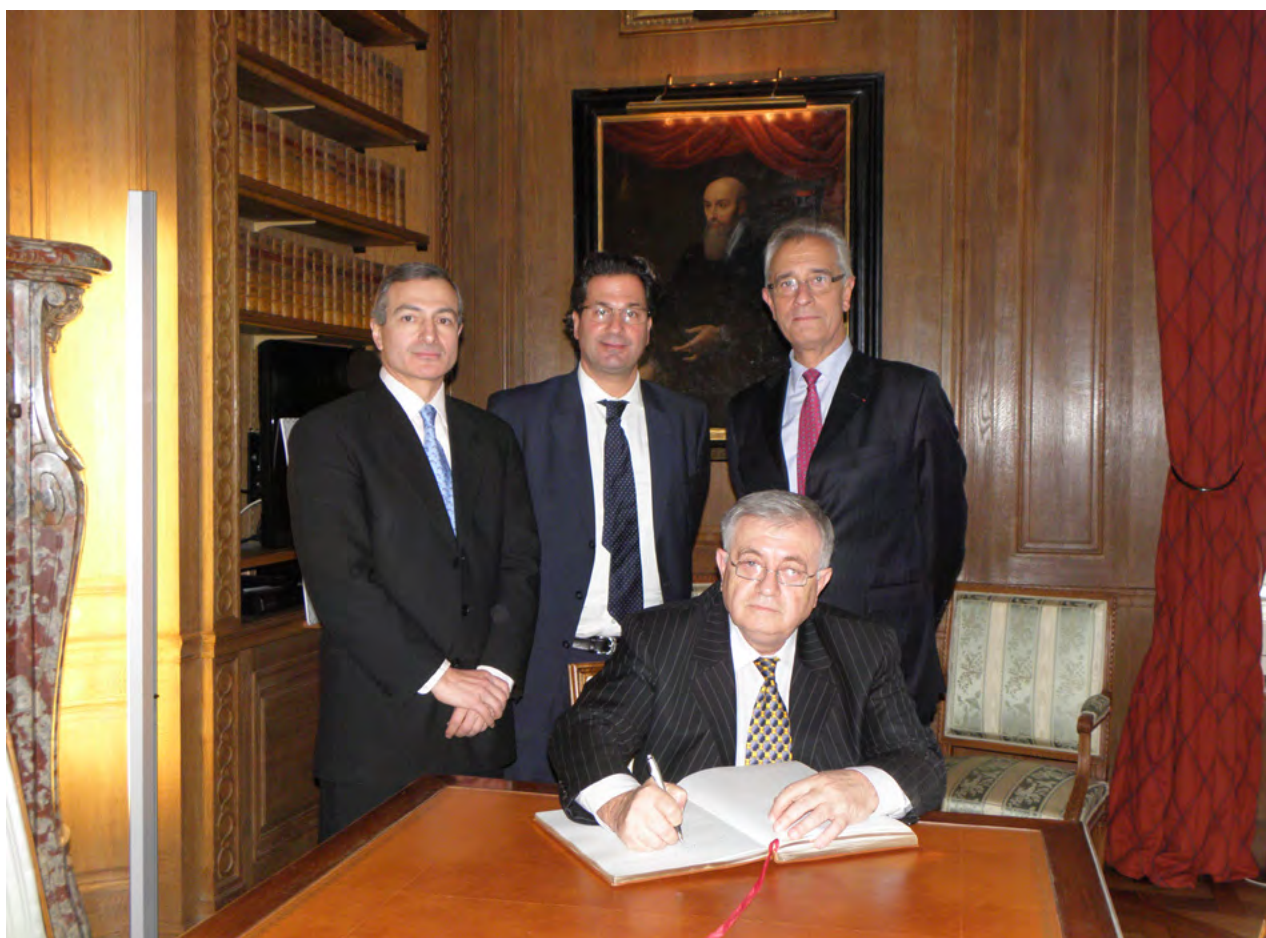
Ruben Sahakyan had an exemplary national conscience devoid of self-interest and greed.

Our first meeting took place on the benches of the Yerevan Criminal Court in July 1995, where I was conducting judicial observation of political trials on behalf of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH). Ruben Sahakyan was heading the pool of lawyers for those accused. I was first accompanied by Michel Zavrian, one of the few courageous lawyers who had defended the militants of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) in France of the 1960s, and then Michel Tubiana (another friend that I have

as a member of his friends and professional circles; this closeness was essential for my pro bono engagement and foremost for my understanding of the problems and challenges of Armenia. I was able to observe the mechanisms and codes of this Armenian society, which are much more secret than one would imagine. I learned without judging. I just tried to understand. Conversely, Ruben took advantage of my Western education and working methods and of my networks in the diaspora to observe and learn. That was the great strength of our partnership. When we were participating in a negotiation in Armenia with the authorities or abroad with partner bar associations, we complemented each other because we had an extraordinary level of mutual understanding.

From 2005, the date of the establishment of the current unified Armenian Chamber of Advocates, and the election of Ruben Sahakyan as its first president, we accelerated the realization of our projects. As special advisor, I was responsible for the international relations of the Armenian bar, including the elaboration and submission of the institutional project for a practice training school of lawyers, by applying for aid from the European Union.

The project was immediately accepted by the European Commission in early 2006 and budgeted. Our collaboration, however, was challenged in 2007. Having heard from Ruben Sahakyan of the circulation in the hands of an off-shore consulting company of the terms of reference of the future call for tender, I seized the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), which decided to freeze the project during



Standing from left: The author, Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, and Paris Bar Association members Vincent Nioré and Jean-Yves Leborgne, the vice-chair of the Bar; seated: Ruben Sahakyan, Chairman of the RA Chamber of Advocates, in December 2010, on the occasion of signature of a cooperation agreement.

just lost early October at age 67), a vibrant and effective defender of the Palestinian rights. Both immediately appreciated Ruben for his human depth and as a good professional.

Ruben Sahakyan and I remained linked to each other. Starting from 1995, he hosted me at his home and I had the privilege of sharing his family life. Often I would land in the middle of the night but he always welcomed me with a smile and warmth. He was a man of great generosity who supported his family, relatives, friends and neighbors.

The complementarity and power sharing are the keys to an effective Armenia-Diaspora relationship and they are the result of mutual learning and mutual trust.

Serving the national interest is the most important challenge faced by Armenian nationals. For 30 years, the Armenia-Diaspora relationship has not evolved properly. In a time of defeatism and extreme demoralization, instead this is a stampede. Each citizen of Armenia is trying to secure his or her personal future rather than the future of its country. In the diaspora, the situation is no better. Armenian organizations, increasingly fragmented, are more concerned with the continuity of their existence and focus on their traditional activities without worrying about national priorities. Individually, we have never seen and heard so many “experts” in the Diaspora. Are these analyses worth anything if they are not the result of joint reflection and consultation with domestic resources?

I became a part of the family of Ruben Sahakyan, as well

the investigation.

Ruben, influenced by some jealous people, in Armenia as well as in France, began to doubt my initiative. It did not last long before he realized that my initiative had saved the project (the project was implemented and completed under the supervision of the Council of Europe between 2009 and 2012). This project and its 2.5 million euro funding attracted a lot of attention. A traditional pattern of corruption (executives from the supervisory ministry, offshore consultancy firm, and corrupt executive at the European Commission delegation) had taken hold but we successfully broke the pattern.

The list of our collaborative actions and achievements would be too long to enumerate. What is important to remember is that Ruben Sahakyan was able to overcome all the obstacles and traditional avatars of the Armenia-Diaspora relationship. He had understood what the sharing of values, principles, and responsibilities could offer Armenia. With his passing, I lost not only my brother, but also the one who made me love Armenia and wish to serve it. At a time of multiple questions in Armenian society and on Armenia-Diaspora relations, I hope that the example of Ruben Sahakyan will be a source of reflection and inspiration.

Rest in peace Ruben! We will continue fighting for the protection of your legacy.

Paris, December 13, 2021



INTERNATIONAL

Kond: An Ancient District of Yerevan Tries to Modernize

By Brandon Balayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Armenia has been in a constant tug of war between tradition and modernity, and a district that fully embodies this struggle is Kond. Kond, which means long hill in Armenian, is one of the three original districts of Yerevan, and was formerly known as Tepebashi during the 17th-century Persian rule. Today, it is known for its vibrant street art which stands in contrast to its history.

One of the historical relics in Kond is the 17th-century Tepebashi Mosque, which

surroundings as a playground. During this interview, she spoke about her late grandmother, who was one of the older residents of the mosque, along with Garush, before her death.

“I remember my grandma was carrying me and she showed me the flowers,” Clara said. “We took pictures next to the flowers over there.”

Clara described how her grandmother used to tell her fairytales before putting her to bed, with her favorite being “Little Red Riding Hood.”

She went on to describe every corner of the mosque and its functions — of course



Young children play fight in Kond.

Garush, a resident of Kond since 1964, understands the historic nature of his home and has a more pessimistic worldview. “The Persians built this mosque. When have the Turks built anything? They’ve robbed our people blind, stolen everything from us, and now it is continuing that way,” Garush said.

Garush’s ancestors fled the 1915 genocide from Mush to Aparan. He eventually moved to Kond with his late wife. His gruff voice expressed the uncertainty of the future, all while reflecting on his past.

Garush commented on the structural integrity of the mosque, and how construction workers come and go without any progress being made. He noted that sometimes when it rains, parts of the mosque crumble.

Other residents of Kond also commented on the condition of the district but wanted to remain anonymous. An older man and his mother, who have lived in Kond for about 50 years, said some people do not even have proper running water, while others are promoting Kond as Yerevan’s new art district.

Garush noted that he hopes his grandchild has the opportunity to see change, even as he had little hope.

“What future? There is no future. Who can you rely on to speak about the future? Leaders come and go, architects come and go... and they do nothing. They sit with their titles and that is it,” he said.

Silva specified that the mosque as a historical site belongs to the state but the residents have documents attesting to possession of their homes. They pay property tax and utility costs, but no rent. However, if the state or Iran want to reclaim the building, the residents would have to sell their apartments back to the state, receiving a sum based on the size and value of the property, and leave.

She said that many Iranians come to visit the mosque and Iran wanted to rebuild it as a place of worship, but that so far has not happened, while the Armenian state does not have the financial resources to rebuild it. She added that the government needs to

speed the process of repair, or of buying back the property, before someone dies due to the building collapsing on them, as it is in poor condition.

Silva, like Garush, thinks the future of Armenia is unforeseeable. “We’re surprised when we see Armenians from the diaspora repatriating,” Silva said. “I cannot tell you how much we want to go to America.”

Silva’s son, Gorik, is a veteran of last year’s Karabakh war. She said his mental health has been negatively impacted and he has a hard time sleeping because of the stress of the war.

Clara knows her brother is a soldier but does not know what that entails. “Gorik is a soldier and goes to the army, but I’m not sure what they do in the army,” Clara said.

The story of Kond can be seen as a microcosm of Armenia: the tug of war between tradition and modernity, the uncertainty expressed by older generations, and the push for younger generations to grow up fast despite their naivety.



Mosque resident Garush walking

was used as a place of refuge for Armenians after the Armenian Genocide. After the genocide, 17 families were housed in the mosque. Today, with generations moving in and out of the district, four families remain. Each has their own “apartment” or section of the building.

Two current residents are Clara, 6, and Garush, 82. The two are neighbors, with drastically different worldviews of the space they occupy.

When walking through the Kond, one might miss the mosque at first glance. However, if one pays attention to the buildings, one can see the characteristic arches of the mosque at its entrance.

Upon entering the mosque through its creaky wooden door, one will find a large well with a faucet that the residents use for drinking and washing. It was there that Clara first introduced herself. The 6-year-old seemingly knew what she was doing in front of the camera, because journalists have visited the mosque quite often and she has done several interviews, according to her mother, Silva.

Since Clara is so young, she sees her



Clara

from her perspective, like how the well is used, how some of the plants in their yard are poisonous, and how her grandmother hated cats.

Clara eventually wandered off to a corner of the mosque where an arch was crumbling. She does not see the space around her as a mosque, but a place where she can relive the memories of her grandmother and play with the neighbor’s children.

Armenia, Turkey to Name Special Envoys For Dialogue

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his government is ready to reciprocate them. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said afterwards that Pashinyan had offered to meet with him.

Erdogan appeared to make such a meeting conditional on Armenia agreeing to open a transport corridor that would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave. He also cited Azerbaijan’s demands for a formal Armenian recognition of Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh.

Çavusoglu made clear later in September that Turkey will continue to coordinate its policy on Armenia with Azerbaijan. “We decide together, we take steps

together,” he said.

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan complained last month about “new preconditions” set by Ankara. “Among them is a ‘corridor’ connecting Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan,” he told the French daily *Le Figaro*.

Eduard Aghajanyan, the chairman of the Armenian parliament committee on foreign relations, said on Tuesday that the two sides announced plans for normalization talks as a result of a “process that started at some point.” He shed no light on that process.

