

# Four Soldiers Killed as Azerbaijani Military Makes Further Incursions into Armenia

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Four Armenian soldiers were killed and six injured on April 11 while conducting engineering work when an Azerbaijani military jeep drove toward them near the village Togh and shot them. Six were injured.

In addition, several Azerbaijani soldiers were killed when the Armenian side retaliated.

The dead servicemen, according to the Armenian Defense Ministry are: Arthur Avetis Sahakyan (1999) Mkrtych Armen Harutyunyan (1989) Henrik Vachagan Kocharyan (1997) Narek Gagik Sargsyan (1994)

The Armenian Defense Ministry said that its troops came under fire on Tuesday afternoon as they fortified one of their outposts just outside Togh. It released an eight-minute video (<https://www.mil.am/en/news/11414>) that shows a large group of Azerbaijani soldiers approaching Armenian servicemen and then arguing and coming to blows with them. The scuffle degenerated into warning shots that apparently preceded the firefight.

One of the servicemen injured in Azerbaijan's latest aggression in the community of Togh in Syunik province is still in critical condition, he has been operated on again, Metaksya Grigoryan, the head of the resuscitation department of the Central Clinical Military Hospital.

According to Grigoryan, all the soldiers wounded in the attack are currently receiving medical treatment at the Hospital.

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Armenian soldiers were conducting engineering work when they were killed by Azeri gunfire.

## Lemkin Institute Blasts Azerbaijan for Non-Compliance with ICJ Order to Unblock Lachin

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention released a statement this week, expressing its outrage at Azerbaijan for its blatant disregard for the binding International Court of Justice (ICJ) decision on provisional measures issued on February 22, 2023, which ordered Azerbaijan to ensure free movement of goods and people through the Lachin Corridor.

The group's statement follows:

Azerbaijan has failed to comply with this order despite the fact that it has accepted ICJ jurisdiction in the 2021 case on the Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Armenia v. Azerbaijan) and it has been a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination since 1996. The Lemkin Institute is equally concerned with the lack of support

from the international community in enforcing ICJ's decisions with viable mechanisms. The voluntary nature of international law renders it inept when a state decides not to implement the decisions of international tribunals. The Lemkin Institute strongly advocates for more forceful vehicles to implement those decisions and believes it is in the interest of all states to do so.

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# Russian, Armenian FMs Meet Again

SAMARKAND, Uzbekistan (Azatutyun) — Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, discussed bilateral ties and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict when they met on Friday for the third time in just over a month.

The talks took place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on the sidelines of a regular meeting of the top diplomats of ex-Soviet republics making up the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, Lavrov again called for "intensifying efforts on all tracks of the Armenian-Azerbaijani normalization in accordance with the 2020-2022 agreements between the leaders of Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan."

Russia regards those agreements as a blueprint for settling the Armenian-Azerbaijani dispute. It has repeatedly accused the West of seeking to hijack them and sideline Moscow.

Lavrov has been trying to host fresh talks between Mirzoyan and Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov.

Speaking in the Armenian parliament on Wednesday, Mirzoyan indicated that he will meet with Bayramov soon. But



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan meet in Samarkand, April 14, 2023.

he did not specify the date or the format of the meeting. Bayramov did not travel to Samarkand for the CIS ministerial gathering.

The Russian, Armenian and Azerbaijani ministers were scheduled to meet in Moscow last December. Yerevan canceled the meeting in protest against Azerbaijan's blockade of the Lachin corridor.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry said Mirzoyan again raised the issue with Lavrov and "emphasized the need to lift the blockade of the Lachin corridor."

Armenian leaders have accused the Russian peacekeepers of doing little to restore traffic through the sole road connecting Armenia to Karabakh. Russian officials have strongly denied that.

Mirzoyan was also reported to brief Lavrov on the earlier fighting on the see TALKS, page 6



Dr. Stanley Kerr

## At Promise Institute, Documentarian Explores Kerr Family's Legacy of Humanitarian Efforts

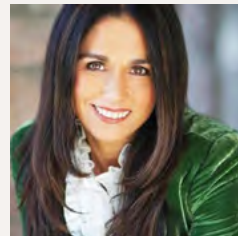
By Harry Kezelian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

LOS ANGELES — On Wednesday, April 12, the Promise Armenian Institute at UCLA introduced a newly endowed lecture series named in honor of the Kerr family. With the backing of Promise Institute benefactor Eric Esrailian and the participation of the Kerrs, who have been involved with humanitarian work and education (notably among the Armenian community and in the Middle East) for three generations, the lecture series has "the aim of amplifying the stories of heroes and heroines who dedicated themselves to providing humanitarian support for victims and survivors of violence and mass atrocities in times of crisis."