“This does not mean that Armenia is renouncing its key national interests,”

Aghajanyan told reporters. “We believe that it is in Armenia’s interests to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey.”

The main opposition Hayastan alliance dismissed these assurances. “It is evident that Turkey and Azerbaijan are now trying to clinch everything from a weakened Armenia and its government willy-nilly serving their interests,” said Artsvik Minasyan, a senior Hayastan lawmaker.

Hayastan and other opposition groups denounced earlier what they see as Pashinyan’s secret overtures to Erdogan. They said that Pashinyan is ready to make more unilateral concessions to Ankara and Baku.

Fresh Fighting Reported on Armenian-Azeri Border

FIGHTING, from page 1

The two sides accused each other of violating the ceasefire two weeks after Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met in Sochi for talks hosted by Russian President Vladimir Putin. The three leaders announced that they agreed to speed up preparations for demarcating the border between the two South Caucasus states.

It was announced ahead of the Sochi talks that the Armenian and Azerbaijani militaries will launch a direct communication link to prevent or minimize armed incidents. It was not immediately clear whether they used that link to stop the latest skirmishes.

Fighting appeared to have intensified on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border on December 10 with the Armenian military accusing Azerbaijani forces of attacking some of its positions.

The Defense Ministry in Yerevan said they suffered casualties while being repelled from the outposts located at a border section in eastern Armenia. One Armenian soldier was killed and several others wounded in the gunfight, it said.

“The exchange of gunfire stopped as of 2:30 pm [local time,]” the ministry added in a statement.

Armlur.am quoted a local government official in Gegharkunik as saying that the epicenter of the fighting was near the Armenian border village of Sotk. “They [Azerbaijani troops] tried to advance in the Sotk section but failed,” Hakob Avetyan told the publication.



INTERNATIONAL

reArmenia: A Collaborative Platform for All

By Christopher Patvakonian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — The 2020 Artsakh war took away so much from Armenians. Whether it was the lives of brave soldiers, the homes of the Armenians of Artsakh, or the sacred sites of Armenian Christianity, these immense losses, though devastating, amplified the Armenian people's need to unify across all fronts for the betterment of the country. Unfortunately, much of that motivation was lost after the war and the necessary efforts and initiatives to prepare for a better future are not being completed. Reasons for this range from distrust of institutions and lack of transparency to challenges in connecting with the people and areas of most need. While many nonprofits coordinated successful fundraisers and efforts to provide aid, for many people interested in contributing their skills or collaborating on projects, there was still no obvious place to do so. reArmenia, however, hopes to change that.

reArmenia is the first Armenian platform dedicated not only to fundraising for existing initiatives, but also for bringing together those passionate about new projects to create teams and providing a framework for teams already working to invite on new collaborators.

Originally the creation of the Tufenkian Foundation, reArmenia aims to fuse knowledge, experience, and the network of all Armenian people.

"We all know people can donate money, but that's just one way to help," explained reArmenia's communications influencer Natella Avanesyan, "Many Armenians have the skills and desires to help in a non-monetary way,



Natella Avanesyan, reArmenia's Communications Influencer, posing at the reArmenia launch.

but no place to do so." And this is truly where reArmenia really distinguishes itself.

The platform is currently divided in two branches: fundraiser and collaborations. A fundraiser is an existing effort which has a team, plan and budget, and is directly seeking fundraising through the organization's website. An initiative, on the other hand, seeks people to help with their knowledge and experience, and has the potential to become a project — though not all collaborations necessarily need money or fundraising. The process for joining a team is rather simple; all opportunities are listed on their webpage, and a potential contributor can look through for a topic or position of interest, and then connect directly with the team to see if there is a fit. If someone is interested in creating their own initiative or hosting their project on the platform, likewise they can apply through the website. reArmenia considers all types of fundraiser/collaborations except for ones on military and political issues. This decision is intentionally made due to the fact that it is an apolitical organization and for security reasons, a proposal related to the military cannot be made transparent to the standard they hold.

One project launching soon is the Hakobavank Revival, which is seeking funds to restore a seventh-century monastery complex in Artsakh. Once the seat of a catholicos in the 13th century, Hakobavank is on par with Dadivank and Gandzasar in terms of religious and cultural significance in Artsakh. Currently, due to years of neglect, the monastery is on the verge of collapse, and a dedicated team is hoping to gather the finances to restore it. Gayane Gevorgyan, who joined the effort in its earlier stages, currently serves as the campaign manager.



Members of the reArmenia team posing for a group photo in Yerevan during an in person gathering for the launch of reArmenia in October 2020.

"When I first heard about Hakobavank after the war, I of course was very concerned since we all see the cultural erasure happening in Artsakh. It happened to be that my line of work is in marketing and communications, the project needed a campaign manager ... it was just the right fit."

And that is exactly the type of outcome reArmenia is trying to achieve — connecting the dots between projects, people and causes of mutual interest.

Beyond solving the institutional void of providing a collaboration platform, reArmenia prides itself on a rigorous review process. The stringent screening provides both participants and potential donors with reassurance that a legitimate collaboration is being undertaken. It includes 5 steps detailed on the reArmenia website, which ensure that the project/initiative is legal, safe, provides an impactful solution, and is actually brought to completion. The Advisory Board in particular serves an interesting role, as it brings together Armenian prominent professionals to review each proposal, with an industry professional from each of the 14 sectors ensuring proposals in their field of expertise is up to par and achievable. Addressing the issue of transparency, another important requirement of reAr-



reArmenia CEO Gevorg Poghosyan speaking with the press about the initiative.

Since their launch at the end of October, reArmenia has received more than 100 applications, with 14 already verified through their approval process. As for their ultimate goal, reArmenia hopes to unite Armenians everywhere and be a trusted place for effective collaboration. The CEO of reArmenia, Gevorg Poghosyan, emphasized that the platform is not only for collaboration, i.e., investing

human capital and creating new assets for Armenia, but also about raising funds for providing aid or "solving problems" in Armenia. "An ecosystem will grow around the platform to the point where all kinds of different organizations and people will come together to collaborate and solve the problems with joint efforts. And when we scale big enough, we will see more and more 'wins' thanks to organic growth of the reArmenia community."

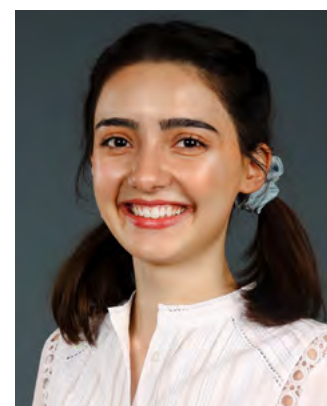
As of today, reArmenia's biggest hurdle is to gain broader recognition, gain the trust of potential donors and reach those who can offer human capital as well as the desire to contribute to Armenia. For those interested, projects currently verified and seeking funds and/or collaborators can be found on the reArmenia website at the following link: <https://www.rearmenia.com/en/>.



Photograph of Hakobavank, a 7th century monastery complex located in Artsakh currently seeking funds on reArmenia's platform.

menia, all fundraisers and collaborations must provide 2 public monthly reports documenting use of finances and progress. The teams are obligated to provide updates until project completion - something not always readily available through other platforms. Donors are also provided with the opportunity to see project pages, openly invited to see where their contributions have directly gone to and have the ability to communicate with project leaders.

The team running reArmenia itself is small but mighty, with roughly 20 core members, as well as others volunteering to run the platform. Even the Advisory Board positions are filled by experts on a voluntary basis. But this has not stopped them or their platform from growing.



Gayane Gevorgyan, Campaign Manager for the Hakobavank Revival Project



INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Israel, Azerbaijan Hold Joint Drills

BAKU (PanARMENIAN.Net) — The Israeli Embassy in Baku and the Security Forces of Azerbaijan have conducted a joint drill, the embassy said in a tweet on Tuesday, December 14.

According to the post, the drills were “aimed at enhancing and solidifying our security cooperation.”

Armenian Ombudsman Details Azerbaijani War Crimes in Italian TV Program

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Italian journalist Stefania Battistini has made a documentary about the 44-day war in Artsakh in 2020, its causes and consequences for Italian television channel Rai 1. Armenia’s Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) Arman Tatoyan spoke about the atrocities and war crimes committed by Azerbaijani forces during the war as he was interviewed for the film this week.

In the film, Tatoyan described the atrocities of the Azerbaijani soldiers, who beheaded Armenians, mutilated their bodies and filmed or photographed it all. The Azerbaijani troops did not hide their faces, as they were convinced that they would go unpunished. Moreover, they shared relevant photos and videos on the Armenian social media platforms, being encouraged by the Azerbaijani side, the Ombudsman’s Office reported on Sunday, December 12.

Tatoyan pointed to the use of prohibited chemical weapons against the people of Armenia and Artsakh, as well as the involvement of jihadists-mercenaries and terrorists in the war by Azerbaijan.

“These atrocities will lead to new, heavier crimes if the masterminds and perpetrators are not held accountable,” Tatoyan said.

He also reflected on human rights violations during the war, presented evidence of Azerbaijani crimes and called attention to the disproportionate response of the international community.

Paradjanov’s Films Screened in Paris

PARIS (Panorama.am) — On December 15 Center Pompidou Musée National d’Art Moderne screened Sergei Paradjanov’s “Triptych” – “Kyiv Frescoes” (1966), “Hakob Hovnatanyan” (1967) and “Arabesques on the Pirosmeni Theme” (1985) – will be held to mark a donation of the three films to Pompidou Center.

The films were restored by the National Cinema Center and the Hamo Bek-Nazarov Project. The restoration was sponsored by Fixa-film and Kino Klassika. Printing of the new 35mm copies of the restored films was sponsored by the Armenian General Benevolent Union for permanent archive collection at the National Cinema Center of Armenia, Pompidou Center, the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA), Dovzhenko Center and Georgian Film Studio.

Yerevan Rejects Aliyev’s Demands for ‘Corridor’

BRUSSELS (RFE/RL) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Tuesday, December 14, accused Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev of obstructing the opening of transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan after the latter said Yerevan must not control a land “corridor” demanded by Baku.

Speaking just hours before his fresh talks with Pashinyan planned in Brussels, Aliyev said the so-called “Zangezur Corridor” that would connect Azerbaijan to its Na-

Jens Stoltenberg. “The same must also be the case on the Zangezur Corridor.”

“If Armenia insists on setting up customs checkpoints to control the movement of goods and people through the Zangezur Corridor, then we will insist on the same conditions for the Lachin corridor,” he told reporters.

Pashinyan was quick to reject Aliyev’s demands and accuse Baku of trying to “drive the issue of opening regional trans-

wrote on Facebook. “I will make this position clear at the trilateral meeting slated for today.”

Pashinyan referred to his planned talks with Aliyev hosted by European Council President Charles Michel. The latter held separate talks with the two leaders earlier on Tuesday.

Aliyev, Pashinyan and Russian President Vladimir Putin reported major progress towards opening Armenian-Azerbaijani transport links after holding talks in the Russian city of Sochi on November 26. Putin said the Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani working group will formalize in the coming days “decisions which we agreed today.”

However, the group co-headed by deputy prime ministers of the three states announced no agreements after meeting in Moscow on December 1.

On December 6, Aliyev renewed his threats to forcibly open a land “corridor” to Nakhichevan. Yerevan condemned the threats and said they run counter to understandings reached at Sochi.

Visiting Yerevan on November 5, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk said the trilateral task force has agreed that Armenia and Azerbaijan will “retain sovereignty over roads passing through their territory.” The Russian Foreign Ministry also reported such an understanding at the time.

Prior to the trilateral meeting, Pashinyan met separately with Michel, as did Aliyev.

Pashinyan thanked Michel for his consistent efforts aimed at solving the problems caused by the 44-day war.

(Panorama.am contributed to this report.)



European Council President Charles Michel meets with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in Brussels, December 14, 2021.

khichevan exclave via Armenian territory must have the same status as the existing Lachin corridor linking Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

“There are no customs checkpoints on the Lachin corridor right now,” Aliyev said after talks with NATO Secretary General

port links into deadlock.”

“The Azerbaijani president’s attempts to draw parallels between the opening of regional transport routes and the Lachin corridor have nothing to do with discussions held and statements signed on that topic to date and are unacceptable to Armenia,” he

Works of Armenian-Egyptian photographer Van Léo on display in Cairo

By Dina Kabil

CAIRO (Al Ahram) — The unique world of the late Cairo-based Armenian-Egyptian photographer Van Léo is captured in an exhibition which continues until 22 February 2022.

The exhibition takes a special approach to the presentation of its hero, as it takes visitors to his studio reproduced in the Future Gallery’s hall at the AUC Tahrir campus.

The viewer has an opportunity to explore life and work of Van Léo (1921-2002), while uncovering the place where the photographer took the shots of the intellectual elite of movie stars, those of the nightlife of Cairo theaters and cabarets, anonymous ordinary people, and foreigners living in cosmopolitan Cairo after World War II and until the 1990s.