The first lecture in the series was dedi-

cated to the Kerr family itself, about whom filmmaker Ani Hovannisian is making a documentary. The lecture, titled "The Extraordinary Humanitarian Legacy of the Near East Relief and Three Generations of Kerrs, Warriors of Peace," was an overview of the research Hovannisian has already done on the documentary and rough film clips she has put together so far.



Filmmaker Ani Hovannisian

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**YEREVAN**

Armenian Weightlifter Wins European Gold



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**FRANCE**

Armenian Genocide Monument to be Installed in France



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**YEREVAN**

Yerevan NGO Promotes Wines Of Armenia



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ARMENIA

## NEWS from ARMENIA

### Azerbaijan Has Occupied 2,700 Hectares of Land In Kapan

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Tatoyan Foundation, led by Armenia's former Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan, on April 17 summed up its fact-finding visit to the country's Syunik Province.

Accordingly, a total of 2,700 hectares of land, including 2,400 hectares of specially protected areas, 170 hectares of forested areas and 130 hectares of communal lands, in the Kapan community alone were occupied by Azerbaijani forces during their attacks in mid-September 2022.

In addition, more than 1,000 hectares of land is in the danger zone where it is either impossible to carry out any agricultural or other works, or they have become increasingly difficult amid security concerns, the Tatoyan Foundation said.

This specifically impacts the villages of Nerkin Hand, Srashen, Shikahogh, Chakaten, and Geghannush, it added.

### Former Armenian PM Charged with Money Laundering

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Former Armenian Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan has been charged with abuse of power, illegal entrepreneurship and large-scale money laundering.

Armenia's Anti-Corruption Committee has revealed that Abrahamyan illegally took control of the Avazhatik sand mining company and receiving profits amounting to 230.4 million drams, the Prosecutor General's Office said in a statement on Tuesday, April 18.

He is accused of using proxies to gain a 60-percent share of the company between 2006 and 2016.

The Anti-Corruption Committee claims Abrahamyan laundered the money by purchasing real estate under the names of his close associates.

Abrahamyan served as prime minister, parliament speaker and minister of territorial administration during this period.

### Aronian and Martirosyan To Compete at Astana Chess Tournament

YEREVAN (Panormama.am) — Levon Aronian and Haik Martirosyan will participate in the Saty Zhuldyz ("Lucky Stars") Rapid and Blitz Chess Tournament to be held in Astana, Kazakhstan from April 20 to 25.

The tournament will be held in a round-robin format with 12 strong chess players, the Armenian Chess Federation said.

The lineup includes GMs Vladimir Kramnik, Levon Aronian, Boris Gelfand, Alexander Grischuk, Hou Yifan, Javokhir Sindarov, Vincent Keymer, Haik Martirosyan, Kateryna Lagno, Arjun Erigaisi, Jakhongir Vakhidov and IM Bibisara Assaubayeva.

# Four Soldiers Killed as Azerbaijani Military Makes Further Incursions into Armenia

INCURSION, from page 1

Russia said on Wednesday that its soldiers and border guards deployed in nearby Armenian territory helped to stop the worst Armenian-Azerbaijani border clash in months. No further ceasefire violations have been reported from this or other sections of the border since Tuesday evening.

"This provocation is another Azerbaijani attack on the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia," the Armenian Foreign Ministry charged on Tuesday night. It urged the international community to stop Baku from further escalating the situation.

#### International Reactions

The European Union has called on Azerbaijan and Armenia to show "restraint" after the most deadly military clashes between the two foes in more than six months killed at least seven soldiers. Both sides exchanged artillery and machine gun fire over their unmarked border, with Azerbaijan warning it "will continue to take all necessary measures... to prevent provocations" from its neighbor.

France accused Azerbaijan of occupying Armenia's sovereign territory when it reacted late on April 12 to the latest deadly clash on the border between the two South Caucasus states.

Azerbaijani army units took up new positions in the area on March 30 after advancing into what Yerevan regards as Armenian territory. Baku denies that they crossed the border.

"We reiterate that the delineation of the border must be achieved exclusively through negotiations, and we urge the Parties to continue their efforts to that end," read a statement released by the French Foreign Ministry.

"Armenia's territorial integrity must be respected and Azerbaijani forces occupying positions on the Armenian side of the line of contact must withdraw in order to prevent future incidents and preserve the foundations of a lasting peace in the region," it said.

Unlike France, the European Union did not blame either side for the fighting. An EU foreign policy spokeswoman urged Armenia and Azerbaijan to withdraw their troops from the volatile border and respect each other's territorial integrity.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan hailed the EU's reaction on Thursday, saying that Yerevan has supported the idea of troop disengagement for the last two years.

"Such a solution is hampered by Azerbaijan's unconstructive position," he said.