In fact, the American University in Cairo (AUC) has this whole treasure of thousands of photos in its possession. In 1998, encouraged by his friend, Professor Barry Iverson, Van Léo bequeathed his entire fortune in photographs, his entire studio, to the AUC where his friend was teaching.

“I wanted to recreate his studio in the city center where he had always lived,” explains Ola Seif, exhibition curator and director of the photo library and cinema collection at AUC.

A reproduction of the studio has been carefully planned by the AUC Rare Books Library and Special Collections Managers.

On the left is the art-deco style office where Van Léo was already photographed and where he stored his negatives and photos on the shelves. Further on, the platform on which his clients came to pose.

This preamble to the world of Van Léo is obvious through two very significant photos; the first shows the artist at the top of the pyramid of Giza and the second, a landscape of the famous place Tahrir in the

downfall of an entire city.

Known for his indisputable portraits, Van Léo is distinguished by the series of inventive self-portraits which reflect his depths, his inner self. As for the portraits, he cap-



Van Leo, at right, in a self-portrait, with some of his photographs

1940s. Both refer to this Armenian from Egypt belonging to the country and underscoring his special attachment to Cairo, and its city centre in particular.

It was in Cairo that the young Léo van Boyadjian settled in 1927, fleeing the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire. He worked at Studio Venus, then in the family house where he remained close to his brother Angelo. In 1941, the latter left for Paris, and Van Léo founded a new studio which witnessed years of glory and

taught numerous national figures of the time such as Taha Hussein and Doria Shafik. He also managed to capture the unknown side of big cinema stars such as like Omar Sharif, Rouchdi Abaza, Faten Hamama or Samia Gamal. In each photograph, we feel there is a unique friendship between Van Leo and objects of his works.

The viewers can explore the irreplaceable world of Van Leo at the Future Gallery, American University in Cairo, Tahrir Campus, until February 22, 2022.



INTERNATIONAL

Inauguration of Esplanade d'Arménie in Paris

PARIS, from page 1

Tolmajian, Nicolas and Kristina Aznavour, Mayor of the 8th district of Paris Jeanne d'Hauterrie and elected officials of the capital.

"This esplanade must be the symbol of living Armenia, of proud and upright Armenia, 20 years after its second independence. This indestructible Armenia thanks to the tenacity, courage and exceptional strength of its people who must be supported more than ever," said Hidalgo.

Previously, on March 12, 2009, former mayor of Paris Bertrand Delanoë had in-



The sign for the Esplanade d'Arménie next to the statue of Komitas (photo Jean Eckian)

augurated, in the presence of the famous singer Charles Aznavour, the "Garden of Erevan" [Jardin d'Arménie].

On January 29, 2001, the day when the Armenian Genocide was recognized by France, the Council of Paris unanimously approved the installation of the statue of



From left, Ara Toranian, Nicolas Aznavour, Kristina Aznavour (photo Roger Kasparian)

Reverend Komitas (6 meters high) made by sculptor David Erevantsi and inaugurated in 2003 by the Mayor of Paris Bertrand Delanoë and Charles Aznavour.



Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan at podium (photo Karen Taieb)



ABOVE: from left, Charles Aznavour, Mayor of Paris Bertrand Delanoë, Armenian Foreign Minister Edouard Nalbandian, 2003 (photo Jean Eckian)

RIGHT: Mayor of the 8th District of Paris Jeanne d'Hauterrie (photo Roger Kasparian)



Far-Right French Presidential Candidate Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — French far-right presidential candidate Eric Zemmour called for strong Western support for Armenia over the weekend as he began a surprise visit to what he described as a Christian nation situated "in the middle of an Islamic ocean."

The former journalist and commentator, known for provocative statements against Islam and immigration, is the main challenger to longtime far-right figure Marine Le Pen for a place in a second round of France's presidential election slated for April. One of them could face the incumbent President Emmanuel Macron in the runoff vote.

Zemmour announced his decision to

officially join the presidential race last Tuesday. He said on December 10 that he chose Armenia for his first campaign trip because "it is an old Christian land" and "one of the cradles of our civilization."

"Armenia is in danger," the AFP news agency quoted him as saying. "It was once a martyr land during the times of the Ottoman Empire and massacres like the Armenian genocide. This country is harassed again by its neighbor Azerbaijan and especially by Turkey."

Zemmour laid flowers at the Armenian Genocide memorial in Yerevan and attended a Sunday mass at the ancient Khor Virap monastery.

"On the border between Armenia and

Turkey, facing Mount Ararat, I want to tell the Armenians what a model of resistance they have been for centuries," the 63-year-old tweeted afterwards.

Zemmour spoke of a renewed "great confrontation between Christianity and Islam." "We see it here, with Armenia, a Christian nation the in the middle of an Islamic ocean," he told French journalists at Khor Virap.

In Yerevan, Zemmour also dined with members of the local French chamber of commerce and met with Armenian Catholic Patriarch Raphael Bedros XXI before holding talks on Monday with four members of the Armenian parliament affiliated with the ruling Civil Contract

party.

Two of those lawmakers head the parliament's standing committees on legal and foreign affairs. The parliamentary press service said they discussed with Zemmour the "development of French-Armenian relations."

While accusing Azerbaijan of systematically destroying Armenian churches, Armenian leaders have long insisted that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is not a religious one. Armenia has also had a cordial relationship with another Muslim neighbor, Iran.

Zemmour complained over the weekend that French leaders "talk but do not really defend Armenia."

Community News

Armenian Christmas At St. Vartan Cathedral on January 6, 2022

NEW YORK — The Nativity and Baptism of Jesus Christ will be observed under strict safety regulations at New York's St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral on Wednesday and Thursday, January 5 and 6, 2022.

With public health considerations still a concern, Armenian Christmas services at St. Vartan Cathedral and all parishes of the Eastern Diocese will be held in compliance with local regulations regarding mask-wearing and social-distancing in the sanctuary.

Armenian Christmas Eve (Jan. 5): On Wednesday, January 5, there will be an Evening Service at 5:30 p.m. The Divine Liturgy will immediately follow, beginning at 6:30 p.m., celebrated by the Rev. Fr. Davit Karamyan, Vicar of St. Vartan Cathedral.

Armenian Christmas (Jan. 6): On Thursday, January 6, Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), will celebrate the Divine Liturgy. The Morning Service begins at 9 a.m., and the Divine Liturgy follows at 10 a.m.

The sacred music will be sung by the St. Vartan Cathedral Choir, under the direction of Khoren Mekanejian.

In Armenian tradition, this feast day commemorates not only the birth of Christ, but also his baptism by John the Baptist. The latter is remembered through the "Blessing of Water" ceremony, which will follow the Divine Liturgy.

Due to safety concerns there will be no indoor Christmas reception. Instead, there will be a light reception on the plaza, weather permitting.

Armenian Christmas will also be observed at local parishes across the Eastern Diocese. Many parishes will celebrate on Thursday, January 6. However, Diocesan parishes have also been authorized to celebrate on Sunday, January 9, if local circumstances so demand. Please contact your local parish to ascertain the time of its Armenian Christmas celebration.

The cathedral's Armenian Christmas Divine Liturgy will be broadcast live over the cathedral's Facebook page and the Eastern Diocese's YouTube platform. Many local parishes will also broadcast their services.

St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral is located at 630 Second Avenue (corner of 34th Street and Second Avenue), in New York City. Armenian Christmas Eve services begin at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 5. The Armenian Christmas Service on Thursday, January 6 will begin at 9:30 a.m., with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy beginning at 10 a.m., followed by the traditional Blessing of Water ceremony.



Mayor Michelle Wu, left, with Sossy Yogurtian

Pharmacist Yogurtian Gives New Boston Mayor COVID Booster in Popular Clinic

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — Osco staff pharmacist Sossy Yogurtian gave a COVID booster shot to new Boston mayor Michelle Wu on December 9 in a first-of-its-kind walk-in clinic at City Hall open to everyone and advertised in the media. The clinic was so popular that though it was supposed to be from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. it continued for an extra hour, and in all, 360 Covid vaccination shots and boosters were given nonstop. In order to encourage people to be vaccinated, the clinic received extensive coverage in newspapers like the Boston Globe, local television, and social media.

The staff of the Osco store in Brighton, Mass., provides both flu and COVID vaccines to Boston City Hall and Boston Public Health departments, and Yogurtian is the contracted supervisor of the provision of these vaccines through clinics.

In a statement about the special clinic, Mayor Wu declared: "Getting boosted is one of the most important ways we can protect our families and communities." She added, "Thanks to the hard work of our team at the Boston Public Health Commission and City Hall, I was able to join the hundreds of residents who have attended our free, walk-in clinics. Let's all continue to take every action possible to end this pandemic."

After the busy day was over Yogurtian in her turn stated: "I strongly recommend everyone gets vaccinated against COVID and then follows up with a third booster shot. If there are any members of the Armenian community who need help with this, I would be happy to facilitate getting their shots." The location of the Osco pharmacy is 370 Western Avenue, Brighton.



A view of the City Hall clinic, with pharmacist Sossy Yogurtian at second table from front

Zohrab Center Presents New Book on Russian Press Coverage of Karabakh Conflict

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK — The Zohrab Information Center, after almost two years, returned to its in-person meetings at the Armenian Diocese in New York, and Zohrab Director Dr. Jesse Arlen, welcomed a sizable crowd for a presentation of the book *Black Garden Aflame: The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict in the Soviet and Russian Press*, by Dr. Artyom Tonoyan, on November 10. The lecture was also available on Zoom and YouTube.

Arlen called it important to "gather in person to talk, listen, think deeply, and appreciate experts' presentations on how to engage most effectively with the homeland and Armenian culture. We have had virtual events, but there is something different about getting together in person, after having spent so much time separated from one another."

Tonoyan began his eye-opening and fascinating talk by discussing the situation post the second Karabakh war in 2020, saying that though Russian President Putin was "interested in tranquility along its southern borders, he was not going to interfere in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict militarily on the side of its regional ally Armenia."

Russia has treaty obligations with Armenia, yet those can only be activated if Armenia itself comes under attack, and since Nagorno-Karabakh has been internationally recognized as a part of Azerbaijan, Russia would not get involved. In addition, there were questions of whether Prime minister Nikol Pashinyan had strayed from Russian dependency and was leaning more to the West geopolitically.

However, back in 1988, nationalism and ethnic grievances first reared their heads, the speaker continued. In Sumgait, pogroms and wanton violence raged against mostly Armenian-populated towns by Azerbaijani thugs. Hundreds of Armenians were brutally murdered in Kirovabad, Khojaly, Maragha and Baku by Azerbaijani mobs and troops, resulting in the exodus of Armenians from Azerbaijan.

Simultaneously, a group of Armenian intellectuals from Nagorno-Karabakh had started a campaign to redress what they considered a historical injustice that Stalin had perpetrated in 1921 and reverse the overwhelmingly Armenian populated Nagorno-Karabakh from Azeri jurisdiction to Armenian control. They stipulated that the area had suffered greatly both culturally and economically.

"Following the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Moscow's influence over the anti-Armenian pogroms in Azerbaijan and the conflict dynamics in Nagorno-Karabakh diminished as Russia turned more or less inward, seeking to solve its many domestic problems and deal with new foreign

see ZOHRAB, page 10



COMMUNITY NEWS

SAS Participates in Annual Conferences of Middle East, Eurasian Studies Associations

FRESNO — The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) sponsored two panels at the 55th Annual Conference of Middle East Studies Association (MESA) and one panel during the 53rd Annual Convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES). Panels held during the MESA conference included, “Early Modern Mobilities: People, Animals, and Objects within and beyond the Ottoman Empire,” followed by, “Fault Lines and Fractures in the 2020 Artsakh/Nagorno Karabakh War.” The ASEEES conference included, “History, Politics, and Memory: The South Caucasus from the Romanovs and Ottomans to the Putin-Erdogan Era.” All panels were held virtually this year within the same week, which began from November 30 and culminated on December 2.

The first panel held during the MESA conference, “Early Modern Mobilities: People, Animals, and Objects within and beyond the Ottoman Empire,” took place the morning of Tuesday, November 30, and was organized by Daniel Ohanian (UCLA) and chaired by Natalia E. Rothman (University of Toronto). The panel focused on various forms of mobility during the 17th and 18th centuries, drawing attention to the ways in which movement connected the lives of those who lived within that period.

The first paper, “Genres in Transit: Movement of Geographical Forms in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire,” by Isin Taylan (Yale University), traced continuity and change in geographical knowledge over 200 years. The papers, “The Empire Comes to Town: Towards a Social History of Sultan Mehmed IV’s (r. 1648–87) Extended Residence in Ottoman Yenişehir, 1668–69” by Arlen Wiesenthal (University of Chicago) and “Printing Pilgrimage: Replication and Imagination between Tokat and Jerusalem” by Erin Pinon (Princeton University), focused on subjects in the 1600s. The last paper, “Mobility, Captivity, and Autobiography: The Tribulations of Bishop Awetik’, 1706–1711,” delivered by Ohanian, reflected on mobility and captivity around 1700.

The second panel within the MESA conference, “Fault Lines and Fractures in the 2020 Artsakh/Nagorno Karabakh War,” was organized and chaired by Sossie Kasbarian (University of Stirling), which began the following Thursday, December 2. This interdisciplinary round table aimed to address the representation of the 2020 war in Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh and the failure of scholars within Middle East Studies to engage with it. Participants joining the discussion included, Elyse Semerdjian (Whitman College), Bedross Der Matossian (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Rachel Goshgarian (Lafayette College), Tamar Shirinian (University of Tennessee, Knoxville), and Kevork Oskanian (University of Birmingham).

The first speaker was SAS President Bedross Der Matossian who argued that all aspects of the war were manifestations of transformations that took place in the Middle East since the Arab Spring. He contended that there is a direct connection between the Middle East and the Caucasus.” In examining the disengagement of Middle Eastern scholars, Der Matossian added, “The reluctance of Middle Eastern scholars to take a stance on the struggle for self-determination of Armenians of Artsakh is the result of ignorance and ambiva-



Sossie Kasbarian, Asya Darbinyan, Daniel Ohanian

lence or viewing the Armenians of Artsakh as an occupying entity.”

Professor of Islamic World/Middle Eastern history at Whitman College Elyse Semerdjian discussed the shared history of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and the Caucasus to highlight why the region of Nagorno Karabakh/Artsakh should matter to scholars of the Middle East. Semerdjian’s discussion served as a call for researchers to, “decolonize both regional fields of study and instead consider how they are linked through global militarization, the struggles and setbacks for democracy, ethnic cleansing, transnational militants/mercenaries, oligarchy, and a particular brand of authoritarianism that exists in both spaces...”

In discussing how an individual or collective imagines contemporary identities, Rachel Goshgarian, examined the trickle-down effects of the absence of Armenian history within the Republic of Turkey. Goshgarian’s paper analyzed, “how these lenses could impact individual and collective political responses to military aggression against Armenians that has been explained by many politicians as rooted in issues related to identity, in a region at the crossroads of the Ottoman, Qajar, Russian and Soviet postcolonial worlds.”

Further adding to the discussion, Tamar Shirinian, reflected on the main objects of studies that inform Armenian studies. Shirinian delved deeper to explore, “the main conceptual frameworks that have been brought to bear on “Armenia” and how these may be speaking to the larger field of Middle East Studies in particular ways and failing to take into consideration other objects – objects improper to a line of questioning within and outside of Armenian Studies.”

In closing, Kevork Oskanian an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham, examined the ability for subjects to speak and be heard within Western-dominated hierarchical international orders. In one-part Oskanian argued, “while most Western scholars and analysts tried to adopt a dispassionate or critical stance, a small minority used their traditionally privileged position as outside observers with a presumption of objectivity to push openly subjective, idealizing narratives that glorified or excused one side over the other.”

In addition, the Society for Armenian Studies sponsored the ASEEES panel, “History, Politics, and Memory: The South Caucasus from the Romanovs and Ottomans to the Putin-Erdogan Era,” organized by Asya Darbinyan (Northern Arizona University) and chaired by Stephen Badalyan Riegg (College of Liberal Arts at Texas A&M University). The panel looked to



the past and present when examining the intersectionality of politics, history, and memory in the South Caucasus. Papers included, “Violent Memories: The Entangled Histories of Bolsheviks and Kemalists in the South Caucasus,” by Ani Ohanian (Clark University) and “Between Moscow and Ankara: Anastas Mikoyan and Armenian National Narratives during the Thaw, 1954–1964” by Pietro Shakarian (American University of Armenia).



Organizer and discussant, Asya Darbinyan, analyzed the Russian Empire’s response towards the evacuation of Armenian refugees in her paper, “‘Deceived’ or ‘Saved?’: Russian Authorities and the Ottoman-Armenian Refugees in the Caucasus during the First World War.” Additionally, Darbinyan examined the sentiment of deception and abandonment by exploring the experiences of those displaced at the Caucasus front.

Scholarships Available

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Tel. 401 461-6114 • Fax 401 461-6112

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COMMUNITY NEWS

AAHPO Marks Decade of Activity with Benefit for Its Continuing Education Program

ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS, N.J. — To commemorate the 10th anniversary of its Continuing Medical Education (CME) program, the Armenian American Health Professionals Organization (AAHPO) hosted a charity benefit at the home of AAHPO President Lawrence V. Najarian, MD, on Sunday, October 17.

The event exceeded expectations, raising vital funding needed to teach state of the art medical skills to physicians who service the villages and rural areas of Artsakh. A portion of the funding will also be used to aid soldiers wounded in the Artsakh war, as well as assist Armenians suffering due to the Covid pandemic.

“For the past decade, the CME program has provided training to more than 80 percent of the healthcare providers in Nagorno-Karabakh by updating their clinical



Representative of Artsakh in the US Robert Avetisyan

expertise in their specialty,” said Najarian. “The program has been extremely well-received and we are actively working with Nagorno-Karabakh’s Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Health to develop new, innovative ways of addressing the changing medical needs of Artsakh. We want to thank the donors, who are the true pillars of this program, for their insight as to how important education is in providing hope to



Fundraising group with Robert Avetisyan

patients for a healthier future.”

The charity benefit also provided AAHPO members and their colleagues with an opportunity to gather in person for the first time since the pandemic. In keeping with AAHPO’s adherence to covid safety protocols, all attendees were required to show proof

of vaccination. Attendees discussed the current state of healthcare in Armenia and Artsakh, as well as explore ways residents in the diaspora can provide aid and support.

Special guest of honor at the event was Robert Avetisyan, permanent Representative of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in the U.S., who was recognized for his humanitarian work on behalf of the Armenians displaced in Artsakh. “AAHPO has supported improvements in a crucial

sphere of Artsakh’s life, and its activities are especially important in providing our healthcare specialists with opportunities for professional training.” Representative Avetisyan also highlighted the continued involvement of AAHPO members in assisting Armenians in the homeland. “I am grateful to everyone who attended the Charity Benefit, who have demonstrated their commitment toward continued and expanded involvement of our compatriots in post-war Artsakh and Armenia,” he said.

The CME Program was first created in 2005 by the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) and the FAR Fellowship Alumni Association to bolster the overall health of the Armenia’s people by improving the skills of Armenian doctors. FAR and AAHPO, through the vision of the late Dr. Raffy A.

Hovanesian, recognized the importance of this training and partnered to fund the CME Program for physicians from rural Artsakh. This program is vital to training physicians and nurses as tens of thousands of Armenians depend on their medical skills.

The feedback gained from physicians trained in this program has been very positive. Truly appreciative of the knowledge gained and newly acquired computer literacy skills, the graduates return to their rural villages, apply the skills gained in treating their patients and sharing their knowledge with fellow physicians.

To view photos and video of the CME Charity Benefit: <https://aahpo.org/2021-cme-fundraiser-video-photo-gallery/>

For more information about AAHPO, visit www.aahpo.org.

Zohrab Center Presents New Book on Russian Press Coverage of Karabakh Conflict

ZOHRAB, from page 8

policy challenges that would account for its weakened international standing,” Tonoyan explained.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, where Armenians were fighting to regain the territory, Azerbaijani victories from 1991 were reversed by 1992 by poorly planned and executed operations, and by the spring of 1994 Armenians had taken full control of Nagorno-Karabakh, except for Shakhumyan and seven Azerbaijani regions. However, Armenians controlled the important towns of Kelbajar and Lachin.

“Exhausted by the cascading defeats on the ground, and fearful of continuing political instability and social unrest, Azerbaijan pressed for a Russian-brokered ceasefire in May 1994. Although fragile, the ceasefire would largely hold for the next two decades,” Tonoyan said. “International mediation efforts led chiefly by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE] Minsk Group co-chairs [Russia, the US and France] tried unsuccessfully to bring the conflicting parties to negotiate a lasting peace.”

Fast forward to three decades later, when the simmering tensions led to a new, full-blown war. Azerbaijan, with its oil wealth, amassed a huge array of advanced Israeli, Turkish and Russian weapons systems, and dismissive of western media-

tors, they “first tested the waters in 2016 with its Four-Day War.” Hundreds were killed on both sides.

“If there was no meaningful international pressure on Armenia to cede territories, Azerbaijan was willing to take matters into its own hands, by fair means or foul,” Tonoyan stated, adding, “cross-border clashes were becoming increasingly frequent, deadly and ominous, a harbinger of things to come.”

With Pashinyan coming to power in 2018 with a fervent promise to reform Armenia’s politics, and sagging economy, “the result left much to be desired,” Tonoyan surmised. “Reform often meant a badly concocted mix of popular sloganeering, some democratic initiatives (and some clearly undemocratic ones), and made-for-TV arrests of long-feared politicians and oligarchs, and emboldened by this new confidence and a mandate from the people, Pashinyan set out to tackle the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh with Azerbaijan.”

In addition, Pashinyan insisted that any negotiated deal “must be equally acceptable to both Armenians and Azerbaijanis, something that previous Armenian governments were loath to voice publicly.” Making the “biggest unforced diplomatic error as prime minister, and providing Azerbaijan and its allies with fresh grounds for a renewed diplomatic onslaught,” “with

characteristic bombast, he declared at the opening of the 2019 Pan-Armenian Games in Stepanakert, “Artsakh is Armenia, period!” The reaction in Baku was furious and “unforgiving,” Tonoyan said.

Bloody cross-border clashes followed in July 2020, including mass demonstrations in Baku with protesters demanding all-out war against Armenia. The 2020 invasion of Artsakh by Azerbaijan with the assistance of Turkey was inevitable, Tonoyan declared.

The South Caucasus, and especially Armenia and Artsakh, “are not and have not been in the attention of the Western media.” If and when the area is covered very infrequently, it involves either the subjects of tourism, or war such as the case of Georgia and South Ossetia in 2008. “People do not know (or perhaps do not care) about the region until and unless something of note takes place,” Tonoyan said.

“Western journalistic interests probably match the general or even the precise contours of Western geopolitical interests in the region,” Tonoyan noted.

And as far as Russia is concerned, he stated that “Moscow’s knowledge of the region is as strong as it is permanent, dictated mainly by geopolitical interests, and depending on the political — and increasingly geopolitical — winds blowing in the region. Moscow has at times favored Ye-

revan, and at other times Baku. But in all circumstances, it has favored Moscow,” he said.

Laurence Broers, co-editor in chief of the *Caucasus Surveys* has commented that “despite its devastating human consequences on the global stage, the Karabakh conflict unfortunately remains obscure. Not so in the Russian-language press, including *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, *Nezavisimaya gazeta* and other papers by Russian and Soviet journalists.”

Broers writes that *Black Garden Aflame* is an “indispensable resource that brings to an English-speaking readership the shock and fury of the conflict’s outbreak in 1988, the inability of the broken Soviet system to contain it, the descent into war, the protracted ceasefire that followed, the multiple geopolitical interests in play and a catastrophic new war in 2020.”

A native of Gyumri, Armenia, Tonoyan received his PhD from Baylor University in Texas. A sociologist and a research associate at the University of Minnesota’s Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, he has researched the sociology of religion, and politics in the South Caucasus, and religion and nationalism in post-Soviet Russia, and has authored many articles. He has also been a frequent guest on the BBC, Deutsche Welle, France 24, and other media.



COMMUNITY NEWS

SAS Donates Large Number of Books to the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute

FRESNO — As part of its ongoing cooperation with the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (AGMI), the Society for Armenian Studies donated around 130 academic books to the museum to strengthen its library collection. The academic books included topics pertaining to the Armenian Genocide, late Ottoman history, comparative genocide, and the Holocaust. The collection included the latest scholarship published within fields which would otherwise not be accessible to scholars in Armenia. The project was initiated by the SAS a few months ago and included active participation from its members.

On November 7, 2021, Prof. Dr. Harutyun Marutyan, the director of AGMI, sent a letter of appreciation to the SAS for the donation, valued at \$2,000. Marutyan wrote, “Thanks to the SAS, the library of AGMI has been completed by books pertaining to the Armenian as well as other genocides, Ottoman history, and memoirs of survivors. We value this phenomenon as the best example of the “scholars for scholars” motto. Each of these books are essential for the researchers of the institute. We are sure that the cooperation between our organizations is an example of the cooperation between Armenia and the Diaspora. We are filled with hope that this useful cooperation will result in the implementation of new and novel research.” Marutyan continued to thank all members of the SAS who participated in the campaign, “We would like to thank all the individuals who donated books to the library and the care that they demonstrated towards the Institute.”



The AGMI awarded SAS a Certificate of Acknowledgment for the conceptualization of this project.

President of SAS Bedross Der Matossian thanked all the SAS members who participated in the project. Matossian added, “Without the extensive participation of the SAS members, this project would not have been realized. While this project could have been realized solely with SAS

funds, the whole idea was to involve SAS members to take an active role in the activities of the Society.”