"This incident yet again emphasizes that in the absence of a delimited border, the 1991 line must be respected and the forces of either side withdrawn to safe distances from this line to prevent any similar incidents from occurring," an EU foreign policy spokeswoman, Nabila Massrali said in a statement.

Massrali also urged Yerevan and Baku to restart their stalled talks on the delimitation of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

It is not clear whether Tuesday's skirmishes were witnessed by any of some 100 EU monitors who were deployed along the Armenian side of the heavily militarized border in late February. The monitoring mission made no public statements.

Meanwhile, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, said the latest fighting shows that Moscow was right to oppose the EU mission and warned that it could only heighten tensions between the two South Caucasus nations.

"We had ... predicted the inevitable," Zakharova told reporters in a clear jibe at the Armenian government.

The Sweden-Armenia Friendship Group of the Swedish Riksdag and members of the Swedish delegations to Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe (PACE) and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on April 17 released a statement blaming Azerbaijan.

"These aggressive actions of the Azerbaijani side have been carried out despite the readiness to resolve the existing problems through constructive negotiations expressed by the Armenian side earlier," the statement from the Swedish lawmakers said.

"The provocation carried out by Azerbaijan is another encroachment on the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia. This policy of Azerbaijan is not new, it is the continuation of the attacks carried out against the Republic of Armenia in May and November 2021, as well as in September 2022, as a result of which Azerbaijan occupied sovereign territories of Armenia.

"It should be stated that the use of force and the threat of use of force, should not be an alternative for Azerbaijan to significantly destabilize the situation in the region and undermine the efforts of mediating partners to continue peace negotiations.

"We, the undersigned Members of the Sweden-Armenia Friendship Group of

the Swedish Riksdag and members of the Swedish delegations to PACE and OSCE-PA, call on the international community, including all partners interested in stability and peace in the region, to condemn Azerbaijan's aggressive actions through targeted statements and clear steps and prevent further escalation of the situation by Azerbaijan."

Yet again, on April 16, at around 10:50 p.m., units of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces opened fire from different caliber firearms towards the Armenian combat positions located in the direction of Sotk, the Armenian Ministry of Defense reported.

No casualties were reported from the Armenian side.

#### Losing Land

Aside from the risk to life the villagers face, they also face losing their lands.

Andranik Shegunts, a resident of Tegh, has lost a plot of arable land that belonged to him, after Azerbaijan's latest incursion into Armenia, former Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan said on Friday, April 14.

"He has a certificate of ownership, as well as other documents proving that the land has belonged to him since 2003. With borrowed money, he grew wheat and cultivated the land, but now the Azerbaijani soldier control the land, and he cannot even approach it," Tatoyan said on social media.

"The 13-person family of Shegunts is now deprived of their main source of livelihood. Due to the illegal presence of Azerbaijani armed servicemen, the family is unable to engage in animal husbandry and beekeeping."

Tatoyan noted that the normal life and safety of his family has been disturbed, the social conditions have significantly deteriorated.

"Dozens of families in the local community have found themselves in this situation due to the incursions and illegal presence of Azerbaijani armed officers," Tatoyan said.

"This is just one of the examples that proves that the armed servicemen of Azerbaijan disrupt the normal life and safety of our civilians. Everything should be done to remove them from our settlements and roads between communities, including through the use of international mechanisms."

(Azatutyun and Panarmenian contributed to this story.)

## State Department Official Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met on April 18 with a visiting senior official from the US State Department for talks on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and US-Armenian relations.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Erika Olson met with other senior Armenian officials in Yerevan on Monday. The US Embassy in Armenia said at the start of her trip that she will discuss "US support for an Armenia-Azerbaijan peace agreement and US-Armenian bilateral ties."

In a statement, Pashinyan's press office said the normalization of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations was on the agenda of his meeting with Olson. It said they also touched upon Azerbaijan's continuing blockade of Karabakh's land link with Armenia and "the creation of an international mechanism for dialogue between Baku and

Stepanakert."

Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov accused Yerevan on Monday of hampering Baku's efforts to "reintegrate" the Karabakh Armenians into Azerbaijan in a phone call with another US deputy assistant secretary of state, Dereck Hogan. According to Azerbaijani news agencies, Hogan stressed the importance of "successfully completing the Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization process."

Earlier on Monday, Bayramov met with Louis Bono, a US special envoy for Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks. Bono visited Armenia last week.



Erika Olson, left, with Nikol Pashinyan

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken mediated talks between Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on February 18 on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference. Blinken had separate phone conversations with the two leaders late last month.



ARMENIA

# Pashinyan Says Armenia Is Ready for Peace with Azerbaijan

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia unequivocally recognizes Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and is ready to sign a relevant peace treaty with Baku, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said on April 18.