Der Matossian specifically thanked Salpi Ghazarian, the director of the USC Institute of Armenian Studies, and Gegham Mughnetyan, Chitjian Researcher Archivist, at the Institute for their help in the realization of this project. He also thanked Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian (California State University, Fresno) for coordinating the project.

The project was made possible through book donations from the SAS as well as from non-SAS members. Special thanks to: Victoria Abrahamyan, Jesse Arlen (Zohrab Information Center), Anahid Asadorian, Nora Avetyan, Nvair Beylerian, Tamar Boyadjian, Aline Donabedian, Davit Donabedian, Harout Ekmanian, Mischa Geracoulis, Salpi Ghazarian (USC), A. Keocheikian, Varak Ketsemanian, Nancy Kricorian, Igor Kotler, Marc Mamigonian (NAASR), Armen Markarian, Vartan Matiossian, Bedross Der Matossian, Dave Moughalian, Sato Moughalian, Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Ani and Tom Odjakjian, Anna Ohanyan, Rolland Parker, Nardo Poy, Lusya Shmavonian Schinelli, Linda Shahinian, Harold Takooshian, and Kirsti Zitar (on behalf of the Mgrublian Center for Human Rights).

As part of its new policy to strengthen ties with academic institutions in Armenia, the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) signed an Agreement on Cooperation on January 13, 2021, with The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Foundation (AGMI).

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House Passes Rep. Pallone Amendment To Investigate Azerbaijani War Crimes

NDA, from page 1
the conflict, a description of the involvement of foreign actors – which were heavily used by Azerbaijan – and any violations of the November 9, 2020 statement that ended most of the fighting.

“The United States has long stood as a beacon for the rights of every person, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, or nationality. We must continue to lead by example and ensure that American tax dollars do not contradict our values at home or abroad,” Pallone said. “My amendment sends a clear signal that the United States takes seriously its democratic norms and commitment to peace by ensuring oversight of our security assistance.

“Azerbaijan continues to threaten Armenia’s safety and sovereignty, which makes these amendments especially urgent. The United States should not be aiding and abetting reckless, autocratic states with appalling human rights records for any reason. Because of our efforts, the Department of Defense is now required to undergo a thorough investigation that will bring attention to the gross human rights abuses committed by Azerbaijan during last year’s war and focus on their deadly actions in Armenian territory that are still taking place to this day. Data from this report will help us to finally bring an end to U.S. funding for the murderous Aliyev regime and instead urge strong support of fellow democracies like Armenia,” Pallone concluded.

The amendment is an important step in creating oversight for the Defense Department’s Section 333 Building Partner Capacity Program that has sent enormous sums of money to human rights abusing regimes and dictators, including that of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, which has numerous documented human rights violations. The Department has spent nearly \$4 billion over the last four years on the program. Even though the State Department has singled out Azerbaijani border units for committing human rights violations, those forces received over \$100 million in security assistance in fiscal years 2018 and 2019 through the program.



Arts & Culture

Pictures at Exhibition Raise Profound Issues

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Ambiguity lends a special quality to art. Not ambiguity as attempted deception, but as an invitation to explore what is unstated, merely hinted, or lends itself to multiple, even contradictory interpretations. An exhibition that opened on November 9 at the Yerevan Modern Art Museum is a perfect example. Guy Ghazanchyan is the artist and the title of the exhibition is “ԱԿԱՆԱՏԷՍ” [Akanatehs], which contains a double meaning, through a play on words. In Armenian, this means “Witness” but if you isolate the first four letters, the word means “land mine.” Then a connecting vowel “u” comes, followed by “nku” which is a word root meaning “see,” thus the title also implies “someone who saw the land mine.”

The exhibition is akin to a project, an action, an act of dedication. The concept, in the words of the artist, is depicted as follows: “A moment is like a verge, like a deafening sudden reality that questions the here and



Guy Ghazanchyan

now. A frightening border between the Real and the Unreal, an attempt to stop time, to hear an unasked question, to stand at a dividing line, to see your own self and to realize the impossibility of accepting a given.”

The day of the opening marked the first anniversary of the trilateral ceasefire agreement after the war in Artsakh, and the subsequent entry of Russian peacekeeping forces into the conflict zone. There are 44 items on display — paintings, an animation and a sculpture. The number of pieces exhibited was purely arbitrary; in fact, some works were removed during the show and, as all works appear under one title, no one even counted them. The first to take note of the number were the journalists. The 1st Public TV channel of Armenia, the country’s main public see EXHIBITION, page 14



Nora Armani in “Back on the Couch with Nora Armani” (Xiaopeng Zhan photos)

‘Back on the Couch with Nora Armani’

By Christopher Atamian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK — Updating a one-person show some 20 years after presenting the original is no easy task. Nora Armani, however, does a more than credible job of it with “Back On the Couch with Nora Armani.”

The new show begins with a fun social media update on what it’s like to be an “ethnic” actor in 2021.

Presented at Theater Row on 42nd Street as part of the 2021 United Solo Theatre Festival on November 21 to a sold-out audience, the action takes place on a stage bare except for a couch, a coat rack and Armani herself.

François Kergoulay’s direction highlights Armani’s enthusiastic acting style — she clearly enjoys performing and her enthusiasm is contagious. One-woman plays take both courage and talent to pull off, as evidenced in the past in performances such as “The Vagina Monologues,” for example, or watching Mary Wilson’s masterful rendition of Diane Vreeland in “Full Gallop.”

As in the play’s original incarnation, Armani takes the audience on a whirlwind tour of her life, beginning with her childhood. Armani’s maternal grandmother survived the Armenian Genocide, while her paternal grandfather left Istanbul for Egypt on the eve of WW I, thus avoiding being conscripted into the Ottoman army. Armani’s childhood in Nasser’s Egypt was idyllic yet difficult, as non-Arab minorities faced almost constant pressure to emigrate.

We then follow the actor as she emigrates to America then Europe and enjoys success as a writer and director.

The most engaging moments to my mind indeed is when Armani focuses on family history. She humorously recounts the tea ceremony that her mother was made to perform when trying to find a husband: if she was graceful and engaging, then this indicated that she favored the potential suitor. If however she spilled the scalding tea on him, this indicated her complete rejection of the poor fellow.

Throughout the play, the recurring thread is the search for home and identity — like many Armenian families, each generation in Armani’s family seems to have started anew in a foreign land with new mores and languages to master, where they had to rebuild their own communities and institutions as well.

Billed as a “self-penned one-woman show on identity, belonging, and multicultural reality,” “Back on the Couch” introduces general audiences to a story that all told few see ARMANI, page 13



A CONVERSATION WITH...

Kami Bordet-Sturla

To Speak, to Sing, to Feel Armenian

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — Last November 23, the young French mezzo-soprano Kami (Camille) Bordet-Sturla played the role of Orpheus in Gluck’s opera “Orpheus and Eurydice” (directed by Vram Karapetyan) at the Yerevan Opera Studio. She is not only a young singer with a wonderful voice and artistry, but also a true friend of the Armenian people. It has been a little more than a year since Kami got acquainted with the Armenian people and culture, but she has learned to speak Armenian fluently, as well as to read and write. Our conversation below also took place in Armenian.



Dear Kami, at first you studied history and political science, then also in an art school. After all of this, how did you become a singer — and such a good singer?

Thank you very much for your comment! My story with music started very early. I was a creative child: I was painting, writing, singing, I wanted to be an actress. We used to live near Dijon, Burgundy, where I attended a special school program and sang in the church every weekend. Then I learned the basics of piano, harpsichord, flute... Music has always been present in my life, but although there are many musicians in my family, they are not professionals. My father is a doctor and my mother a social worker. In their opinion, I had to study something “serious;” the possibility of becoming a singer didn’t even come to mind, so I chose the traditional path. Everything was interesting to me, especially the subjects that helped me understand the world, such as history and political science. When I was 13, I watched a documentary about Afghanistan that affected me so much that I decided see STURLA, page 16



ARTS & CULTURE

California Cool 'On the Edge' Art from Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection on Display at Bakersfield Museum

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. — A never-before-seen exhibition debuts at Bakersfield Museum of Art on Thursday, September 30 at 7 pm. "On the Edge: Los Angeles Art, 1970s - 1990s, from the Joan and Jack Quinn Family Collection," is an intimate display of over 150 objects from some of the 20th century's most famous Contemporary artists including Ed Moses, Lynda Benglis, Peter Alexander, Frank Gehry, Robert Graham and Ed Ruscha.

"The work and artists on display have come to represent a period of history that transformed art making," said Bakersfield Museum of Art (BMoA) Curator of Exhibitions and Collections Rachel McCullah Wainwright. "Art made in Los Angeles during the late 1960s and 1970s onward is

Newly married in the 1960s, Joan and Jack took to collecting early. "We reveled in our friendship with the artists by buying their work and introducing them to galleries," notes Quinn. Herself a society columnist for several publications, including Andy Warhol's Interview magazine and the Los Angeles Herald Examiner, Joan ensured her favorite artists appeared in the society columns of important magazines and newspapers. Jack promoted them by giving lunches and cocktail parties within the legal community.

Enduring friendships developed between the Quinn family and artists like Billy Al Bengston, Andy Warhol, David Hockney, Frank Gehry, Laddie John Dill, and others. "Our accumulation of art is so personal



Top row, from left: Artist Gregory Wiley Edwards, artist Astrid Preston, BMoA curator Rachel McCullah Wainwright, artist Andy Moses, artist Lita Albuquerque, artist Laddie John Dill, artist Charles Arnoldi, artist Ned Evans, former curator Rani Singh, Bottom Row: artist Don Bachardy, Joan Agajanian Quinn. Photo courtesy of Alan Shaffer



From left, Lysa Grigorian, artist Don Bachardy, Joan Agajanian Quinn, Mary Minassians, artist Ned Evans and Andy Moses. (Photo courtesy of Alan Shaffer)

defined by a unique spirit of anti-conformity, a play of new materials and a celebration of light and the California cool ethos. It is exciting that so many of these artists are still with us and able to share their work and the experience of working during this period."

Part of what makes the collection so unique is its foundation in friendship between collector and artist. The friendship formed from a commitment by art lover Joan Agajanian Quinn and her husband, attorney Jack Quinn (d. 2017), to support and promote a creative community experiencing a new found freedom.

that we have drawings on napkins, sketches on place mats, bags and jewelry made from studio residue," said Quinn.

Known for her charisma, intelligence, and flamboyance, Quinn has been a muse for artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Larry Bell, Bengston, Gehry, Hockney, Antonio Lopez, Moses, Helmut Newton, Zandra Rhodes, Ruscha, and many others. As artists sought to record her image across a variety of media, Quinn has found herself with one of the world's largest and most important collections of Contemporary portraiture — a poignant representation of friendship, appreciation, and respect. More



From left: artist Aram Grigorian, Lysa Grigorian, Joan Agajanian Quinn, artists Andy Moses and Kelly Berg, and Amanda Quinn Olivar. Photo courtesy of Alan Shaffer

than 50 such portraits of the Quinn family are included in "On the Edge."

"On The Edge" is presented by the Wonderful Company with added support from the JHM Foundation, Barbara Patrick and Gene Tackett, Citi Private Bank, Christie's, Larry Gagosian, Phillips, James Corcoran Gallery, Kathy & Steve Hair, Inspiration

Supporters, Philibosian Foundation, and Marc Grossberg.

Curatorial assistance for this exhibition was provided by Quinn Family Collection Director Erin Katgely, Curatorial Advisor Amanda Quinn Olivar, and Curatorial Assistant Natalie Varebedian, and by BMoA Curatorial Assistant Melissa Bañuelos.

'Back on the Couch with Nora Armani'

ARMANI, from page 12

have heard, in spite of the increasing exposure that the Armenian Genocide is now receiving in academic circles and the media. Yet the story she tells has morphed, it is not static: "Times have changed, I have changed," says Armani. When asked what she wanted audiences to take away from her show, Armani clarifies: "I'm not here to teach people lessons, but rather to have a heart-to-heart conversation with my audience. In the process, they become my friends, sitting with me in my living room, on my couch for the duration of the play."

Armani sees theater through an optimistic lens, as a way of becoming compassionate by learning about the other and empathizing with their individual situation or plight.

At times, Armani punctuates her monologue with another clever device, an aside with an old unidentified lover whom she addresses in the audience. The presentation is Brechtian in feel and structure, in that she goes in and out of character to address

his presence: "My goal in doing so," the actress says, "is to get people to think and reflect upon their own lives, to react and possibly act upon it." This ties in closely with her transformative mission as an actor, i.e. the her desire to affect change in the world around her, one person at a time: "Theater is a powerful tool to get people to understand themselves and the society around them," she continues. "If I succeed in making a difference in one person's approach to their lives, then I can say that I have fulfilled my mission as a performer. Theater is immediate and direct. Therein lies its power."