"The peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan will become realistic if the two countries recognize clearly, without ambiguities and pitfalls, each other's territorial integrity and undertake not to ever submit territorial claims to each other," Pashinyan told the Armenian parliament.

"I now want to reaffirm that Armenia fully recognizes the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and we expect Azerbaijan to do the same by recognizing the entire territory of the Armenian [Soviet Socialist Republic] as the [modern-day] Republic of Armenia," he said.

Pashinyan already vowed such recognition in a joint statement with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, French President Emmanuel Macron and European Union chief Charles Michel issued after their meeting held in Prague last October. The statement upheld a 1991 declaration in

which Armenia and other newly independent Soviet republics recognized each other's Soviet-era borders.

This was due to be at the heart of an Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty promoted by the West. Pashinyan publicly backed such a deal ahead of the Prague summit, stoking Armenian opposition claims that he is ready to help Baku regain full control over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov likewise said in December that Pashinyan effectively recognized Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh in Prague. Lavrov said the Armenian leader thus all but precluded a different peace deal favored by Moscow. It would indefinitely delay an agreement on Karabakh's status.

An Armenian opposition lawmaker, Artur Khachatryan, challenged Pashinyan on Tuesday to clarify his position on Karabakh's future status. The prime minister gave no clear answer, saying only that there needs to be an "international mechanism" for direct talks between Baku and Karabakh's leadership.

In April 2022, Pashinyan sparked angry opposition protests in Yerevan when he signaled readiness to "lower the bar" on Karabakh's status acceptable to Armenia. He and other Armenian officials also stopped making references to the Karabakh Armenians' right to self-determination in their public statements.

Pashinyan's Civil Contract party pledged to continue championing the principle



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at Parliament on April 18, 2023

of self-determination in its 2021 election manifesto.

Artsvik Minasyan, another opposition lawmaker, accused the Armenian government of not honoring that pledge and thus calling its legitimacy into question.

Meanwhile, Aliyev said that Armenia's leadership now "agrees in principle" with his position on the Armenian-Azerbaijani peace treaty. Still, he said, Pashinyan should go further and declare that "Karabakh is Azerbaijan."

In an interview with Azerbaijani state

television aired on Tuesday, Aliyev also renewed his threats of fresh military action against Armenia, saying that Azerbaijan is strengthening its army because it "must be ready for any situation."

Aliyev went on to again rule out any internationally mediated talks with Karabakh representatives. Karabakh Armenians should accept Azerbaijani citizenship or leave the territory, he said.

"The separatists have to realize that they have two options. either they will live under Azerbaijani rule or leave," added Aliyev.

## OSCE Says It Is Ready to Open New Page of Cooperation With Armenia

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairman-in-Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia Bujar Osmani has said that the organization is ready to open a new page of cooperation with Armenia.

Osmani made the remarks at a meeting with President Vahagn Khachatryan.

"I can say that we have a valuable and effective cooperation based on mutual trust, and we are also ready to open a new page of cooperation, taking into account the changed geopolitical circumstances," Osmani added.

Khachatryan expressed confidence that Osmani's visit will contribute to solving problems in the region.

"Unfortunately, it's not that we have nothing to worry about in the current stage on the road to peace. We are convinced that the OSCE has its role in solving the problems of our region, taking into account both the activities of the OSCE and our long-term working experience with the OSCE," the President said.

During the meeting, he presented to the OSCE Chairman-in-Office the approaches and possibilities of Armenia regarding the solution of regional problems. Khachatryan emphasized that Armenia is firm in its position to achieve stable peace in the South Caucasus and establish neighborly relations with its neighbors.

The two discussed issues related to the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh problem, the humanitarian crisis created in Nagorno-Karabakh as a result of the illegal blockade of the Lachin Corridor, and the mechanisms for protecting the rights and security of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Referring to conflict settlement, Buyar Osmani noted that the OSCE and North Macedonia in particular have great experience in solving such problems and are ready to share that experience.

Azerbaijan launched a deadly provocation against Armenia on April 11, which left around a dozen Armenian troops killed or injured.

## Lemkin Institute Blasts Azerbaijan for Non-Compliance with ICJ Order to Unblock Lachin

LEMKIN, from page 1

On February 22nd, the ICJ issued a decision stating that Azerbaijan shall "take all measures at its disposal to ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions." The February 22nd decision comes after the ICJ issued provisional measures in that same case, on December 7, 2021, ordering Azerbaijan to "protect from violence and bodily harm all persons captured in relation to the 2020 Conflict who remain in detention, and ensure their security and equality before the law; take all necessary measures to prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred and discrimination, including by its officials and public institutions, targeted at persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin; and take all necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration affecting Armenian cultural heritage, including but not limited to churches and other places of worship, monuments, landmarks, cemeteries and artefacts."

Several weeks later, Azerbaijan has not only still not complied with the Feb 22nd, 2023, order, but has also launched new military actions in addition to remaining in violation of the orders issued from December 2021 until today. The Lemkin Institute reiterates that ICJ decisions are binding on the parties in a given case, which means that any order the ICJ issues in the case of Armenia v. Azerbaijan is binding on both parties. This means that both Azerbaijan and Armenia must comply with ICJ orders in light with treaties and agreements both sides have agreed to under international law. Thus, Azerbaijan's noncompliance with the ICJ provisional measures is a blatant violation of international law and a flagrant ignorance of Azerbaijan's international obligations.

There have been very little efforts made by the international community to compel Azerbaijan to lift the blockade in the month since the ICJ order. The most high profile statement made was by Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the previous Secretary-General of NATO, who expressed his dismay at the ongoing blockade and warned of a "humanitarian catastrophe," but did not offer much else. The EU international mission charged with monitoring the Lachin Corridor, which has been protested by Azerbaijan, likewise has proved incapable so far of effectively changing the situation, thus far having released only statements that they will report their findings back to Brussels. The EU's South Caucasus envoy, Toivo Klaar, continues his shameful effort to play both sides of the issue.

Let us remember that the blockade started on 12 December 2022, when Azerbaijani civilians claiming to be environmentalists established barricades to protest "illegal mining activities" and the use of the Corridor to transport weapons. In reality, some of the blockaders have connections to the Azerbaijani government and the blockade is more for political purposes than legitimate environmental concerns. These barricades are also a clear violation of the November 9, 2020, Trilateral Peace Treaty signed by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia, which includes provisions providing for free movement along the Lachin Corridor.

Our readers will recall the February 12th statement from the Lemkin Institute expressing outrage at the tepid efforts and ongoing silence made by the international community in forcing Azerbaijan to change its actions. The Lemkin Institute once again reiterates its call for the international community to take action and pressure Azerbaijan to lift the blockade immediately, enact sanctions for the criminal acts of the Aliyev regime, and foster a peaceful environment conducive to a diplomatic solution that adequately protects the rights of indigenous Armenians in Artsakh.

The Lemkin Institute would like to bring to the attention of international policymakers the implications that Azerbaijan's noncompliance with an international tribunal carries for future cases. Any given state not complying with ICJ's decisions, and the decision of any other international court of body to which countries have subjected their conflicts, undermines and defeats the purposes and core principles of the international community. If Azerbaijan successfully gets away with not complying with the ICJ orders, that sets a terrible precedent and renders international organs useless in future proceedings. Furthermore, ignoring Azerbaijan's violations only invites more violence. The international community risks destroying trust in international institutions if it continues turning a blind eye to Azerbaijan's noncompliance.

The Lemkin Institute demands that meaningful action be taken to bring Azerbaijan into compliance with both the December 21, 2021 provisional measures, and the February 22, 2023, ICJ order to lift the blockade of the Lachin Corridor, that Azerbaijan be sanctioned once and for all for its criminal actions, and that the international community demonstrates respect for the principles it has adopted to end atrocity crimes and endless wars around the globe.



## Two Azerbaijani Soldiers Arrested In Armenia

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia/PanArmenian.net) — Criminal proceedings have started against two Azerbaijani soldiers — Agshin Babirov and Hussein Akhundov — for illegally crossing the border the Republic of Armenia in a prior consent with a group of persons, smuggling of firearms and munitions across Armenia's state border. The two crossed from Nakhichevan.

Charges have been presented under Article 469, Part 3, Clause 2 and Article 340, Part 2, Clause 1 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia.

Detention has been chosen as a preventive measure.

Human Rights Defender of Armenia Anahit Manasyan on Sunday, April 16 visited the Azerbaijani servicemen.

According to a statement from the Defender's office, Manasyan got acquainted with the conditions of their detention, and issues related to guaranteeing their rights, including their right to health.

Manasyan registered that the Azeri soldiers are provided with proper detention conditions, including constant drinking water, food, and hygiene items. They are also provided with medical assistance and service when necessary. The doctor-specialist of the staff of the Defender's Office, who was also present during the visit, got acquainted with the medical documents, and the medical assistance that was provided to the mentioned persons.

The persons deprived of their liberty informed that they are familiar with the accusations that are brought against them, and that they were provided with a free public defender, as well as the participation of an interpreter was guaranteed during the proceedings.

The Human Rights Defender clarified to the persons deprived of their liberty the mechanisms of the protection of their rights, the nature of the restrictions applied by the judicial act, the procedure and deadlines of its appeal, as well as the procedures of applying to Human Rights Defender.



Parents of soldiers killed in the 2020 Karabakh war protest outside the Investigative Committee building, April 14, 2023.