At last count, Armani has performed "On the Couch" on four continents in more than 25 cities worldwide, in both its English and French versions, to critical acclaim. Especially coming in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic that has alienated so many, audiences old and new will be happy that she decided to reprise her show, for all to enjoy.

Learn more at www.noraarmani.net/shows





ARTS & CULTURE

Pictures at Exhibition Raise Profound Issues

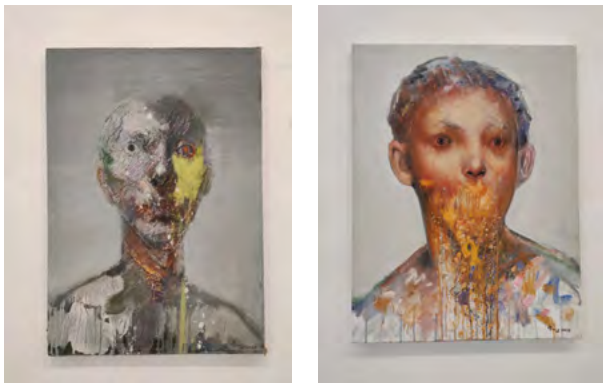
EXHIBITION, from page 12

channel, carried a report on November 9, the day the exhibition opened, in the evening news. Up to that time no one (not even the artist) had pointed out the number of exhibited paintings. Everyone seemed surprised by such a coincidence: 44 paintings and the 44-day war.

Guy Ghazanchyan had started work on the project actually at the beginning of 2020, and, on reflection, thinks that he may not himself have fully realized what was emerging. Certain features of his earlier works, female images, aerial light compositions had vanished and given way to new concepts. It is hard to tell what triggered this change, but as the subsequent tragic developments unfolded, he followed the road chartered with new strength.

Portraits – of Whom?

With every new painting a new, horrifying image of a young man was born, with the frozen expression of an



“Witness”

unanswered question on his face. The question, that, in Guy’s view, the beholder has to hear himself. We move from one portrait to the next, and despite the blurred, almost amorphous shape of each, we know that each is a distinct human being, an irreplaceable individual.



Guy Ghazanchyan

I was reminded of the photographs displayed on the walls of the Museum of Fallen Soldiers in Stepanakert, of the countless young Armenians who fought and died in the Karabakh war of the early 1990s. Under each black and white photo was a name and the dates of birth and death. I was one of many adults accompanying children from the graduating 5th grade class of St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School in Watertown. There, thanks to the plaques, we could identify each and every one; here in Guy Ghazanchyan’s portrait gallery, we can only pose the questions: Who? And from where? And how old (or, how young)? And, above all, why?

Identity, Reality and Idealism

As Daniela Grüniger, an art critic from AvestArt, noted, though the human “figures have volume,” they are enhanced by abstraction. Ghazanchyan’s figures “have individuality, personality, and give a deeper sense of reality; he does not have a stereotypical way of painting,

which makes the works less ‘flat’ and superficial. His way of applying color expresses tension and suggests the idea of something much more masculine.” The art critic highlights Ghazanchyan’s “way of mixing reality, identity and idealism,” whereby “the figures seem real ... they are not recognizable, but still they are unique, and all have an identity: he holds the viewer between these three worlds.” Indeed, this is the impact viewing the portraits had on me: one of suspension among three levels of existence. Who are they? Where do they come from? What do they represent ideally?

The animation projected onto the wall of the exhibition hall replicates the view of the series, but in accelerated time, one image immediately replaced by the next, and the sheer speed renders identification utterly impossible. Yet, we know, here too, that these faces are not statistics, but rather human beings. The sound track accompanying the rapid sequence of images enhances the overall

continued on next page





ARTS & CULTURE



from previous page

atmosphere, transporting the viewer into another dimension. One is tempted to intervene and say, “No, stop, let me see who that is!” But in vain.

The sculpture “Centaur” embodies the absurdity of a war, with its predefined impossibility, unfairness, a war destined only to turn into horror, suffering and the wanton destruction of human life.

Extraordinary Reception

The exhibition “Witness” generated profound interest among professionals, which is of great importance to the artist and his family. Guy Ghazanchyan, 30 years old, represents the third generation of artists, his grandparents Nona Gabrielyan and Van Soghomonian have been living and painting (and teaching) in Germany for thirty years. His parents, Lilit Soghomonian and Gagik Ghazanchyan, are active in their Yerevan studio. (Guy has remarked that with such a family background, he can’t afford to be uninteresting.) Although this is not his first exhibition, it does represent a breakthrough. His mother, Lilit, admits she finds it very difficult to be unbiased while talking about her son’s work. Of course, she is very happy for and proud of everything he has accomplished, as any mother would be; but, as an artist and a specialist herself, she realizes how much he invested in this project, how he put his mind and heart into these works. She thinks as well that the work on this project probably helped him to survive everything they all had to go through.

Judging from the public reception, it has also helped others as well.

It was not only the community of artists and critics that applauded the artist’s work: just as important is the response that has come from the younger generation, the students at art colleges and academies in particular. They have come to the museum and stood in front of one portrait after the other, reflecting on what each image communicates; it is as if each face on the canvas were looking at you the visitor and telling his story, sharing his perception of everything that is happening. They all, together

with their viewers, are united around one sensation, they experience together a fundamental emotional conflict: the inability, perceived impossibility to accept the reality before them, and yet the urgent need to stop the violence.

Questions are posed, simple answers are nowhere to be found.

Due to the extraordinary reception, the exhibition has been extended through December 20. For those unable to visit in person, the artist’s website is: <https://guyghazanchyan.com/index>. See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyDdcCNHqM4>

(Note: The “AKANates” / “Witness” exhibition-project was represented by Yerevan Modern Art Museum <https://mamy.am> and AvestArt Art Management Company, Zurich, Switzerland <https://www.avestart.ch/artist/guy-ghazanchyan/>. Daniela Grüniger is an International Expert in Modern and Contemporary Art, Curator, former Head of the Geneva Office at Phillips Auction.

The author of this article extends her thanks to Lilit Soghomonian and Guy Ghazanchyan for making the material, including photos, available, and to Sona Petrosyan, for her excellent translations into English.)



The Centaur” at “Witness”

‘O Holy Night’ Christmas Concert in Providence

PROVIDENCE — A festive Christmas concert was held at Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church on December 10 by the Armenian Chorale of Rhode Island, soloists and students of the Armenian school of the church, organized by the Cultural committee of the church.

Artistic director, conductor and chairman of the Cultural committee Konstantin Petrossian presented an interesting program, consisting of Armenian and traditional Christmas carols. The audience warmly greeted the performances of the chorale, pianist Mari Panosian, and soloists Gohar Manjelijian, Mari Megrdechian, Satenik Emdjian, violinist Gregory Ayriyan. The performance of children from the Armenian school, who sang New Year’s songs, as well as Christmas carols with the Armenian Chorale, was warmly received.

As the pastor of the Church, Rev. Shnork Souin, said at the end of the concert, this concert was long-awaited due to the COVID-19, and became an inspiring factor in the resuming of the cultural life of the community. He thanked Petrossian, members of the chorale, soloists, and students of the Armenian school for the wonderful Christmas present. The evening was concluded at Egavian Hall with the reception, which was organized by the Cultural committee of the Church.



Rev. Shnork Souin and the performers at Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church’s concert on December 10



ARTS & CULTURE

Kami Bordet-Sturla: To Speak, to Sing, to Feel Armenian

STURLA, from page 12

to become a journalist to direct documentary films about far-away countries. When I was admitted to the Paris Institute of Political Science, I was scared of not being good enough and thought to myself, that I should focus on my studies: I dropped all of the artistic activities I was doing. But I was not happy, something was missing in my life. I was going to school with people from different social backgrounds, in a very Parisian atmosphere, some of them had a lot of money, some of them had been determined to go into politics from a very early age. This was unusual for me, and I was not feeling comfortable in this atmosphere. In the fourth year, I had to start working for a company, I discovered what it felt like to stay eight hours straight in front of a computer, to keep quiet and respectful while facing a boss whom I completely disagreed with, and I hated it. I felt that if I kept going in this direction, maybe I would be very successful and earn a lot of money, but I would never be happy. So I tried another way. I entered the National Superior School of Decorative Arts in Paris, while finishing my master's degree. Once my master's degree was completed, and since I had a little more time, I decided to go back to the conservatory. Gradually I realized how much I loved to sing, and my interest for the stage returned. On stage, I feel free: it is similar to life, but without limits: everything is possible, every sensation is multiplied. It is an incredible feeling. That's why I then went to the Basel Conservatory.

You mainly have sung in Baroque operas, in less staged works. Is it your choice or is it what suits your voice?

Both. My family has always listened to a lot of Baroque music, and I naturally went for that style. At the same time, since I'm a light coloratura mezzo, I feel very comfortable in the Baroque and classical repertoire. It is important for producers to know the identity of the singer and to offer appropriate roles, and so far, baroque music has brought me luck. For example, last summer I started working with the famous Catalan baroque conductor Jordi Savall and I was accepted into a French program that helps young singers to sing in front of important people and find a job. I sang with them the role of Nero in Handel's "Agrippina," which was a fantastic experience.

Andrea Bocelli has said: "An opera singer is like an athlete before the match." Is he right?

One hundred percent! I agree in different ways. Most singers have to nurture a very healthy lifestyle (sleep and eat well, stay away from alcohol and smoking, etc.). Of course, there are exceptions, but it most of us can't mess up. Singing, like sports, requires an excellent understanding and control of our body and mind. In addition, singing is a result of an important muscular work that, like memory, must be trained to remain healthy. On a psychological level too, singing and sports are similar. The world of music is not easy, especially when you didn't walk on the usual tracks. Since I started to study professionally later than others, it seems to me that I have to overcome more challenges to achieve my goals, because I am about five years late. Like athletes, singers have to be very strong mentally also. We must learn to manage failure, to fall, rise again, never give up, until the light finally shows up.

It is true that opera's audience is mostly older people? How can opera in the 21st century appeal to the young?

This is a very good question, and I think about it a lot, because I do not have a proper answer. I think that, maybe, the first step



is education. Music is not well taught in traditional schools, at least in my country. Opera is the deepest, the most precious form of Western music. It does not mean that it has more value than other styles, but from all points of view (harmonic, rhythmic...) it is more developed, therefore more complex. Even as a professional musician, who listens to classical music all day long, I know that I can understand ten percent of it. Someone who is just discovering opera can probably get two percent of the composer's intentions. This is a huge problem and it happens in every field. The more educated people are, the richer their taste is, and more likely they are to go towards more complex artistic forms.

On the other hand, we should not be "polite" with opera. While respecting a composer's wishes, we have to adapt opera to our time and bring out the elements that speak universally. Despite texts or themes that may seem old fashioned, the main questions raised in the plots are ageless. I like directors who build bridges between the music of past centuries and our reality, allowing me to feel close to the characters and their problems. For example, when I was working on "Orpheus" I always tried to make the story talk. What message, what metaphors, what symbols are embedded in this story? What does Hell represent, what does it symbolize? What does teenage love feel like? What does it mean to fall in love for the first time, to do anything for it? And so on. This way my work becomes much more interesting, because I start to imagine, dream and finally, I become creative, so that in my turn I can build a bridge with the audience.

You speak several languages. How did it happen that you mastered Armenian, even in writing?

This is a very beautiful story. I started to learn Armenian just before the last war. I did not know anything about Armenia at that time. Since I wanted to learn German, I started using a website that connects people who want to learn languages. I met a German-speaking Armenian guy, who started to talk about his country and to show me words in Armenian. I was struck by the beauty of this alphabet. Progressively, we got closer and I wanted to learn more about his country, which seemed very interesting to me. I loved this very rich and diverse culture, mixing Russian, Middle-Eastern, European influences. A few days later the war started. I do not know why, I felt very strongly your people's pain and I could not stop thinking about what was happening in Armenia. I started learning the alphabet, then gradually the language. At some point, I thought that I should definitely

find a connection with my work, because I couldn't eat, sleep, I was losing interest in music. I started to dig into the Armenian music, among which I discovered Komitas. In Gordes, in the south of France, I won a song contest thanks to Komitas' Lullaby, that I performed a cappella, improvising. I try as much as possible to perform Komitas at my concerts. During the war, I tried to get in touch with many Armenians on the Internet. I wanted to show to your people that they are not alone. Accidentally, I met an Iranian musician who spoke fluent Armenian. Since he was also a foreigner, it was easier for him to explain the rules of the language to me, and he taught me Armenian. The reason I learned so quickly was that I am impatient, so I practiced every day, trying to speak as much as possible without fear of making mistakes, writing every new word in a notebook to learn it later... To this day, I have been using this method. I learnt to write with the book Eastern Armenian for English Speakers. And since I have studied art, I am very sensitive to lines and shapes, my eye gets it quickly.