## Families of Fallen Soldiers Protest Again in Yerevan

By Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Several dozen parents of Armenian soldiers killed during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war partially blocked a street in Yerevan for the second consecutive day on Friday, April 14, to protest against authorities' failure to prosecute police officers who used force against them.

The same protesters gathered at the main entrance to Yerevan's Yerablur Military Pantheon last September to try to prevent Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan from laying a wreath there on the occasion of Armenia's Independence Day. They blame Pashinyan for the deaths of their sons as well as at least 3,800 other Armenian soldiers killed in action.

Riot police violently dispersed the protesters shortly before senior officials led by Pashinyan arrived at the military ceremony. At least 37 grief-stricken men and women were dragged away, forced into police vehicles and detained in dramatic scenes that caused an uproar on social media.

Armenia's leading civic organizations strongly condemned the use of force and demanded the resignation of Vahe Ghazaryan, the then chief of the national police. Ghazaryan retained his post before being promoted and appointed by Pashinyan as interior minister in January.

While defending the use of force, Ghazaryan ordered an internal inquiry into his officers' actions at Yerablur. None of them have been fired or subjected to disciplinary action.

Despite formally recognizing most of the detained parents as "victims" of violence, Armenia's Investigative Committee has likewise not indicted any of the policemen in a separate, criminal investigation launched after the Yerablur crackdown.

The angry parents decried this fact and demanded official explanations when they rallied outside the law-enforcement agency's headquarters on Thursday evening. They also partially blocked traffic through a street adjacent to the building.

The protest continued through the night and on Friday morning. Its participants also

condemned the Investigative Committee's refusal to meet with them.

"We spent the night here," said Gayane Hakobyan, who lost her son, Zhora Martirosyan, during the six-week war.

Hakobyan said that riot police officers must be held accountable despite apologizing to her and other parents during a joint interrogation.

"We suffered more mental and moral injuries than physical ones," she told journalists.

In a statement, the Investigative Committee rejected the protesters' demands as "illegal" and defended its officials' refusal to hold more face-to-face meetings with them. It claimed that some parents shouted insults and made other "emotional" statements when they were received by investigators last fall.

The protestors dismissed that explanation. As one of them put it, "They haven't taken any investigative actions since our last meeting. They don't come out [to meet the parents] simply because they have nothing to tell us."

# Armenian Gold Mine 'Hit By Azeri Gunfire'

By Susan Badalian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Armenia's largest gold mine was unable to restart production operations for the third consecutive day on Monday, April 17, due to what its management and workers described as cross-border fire from nearby Azerbaijani army positions.

The Sotk mine, employing more than 700 people, is right on the volatile border with Azerbaijan.

"The mine's operations were halted on Saturday morning and have still not been relaunched due to periodic gunfire," said Ruzanna Grigoryan, a spokeswoman for the Russian-owned company GeoProMining Gold developing the massive gold deposit.

Grigoryan said that 300 workers making up the company's day shift were evacuated on Monday morning after coming under fire again.

"As soon as the day shift tried to get to work this morning, yesterday morning and Saturday morning gunshots resumed and we had to evacuate the workers for security considerations," she told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. "We gathered to go to work today but they didn't let us," said one of the workers. "As soon as there is movement at the mine and it's about to work, they open fire."

The Armenian Defense Ministry accused Azerbaijani forces of opening fire late on Sunday at its troops deployed near the Sotk mine. None of them was hurt, he said, adding that the situation there was "relatively stable" the following morning.

The Azerbaijani military denied violating the ceasefire in the area.

Mining operations at Sotk were brought to a halt three days after at least three Azerbaijani and four Armenian soldiers were killed in fighting at another section of the heavily militarized border. No further major skirmishes have been reported from that section since then.



The GeoProMining Gold Mine



## ARMENIA

## Armenian Anti-Corruption Chief Cleared Over 'Dubious' Property Deal

By Artak Khulian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Prosecutors have decided not to launch criminal proceedings against the head of an Armenian law-enforcement agency tasked with combating corruption after looking into allegations that he abused his power to buy a large apartment at a discount.

Infocom.am revealed last month that Sasun Khachatryan, who runs the Anti-Corruption Committee (ACC), halted a criminal investigation into a wealthy businessman in 2021 shortly after purchasing the apartment in a new residential district constructed by the latter's company in Yerevan.

Khachatryan paid 71 million drams (\$180,000) for the 167-square-meter property. According to the online publication, this is significantly less than what the owners of other apartments located in the same building paid Jermuk Group, a private developer.

The ACC claimed on March 30 that Khachatryan was entitled to the discount because he had booked the apartment in advance of its construction. Infocom.am pointed out, however, that neither the ACC nor Jermuk Group provided any documentary evidence of the apartment reservation.

The publication noted that the ACC investigated Ashot Arsenyan, a well-known businessman who controls Jermuk Group, over vote buying alleged by the Armenian police in 2018. Citing a lack of incriminating evidence, the law-enforcement body suspended the investigation in October 2021, seven months after Khachatryan formalized his property deal with Arsenyan's firm.

The author of the investigative article, Mkrtich Karapetyan, suggested that Khachatryan may have bought the apartment at a knockdown price in exchange for not prosecuting Arsenyan.

The Office of the Prosecutor-General told RFE/RL's Armenian Service on Monday, April 17, that it has looked into the article and found no wrongdoing on the part of Khachatryan which would warrant a formal criminal investigation. It did not go into details.

Khachatryan, 46, worked as a senior prosecutor under Armenia's former governments. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan appointed him as chief of the Special Investigative Agency, of which the ACC is the successor agency, after coming to power in 2018. Khachatryan also owns two other apartments in Yerevan, according to Infocom.am.

Khachatryan is one of several Armenian officials, including Defense Minister Suren Papikyan, who have bought expensive property in the upmarket Byuregh district built by Jermuk Group.

The investigative publication Hetq.am reported recently that even though Papikyan's apartment is now worth an estimated \$412,000, he paid only \$168,000 for it last summer.

Pashinyan defended his defense minister and close political ally on March 14, questioning the market value of the apartment cited by Hetq.am. He again claimed to have eliminated "systemic corruption" in Armenia.

Pro-opposition and independent media outlets increasingly accuse members of Pashinyan's entourage of enriching themselves or their cronies. Earlier this month, hackers hijacked the YouTube channel of the Yerevan daily *Aravot* as it was about to publish a video report detailing expensive property acquisitions by several senior government officials and pro-government lawmakers.



Gor Sahakyan

## Armenian Weightlifter Wins European Gold

YEREVAN (Panorama) — Armenian weightlifter Gor Sahakyan, who earned a gold medal at the 2023 European Weightlifting Championships in Yerevan on April 17, said he believed in his victory despite the tough competition.

The 19-year-old won the 67 kilogram gold after lifting a total of 340kg (145kg+175kg). Spain's Juan Hernandez came

in second, while Karan Kahrman of Turkey finished third.

"It was a tough competition," Gor told reporters after being crowned European champion.

"I believed in my victory, I worked hard after the European Youth Championships. I'm overjoyed. I was looking forward to this," Sahakyan said, thanking his fans.

## US Sanctions Armenia-Based Firm

By Robert Zargarian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — The United States has added a Russian-owned firm registered in Armenia to its list of entities accused of helping Russia evade US sanctions imposed since the invasion of Ukraine.

The US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) blacklisted on April 12, more than 100 people and entities it said have violated US export controls and helped Russia's war effort. The sanctions bar US companies and individuals from any dealings with them and also freeze any assets the latter may hold in US jurisdiction.

The newly blacklisted entities include, TAKO LLC, a little-known company registered in Armenia in May last year about three months after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine.

According to the Armenian state registry,

TAKO is fully owned by a Russian national, Vadim Verkhovtsev, and specializes in wholesale trade in electronic and telecommunications equipment and parts. No other details of its operations are known.

TAKO's registration address matches that of an office building in Yerevan. The building administration told RFE/RL's Armenian Service on Friday that the company rented an office there until last fall.

The OFAC said that TAKO has cooperated with the Russian company Radioavtomatika regarded by it as a supplier of electronic items to Russia's defense industry. The US sanctioned Radioavtomatika last year.

TAKO is the first Armenia-based entity known to have been blacklisted by Washington in connection with the sweeping sanctions against Moscow. The development follows a series of meetings during which US officials apparently pressed the Armenian government to comply with the

sanctions.

US Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo discussed the issue with Armenia's Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan in Washington on April 11. According to the US Treasury Department, Adeyemo "highlighted the United States' global efforts to prevent evasion of US sanctions and export controls imposed on Russia."

In a joint "compliance note" issued this month, the US departments of Justice, Treasury and Commerce said that third-party intermediaries have commonly used China, Armenia, Turkey and Uzbekistan as "transshipment points" to Russia as well as Belarus.

Russian-Armenian trade skyrocketed last year, with Armenian exports to Russia nearly tripling to \$2.4 billion. Goods manufactured in third countries and re-exported from Armenia to Russia are believed to have accounted for most of that gain.

## Armenia's Border Guard Chief Sacked

By Astghik Bedevian

YEREVAN (Azatutyun) — Opposition leaders accused Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Thursday, April 13, of trying to dodge responsibility for continuing national security failures after he sacked the commander of Armenia's Border Guard Troops.

The official, Arman Maralchyan, was relieved of his duties after four Armenian soldiers were killed in fighting with Azerbaijani forces near the Armenian border village of Tegh.