Soon, of course, I decided to go to Armenia. It did not make sense to learn so much without getting to know the country. Last January, I came to Armenia for the first time, on my own. I got extremely lucky,

met incredible people, among which this guy, with whom I had only spoken online, who was there to pick me up at the airport and found an apartment for me, without asking for anything in return. Back then I also met my boyfriend. Our relationship started in English and little by little I insisted switching to Armenian. Now we almost always speak Armenian.

I think the Yerevan performance of "Orpheus and Eurydice" was a great novelty in the history of Armenian opera, with a brilliant international staff. We were very satisfied, what about you?

Of course me too! Orpheus is a very big and interesting role. It was the first time I had to play such an important role, and it was even more interesting that it happened in Armenia. There were so many challenges: there was very little time, few rehearsals, I was working in another language, in another culture. But adapting to a different context was very interesting on a work level and on a more general life level. I was thrilled by the talent of my colleagues. Working with Vram, the director, was also a pleasure, because he gave us a lot a freedom. It was a real exchange: although giving his point of view, he was always open to hear whatever we had to say. I do not know if I would have such a collaboration in Europe. Finally, I was very moved during and after the performance. The positive comments I received from the audience warmed my heart, and I am thrilled to hear that you enjoyed our work.

What new projects do you have in France when you return?

There are a few auditions coming; I am preparing the role of Dorabella in Mozart's opera "Così fan tutte" for next summer. I'll be singing Handel's "Messiah" with Jordi Savall. I have a few concerts in Gordes earned thanks to the competition, I am working on a program around French composer Déodat de Séverac's work with my pianist. I would also like, finally, to write the show I've had in mind for a long time now, about my first trip to Armenia and Artsakh, but so far I haven't found enough time. As you can see, I am not close to getting bored.

They say someone who comes to Armenia once wants to return again.

I know. I am coming back for New Year's Eve!

CALENDAR

OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

MASSACHUSETTS

DECEMBER 19 — City of Smile Charitable Foundation is hosting its first ever CHESS Tournament to benefit Children with Cancer in Armenia! Sunday, 4–8 P.M. Featuring Chess Grand Master Samuel Seviaan, an American-Armenian chess prodigy who shattered the historical American record of the youngest-ever American Grandmaster by a whole year at age 13, in 2014. In 2012 Seviaan became World U12 Champion and in 2017 the youngest winner of the Continental Championship in Medellin Colombia. He is currently the TOP 50 Player in the World Ranking. Just recently Seviaan shared the Top 3 spots with World #2 Fabiano Caruana and World #8 Wesley So in the highly competitive US Championship, taking 3rd place on tiebreaks. The event is organized by a nine-year-old American Armenian, Aram Papoyan, with support of his family and friends. This is an amazing opportunity to play with one of the greatest chess players and show your support for children in Armenia! ACEC (Armenian Cultural & Educational Center), 47 Nichols Avenue, Watertown. Call or email for entry form and tickets: Dr. Yelena Bisharyan, Chair of the Board, City of Smile USA, email: yab3@cornell.edu, cell phone: 607-227-6322. \$50.00 Entry fee. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/chess-tournament-fundraiser-tickets-216040070667>



ARTS & CULTURE

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



Holiday Candy Cane Simit From Guild Gatherings

During the COVID-19 lockdown last year, the Women's Guild of St. John Armenian Church in Southfield, Michigan searched for ways to stay connected while staying apart. Normally the Guild's calendar is filled with activities and events throughout the year. Maintaining that connection to each other while remaining homebound meant thinking in new ways. To start, the group divided up their phone directory and took turns calling each member to check in regularly.



Marianne Dardarian demonstrates how to make Candy Cane Simit in her kitchen. (Photo: Daniel Dardarian)

A suggestion by Fr. Aren Jebajian led to the creation of Guild Gatherings, a series of instructional videos recorded by volunteers in their homes and posted on YouTube. The popular channel now has about 35 videos viewed over 7,000 times, covering a wide variety of subjects. "Every day, millions of people go to YouTube to be educated, informed, motivated, or just plain delighted. We demonstrate how to make souboreg, katah, stuffed peppers, comfort foods, yogurt, manti, and choreg, just to name a few of the cooking videos. Other topics include designing holiday planters and tablescapes, painting, knitting, exercise, and more," says Denise Karakashian, Guild Gatherings co-chair. "These videos inspired many viewers to learn new skills during the quarantine."

"Our members were willing to share their expertise and provide entertainment for others during the lockdown. It was exciting to see them go beyond their comfort level, look into the camera and connect with others," says Paulette Apkarian, co-chair.

Family recipes are popular, like the one Marianne Dardarian demonstrates in, "Let's Bake Candy Cane Cookies," a version of simit her mother, Lillian Baylerian Hovsepien, would make at Christmas. "Mom made simit cookies at Christ-

mas, and she loved having us help her. Since we hosted Christmas dinner for the Baylerian and Hovsepien families, it became a tradition to have a basket of them for all to enjoy. My sister Patty and I made them with our children, and we taught friends to make them with their children. Some of us even made them with our children's kindergarten classes as part of the lessons on holiday traditions."

Candy Cane Simit

Contributed by Lillian Hovsepien and Marianne Dardarian

INGREDIENTS:

1/4 cup milk
4 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons shortening
1/4 cup sugar
1 large egg
1 3/4 cups flour
1 1/8 teaspoons baking powder
1/8 teaspoon salt
6 drops of red food coloring
1 egg for brushing

PREPARATION:

The measurements above are for one recipe of dough. You will make two recipes; one plain and the other tinted red. Start with the plain dough. Mix together flour, baking powder and salt. Heat the milk, butter, and shortening until butter is melted. Pour into a mixing bowl, add sugar and combine well. Mix in the egg, and finally the flour mixture. Mix thoroughly until a ball of dough forms. Set dough aside.

Next make the second recipe of dough adding food coloring to the melted liquid ingredients. Allow both doughs to rest for an hour.

Portion out 1/2 oz. balls. Roll each piece into a 6" to 8" stick, then twist one plain stick and one red stick together, making a crook at the top to form a candy cane. Allow to rest again for a short while. Brush twice with an egg wash for a shiny finish.

Bake at 400°F for 15 minutes in the middle of the oven. Bake on top rack for 3 minutes more.

Yield: Approx. 35 simits

View this video and others by going to the Women's Guild website at: <http://stjohnwomensguild.square.site>. Once there, click on Guild Gatherings to learn more.

To view all Guild Gatherings videos on YouTube, go to: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgaajJ5B015V_fCalkqdiHwLZU3qTyV71

Also available on the Women's Guild website: Armenian Cuisine: Preserving Our Heritage Cookbook

Over 450 tested recipes from the Detroit metropolitan Armenian community, updated using modern techniques and equipment. Detailed description of cooking and baking methods including tips for preparation. \$35 with free shipping.

Pomegranate Apron

With 2 handy pockets and adjustable straps. Great for the kitchen, garage, or garden. \$20 with free shipping. To order, go to: <https://stjohnwomensguild.square.site/>

Consider a Donation to Support the Mission of the Women's Guild of St. John Armenian Church: Women's Guild strives to nurture fellowship and service to our Church and community through a variety of activities and events. Your funds will help us continue outreach activities in Armenia such as sponsoring orphans and supporting Mer Doon, which provides young women with a safe home and instructs them in life skills.

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There's Nothing Wrong With Her

A MEMOIR

M.B. YAKOUBIAN

Thrust into the Syrian desert by the Ottoman Turks, young Elise and her mother survived the 1915 Armenian death march. Twenty years later, her new life in America is more than she could ever have dreamed possible. The dream ends when her husband Leon dies and she is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. She has spent her entire adult life filling the woman's role she was taught to in Syria—cooked, cleaned, prayed, and looked after her three children. But she never learned how to drive a car or manage a bank account. Leon saved enough for her to get by after his death. But he didn't think their lawyer son would turn his eye to those meagre savings. Elise's advancing dementia dimmed her awareness of the family strife swirling around her that would mark the last five years of her life. Elise's daughter offers a close-up view here of helping a dependent mother from a thousand miles away.

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EDITORIAL

Fate of Armenia Caught in New Rivalry of East and West



By Edmond Y. Azadian

question the cost for that win: 18,000 Azerbaijani casualties.

The actual winners were Russia and Turkey, at the expense of Azerbaijani sovereignty. Ankara has virtually taken over the command of the Azerbaijani government and army, under the slogan of “one nation, two governments.”

In the meantime, Russia, which had lost its foothold on Azerbaijani soil, has returned there with force for the long haul. As Neil Hauer writes: “If you’re sitting in the Kremlin, you are likely quite pleased with how 2021 turned out in the Caucasus. ... The entrance of Russian peacekeepers into Karabakh at that war’s conclusion had been a goal ever since the conflict’s outbreak three decades ago. Their presence has seen the territory transform into a Russian protectorate in all but name. Even more crucially, it is a hefty source of leverage against both Armenia and especially Azerbaijan. So alongside the Georgian breakaway states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, whose status is unchanged, Russian troops are now deployed on the de jure territory of all three South Caucasus republics.”

Moscow’s intention to keep Karabakh under its sway was manifest since the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Arkady Volsky, the representative of the USSR Politburo to Karabakh, promoted the idea. But at that time, the inexperienced Karabakh movement leaders had their own unrealistic goals which ran counter to Volsky’s.

Today, Moscow has been consolidating its position in the region and jealously guarding it against intruders. It is in this landscape that the renewed East-West rivalry is being enacted. It is in Russia’s interest to keep the conflict continuing as the warring parties have come to accept Russia’s role as a mediator and arbiter. Hence, every time the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, tasked with bringing peace to Karabakh since 1992, tries to take the initiative, Moscow comes up with a counteroffer to keep the West away from the region.

Although Russia is one of the co-chairs of the group, alongside the US and France, it believes it can be outvoted in that format. Therefore, it comes up with its own plans.

The trilateral Sochi meeting on November 26 between the leaders of Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan had not been part of those plans – at least it had not been announced previously. Yet, as soon as European Council President Charles Michel announced that on December 15 Armenian Premier Nikol Pashinyan was to meet with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Brussels, Russian President Vladimir Putin preempted that meeting and summoned the two to Sochi. The communique which was released following that summit did not reveal much; the only worthwhile news was Aliyev’s low-key behavior at that meeting and the absence of a reference to the Zangezur Corridor.

Little would we know that within a week of that meeting, Aliyev would return to his combative posture, demanding a deadline from Armenia for the opening of the so-called corridor, which meant that nothing had been achieved in Sochi.

Another diplomatic casualty of this interference was the cancellation of a previously announced meeting between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in early December in Stockholm on the sidelines of the OSCE Ministerial Council.

Ankara and Moscow at this time are actively promoting the 3+3 format, conceived by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and actively supported by President Aliyev. Russia pre-

tends to have joined this effort reluctantly but since its tenor is to keep the West away from the region, it has come to fully subscribe to it.

The 3+3 format includes Russia, Turkey and Iran on one side, to be joined by the regional nations of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. It purports to resolve all the current problems between these nations. Since it has a markedly anti-West bent, the Islamic Republic is sanguine about the plan, as Tehran’s ambassador to Ankara, Mohammad Farazmand, has stated: “Tehran supports the proposal of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in November 2020 to establish a regional co-operation mechanism in the South Caucasus with the participation of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia as three countries in the region and also with the presence of Turkey, Iran and Russia in the form of 3+3. The ‘3+3 format’ is exactly in line with the principles and foundations of the foreign policy of Iran, which is solving the problems of the region by the regional countries, minimizing tensions and developing cooperation and creating a strong region through synergy.”

Georgia is decidedly against the format and has refused to participate in the first meeting which took place in Moscow on December 10, on the level of deputy foreign ministers. Tbilisi



refuses to participate in any structure where Moscow can decide its fate.

The 3+3 format is the alternative forum to the Minsk Group, which has a different agenda. Thus far, Moscow and Turkey have been successful in keeping the Minsk Group inactive.

After a long hesitation, Armenia decided to participate first in deference to Moscow and second, because thus far that format remains the only forum where it can negotiate its problems face to face with Turkey.

After participating in the Moscow meeting, Armenia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Vahe Grigoryan made a significant statement regarding the 3+3 format, stressing that “the platform must refrain from duplicating other international forums.” That reference can only be to the OSCE Minsk Group, which has or had, until recently on its agenda, the future status of Karabakh. However, Armenia cannot expect any positive results from that format, because for Turkey and Azerbaijan, the Karabakh conflict has been settled by force and there is nothing to discuss.

For Russia, the issue of Karabakh’s status has to be postponed for an indefinite future, until Moscow can implement its own solution. Iran has already congratulated Azerbaijan for having recaptured “its own territory.”

Incidentally, Iran is adamantly opposed to the Zangezur Corridor, but not for any altruistic reasons. That corridor will render redundant Azerbaijan’s and Turkey’s trade over Iranian territory and will cede a competitive edge to Ankara in its trade with Central Asia.

Among several reasons why the Minsk Group could not resume its mission was the formulation of its agenda. Moscow assumed it was its role to define Karabakh’s status and any significant progress by the Minsk Group was viewed as an

continued on next page



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Reminiscing About an Unforgettable Trip To Armenia With Sen. Dole in 1997

A lot has been written about the larger-than-life Sen. Bob Dole since his passing on December 5 at the ripe old age of 98. He was a soldier, Kansas State Representative for two years, member of the US House of Representatives for 8 years, US Senator for 27 years, three-term Senate Majority Leader for 11 years, Republican vice presidential nominee in 1976, and presidential nominee in 1996. He was a decorated war hero and champion of the Armenian Cause.

His life took a tragic turn after he got critically wounded in Italy during World War II while serving in the US Army, crippling his shoulder and right arm. Armenian orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Hampar Kelikian, was able to save Dole's wounded arm, after seven surgeries which the miraculous doctor performed free of charge.

More importantly than treating him physically, Dr. Kelikian boosted the self-confidence of the future Senate leader to focus on what he was left with rather than complaining about what he had lost. This was an important lesson that Bob Dole kept in mind the rest of his life.

Dr. Kelikian was a survivor of the Armenian Genocide. He shared with his patient, Bob Dole, the hellish experience of the Armenian Genocide, during which he lost several members of his family and barely survived himself. Those horrible stories left their indelible mark on young Dole who never forgot the Armenian tragedy. When he rose to the highest ranks of power, he did his best to bring a degree of justice to the long-suffering Armenian nation by trying to get the United States acknowledge the Armenian Genocide.

Dole's valiant efforts in the Senate on behalf of the Armenian people were thwarted by the Clinton Administration and Sen. Robert Byrd (Democrat-West Virginia). However, 30 years later, the publicity generated by Sen. Dole's persistent dedication to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide paid off. Fortunately, Bob Dole lived long enough to see the fruits of his untiring efforts, when President Joe Biden, Bob Dole's close friend and political rival, issued a Statement on April 24, 2021 recognizing the Armenian Genocide. Dole sent a personal note to President Biden thanking him for his acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide.

I would like to share with readers my recollections of accompanying Sen. Dole on a fact-finding trip to Armenia, October 13-15, 1997, to assess Kirk Kerkorian's planned multi-million dollar humanitarian projects through his Lincy Foundation. The delegation included Alice Kelikian, the daughter of Dr. Kelikian, Armenia's Ambassador Rouben Shugarian, Chairman of Lincy Jim

Aljian and his wife Marjorie, two of the Senator's aides, and Sue Temkin, a tax attorney from Dole's Washington law firm. We travelled on board Kerkorian's private jet. I travelled with the delegation in my capacity as the person in charge of the Lincy projects in Armenia.

In a gesture reserved to visiting heads of state, then Prime Minister Robert Kocharyan and several high-ranking officials came to the Yerevan airport to welcome Sen. Dole to Armenia. Also present at the airport was the US Ambassador to Armenia Peter Tomsen. Although President Levon Ter-Petrosian was out of the country on a visit to France, he spoke with Sen. Dole by telephone.

Sen. Dole, as a hero to the Armenian nation, was received enthusiastically both by the public and officials. During the couple of days we were in Armenia, we met with the Prime Minister, Chairman of the Central Bank, Minister of Trade and Industry, Deputy Minister of Economy and Finance, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (their respective ministers were with the President in France), Chairman of Parliament and his two deputies, Chairmen of all parliamentary committees, local businessmen and bankers. Sen. Dole also met with leaders of three opposition parties and held a press conference.

We visited the US Embassy, where we were briefed by the Ambassador, Commercial Attaché, and representative of USAID. We also met with Catholicos of All-Armenians Karekin I at the Cathedral of Holy Echmiadzin. We toured a state-of-the-art clothing factory owned by a businesswoman who had 500 employees. Finally, we visited the Children's Cardiac Center where Dr. Hrayr Hovaguimian, an Armenian-American, was the chief surgeon.

Sen. Dole was deeply touched during his visit to the 70 young children at the Nork Orphanage. When he learned that the staff of the orphanage had not received their salaries for several months, he graciously offered to provide their back pay.

Another moving experience was Sen. Dole's visit to the Armenian Genocide Memorial Monument and Museum where he laid a wreath. He and Alice Kelikian planted a tree in memory of Dr. Hampar Kelikian.

This was Sen. Dole's second trip to Armenia. He and his wife Elizabeth visited Armenia in 1989, following the December 1988 earthquake. In 2019, the Republic of Armenia bestowed the prestigious "Order of Honor" on Sen. Dole.

Sen. Dole was still active at the age of 97. On September 15, 2020, Sen. Dole and his lobbying firm, Alston & Bird, signed a contract with the Armenian government to "monitor current events relevant to US-Armenia relations and provide strategic counsel with respect to improvement of that relationship." Sen. Dole wrote: "These services may include outreach to United States Government officials as well as Members of Congress and their staffs." The contract was for one month at a cost of \$10,000.

The Armenian nation will long remember this great man who never forgot the Armenian surgeon who restored his health and did his best to bring acknowledgment to the Armenian Genocide.

from previous page

increased role for the West in the Caucasus. Therefore, Russia always tried to deflect the attention of the other co-chairs from the issue of the status, emphasizing the humanitarian issues instead. Now that things have started moving, it looks like Moscow has consented to participate with a revamped agenda.

That move is reflected in the December 7 declaration of the three foreign ministers of the Minsk Group countries. Indeed, Antony Blinken, Sergey Lavrov and Jean-Yves Le Drian have stated in their communique, "The Co-Chair countries call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue their engagement under Co-Chair auspices to make concrete progress on humanitarian issues — including, inter alia, detainees, demining, missing persons, voluntary return of displaced persons, and the protection of historic and cultural sites, and to work constructively to resolve other outstanding issues, such as border delimitation and demarcation and the restoration of economic and transportation links. The Co-Chair countries also note with concern recent incidents on the non-demarcated Armenia-Azerbaijan border and reaffirm that the use or threat of force to resolve border disputes is unacceptable. The Co-Chair countries also remind Armenia and Azerbaijan of their obligation to comply with the requirements of international humanitarian law and urge the sides to lift immediately all restrictions on international humanitarian organizations accessing conflict-affected areas and populations."

As we can see, only humanitarian issues are mentioned and for the first time, the status issue has been sidelined. Is this a concession to Russia to assure its participation or are there other underlying reasons?

The political puzzle in the Caucasus politics is too complicated to find a clear picture. Besides powerplay, each party is concerned with the configuration of road and energy networks which will eventually emerge from these negotiations. Armenia is fighting for its life. The parties have left no say for Yerevan over the Karabakh issue.

If Armenia comes out unscathed in one piece, without losing its sovereignty over Syunik, this will prove to be a miracle.

Having Blamed Everything and Everyone Else, Pashinyan's Government Now Blames POWs

By Avo Piroyan

On December 7, a video circulated on social media channels of Armenia's Parliamentary Speaker, Alen Simonyan, criticizing Armenian prisoners of war in Azerbaijan and questioning their intent/goals when surrendering to Azerbaijan.

He said, "When terrorists hijack a plane, Israel does not negotiate with them, it shoots down that plane. Do you know who these prisoners are?"

These are people who threw down their weapons, fled and got lost. I cannot speak about it publicly. Are you not interested in why the parents of these prisoners are not active now? Because these people know that the soldiers have deserted. They left their weapons and fled, and were captured."

The private comments followed public ones by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in parliament on November 17, a day after a major flare-up in violence in Armenia's south that led to more Armenian POWs. Pashinyan, taking a critical tone, said, "there needs to be a discussion around what it means to become a prison of war and under what circumstances [this happens]."

The comments mark a major shift in the Armenian government's position towards Armenian POWs in Azerbaijan.

In recorded speeches to campaign rallies just prior to the June 20 parliamentary elections, Pashinyan made promises around the return of including a bizarre public offer to Azerbaijan to exchange all POWs for his son. He also said that POWs and their families would forgive him for delaying their return by a few months for the sake of the nation.

The few months have passed since the election, indeed, over a year has passed since the Second Karabakh War and only a handful of POWs have been returned and all in exchange for significant concessions by Armenia.

The change in tact towards POWs is staggering, however, it is consistent with the Pashinyan government's approach of deflecting responsibility and laying blame at others.

The long list of those to blame for the loss in the war and beyond include the former political elites due to their corruption of military funds, the army general staff for their organizational and other failings, Russian military equipment for being faulty, Russia selling Su-30 fighter jets without missiles, volunteer units loyal to other factions deserting, among others.

Now the soldiery itself, who up to this point had been praised and even sympathized as having fought well but let down by their commanders, are to blame.

To what extent any of the above is indeed to blame is unclear, not least because the government has still not carried out an independent review of the war. However, what is clear, is that the Armenian government is to blame at least in part if not mostly for the overall outcome of the war. Nevertheless, to date only excuses why they are not to blame have been presented.

(Avo Piroyan is a regular contributor to the *Mirror-Spectator* and a professional journalist based in London,



A Leader of L.A. Pandemic Fraud Ring Gets More than 10 Years in Prison

By Michael Finnegan

LOS ANGELES (*Los Angeles Times*) — An Encino real estate broker was sentenced December 6 to more than 10 years in prison for her role in a family fraud ring that stole \$18 million in emergency pandemic loans largely through fake businesses in the San Fernando Valley.

Tamara Dadyan, 42, is one of eight convicted conspirators in the scam that was led by her brother-in-law, Richard Ayvazyan. Ayvazyan and his wife, who bought a \$3.25 million house in Tarzana with proceeds from the loan scam, were convicted at a trial in June, but fled after slicing off their ankle monitoring bracelets. Ayvazyan was sentenced in absentia last month to 17 years in prison and his wife to six years.

The group filed 151 fraudulent applications for loans that were supposed to keep small businesses nationwide from collapsing during the initial lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic, prosecutors say.



Richard Ayvazyan

Lamenting the “brazenness” of Dadyan’s crimes, U.S. District Court Judge Stephen V. Wilson said her “total disregard for the law” was extraordinary. He found that she played an important role in assisting Ayvazyan. The judge mentioned text messages the pair exchanged as they rushed to submit loan applications — including some in the name of dead people — before the taxpayer bailout ran out of money.

“The conversations with Richard Ayvazyan show that she was his junior partner or maybe more,” Wilson said.

Dadyan’s husband, Artur Ayvazyan, the ringleader’s brother, was sentenced last month to five years in prison for his part in the scam. When they report to prison next month the couple will leave behind two teenage girls, ages 13 and 15.

Dadyan’s attorney, Jerry Kaplan, urged the judge to stagger the sentences so one parent could continue raising the children, but Wilson declined to do so.

Kaplan described Dadyan as an immigrant who came to the U.S. from Armenia as a child and built a successful career as a real estate broker. He called her “a credit to her community.”

“This lady has been a stalwart of the family,” he said. “Her brother-in-law happened to be a crook.”

Wilson invited Dadyan to address the court before sentencing. She nodded no, letting Kaplan speak on her behalf instead.

“The defendant would like to apologize to her community and to her children,” Kaplan told the judge.

Prosecutors had sought a sentence of more than 21 years in prison for Dadyan, calling her crimes “shockingly callous.”

“The millions she stole were intended for small businesses and working families who desperately needed the money to survive as the pandemic paralyzed the economy,” they wrote in a court memo.

The family fraud ring created sham businesses to get many of the loans, attaching fake payrolls and forged tax returns to the applications. To open bank accounts for the businesses, they used the names of people whose identities were stolen.

In the text messages, Dadyan and her brother-in-law discussed how to create phony payroll reports and invent employer identification numbers that would look legitimate to government loan monitors.

When FBI agents raided the Encino house of Dadyan and her husband, they found fake identification documents, credit cards for phony businesses, checkbooks in

the names of fraudulent loan applicants and notary stamps and seals belonging to state and federal courts.

Dadyan pleaded guilty in June to aggravated identity theft, conspiracy to commit wire fraud and bank fraud, and conspiracy to commit money laundering. She named her husband and his brother as co-conspirators. Her husband, in turn, blamed Dadyan for the fraud when he took the stand at his trial.

Dadyan later asked Wilson for permission to withdraw her guilty plea. She claimed she had relied on bad advice from the attorney who urged her to accept prose-

cutors’ demands in the plea deal.

Wilson rejected that request on Monday. Dadyan’s new attorney, Kaplan, said she would appeal her sentence.

Christopher Fenton, a trial attorney at the Justice Department in Washington, asked Wilson to have Dadyan immediately taken into custody, saying she had “every incentive to flee,” but the judge let her remain free until Jan. 5.

“There’s no clear and convincing evidence that she’s a flight risk,” Wilson said.

Both Dadyan and her husband are awaiting trial on unrelated state mortgage fraud charges.



Once again, it has been a challenging year. The Mirror-Spectator has covered the crises in Artsakh, Armenia and Lebanon, supported efforts at humanitarian fundraising, and secured new young correspondents in Armenia, Artsakh and the US. We continue to provide periodic video reports online.

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