Azerbaijani army units took up new positions in that area on March 30 after advancing into what Yerevan regards as sovereign Armenian territory. They completed a partial change of the route of the Lachin corridor connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Pashinyan and the National Security Ser-

vice (NSS) initially downplayed the Azerbaijani advance but later acknowledged the loss of a large part of agricultural land and pastures belonging to Tegh's farmers.

Pashinyan's political opponents blamed him for the fresh Azerbaijani territorial gains, saying that the Armenian army should have taken up positions along the Armenian side of the border section beforehand. They said that Pashinyan not only failed to issue such an order but also declared on March 30 that from now on the Tegh area will be patrolled and protected by lightly armed border guards subordinate to the NSS, rather than army units.

The criticism intensified following April 11's border clash, which also left at least three Azerbaijani soldiers dead.

Pashinyan claimed the following day that the deadly violence occurred because security officials failed to execute his "concrete instructions."

"What happened should not have happened and it is clear, at least for me, that we need to investigate what happened there and why it happened," he told the Armenian parliament.

Maralchyan's dismissal was announced shortly after Pashinyan's remarks. Armenian government officials and pro-government lawmakers declined to comment on it on Thursday.

Tigran Abrahamyan, a senior lawmaker representing the opposition Pativ Unem bloc, said that Pashinyan's government is seeking to scapegoat security officials for its inability to defend the country.

"I believe that the sacking of the commander of the Border Guard Troops primarily stems from the authorities' obsession with dodging political responsibility and finding scapegoats whom they can blame," Abrahamyan told RFE/RL's Armenian Service.

## INTERNATIONAL

## INTERNATIONAL

### Armenia Moving Closer To Hosting Next Mars Simulation

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — A memorandum on conducting analog studies of Mars was signed between the Armenian Aerospace Agency and the Austrian Space Forum (OeWF) in Yerevan on Monday, April 17, Sputnik Armenia reported.

The Austrian Space Forum (OeWF) will be conducting its next AMADEE-24 Mars simulation in Armenia in March 2024. A small field crew of highly trained analog astronauts with spacesuit simulators will conduct experiments preparing for future human and robotic Mars exploration missions.

The agreement was signed by the head of the Armenian Space Agency (ArmCosmos) Mher Mehrabyan and OeWF director Gernot Grömer.

According to Grömer, Armenia will be at the epicenter of Mars exploration throughout the year.

### Çavusoglu Makes Fresh Demands on Armenia

ISTANBUL (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavusoglu, in an interview with HaberTürk TV on April 14, spoke about the so-called “Zangezur corridor,” Azerbaijan’s latest provocation in the Armenian village of Togh, making baseless accusations against Armenia, Ermenihaber.am reports.

“It is necessary to leave these tensions aside and sign a comprehensive peace agreement as soon as possible, as well as build those crossings and roads that are also in favor of Iran, they are in favor of all of us, they are to the benefit of Armenia,” he said on April 14.

“Iran also had an idea to build roads through its territory to Nakhijevan. In fact, we support this as well. Because there should always be different alternatives. Being tied to one place is risky, there must be alternatives. In other words, the implementation of this program is for the benefit of everyone, first of all for Armenia.”

Çavusoglu also made claims accusing Armenia of trying to “transfer weapons to Nagorno-Karabakh.”

### OSCE US Co-Chair Louis Bono Visits Baku

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and US Co-Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Louis Bono discussed the prospects of negotiations on peace treaty between Yerevan and Baku, ARMENPRESS reports, the press service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan said in a statement on April 17.

“During the meeting, further prospects of the negotiation process on the peace treaty between Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as other components of normalization of relations were discussed,” reads the statement.



Dignitaries at the Courbevoie commemorations

## Armenian Genocide Monument to Be Installed in France’s Courbevoie



Courbevoie Mayor Jacques Kossowski

COURBEVOIE, France (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Armenian Embassy in France on Saturday, April 15, participated in an event commemorating the 108th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in Courbevoie, a commune located near Paris.

The event was organized by the Courbevoie municipal in collaboration with Councilor Jean-Jacques Saradjian and the Association of Former French-Armenian Fighters, the Armenian Embassy in Paris announced.

At the event, Courbevoie Mayor Jacques Kossowski announced plans to erect an Armenian Genocide monument in the city next year.

In their remarks, high-ranking French officials and local government leaders expressed their solidarity with and support for Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) facing difficult geopolitical challenges and, in particular, for the Artsakh Armenians who have been struggling under Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Lachin Corridor for more than four months now.

## US Sets \$259 million F-16 Equipment Sale to Turkey

By Humeyra Pamuk and Patricia Zengerle

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — US President Joe Biden’s administration notified Congress on April 17 of the planned sale to Turkey of avionics software upgrades for its current fleet of F-16 fighter aircraft, a deal valued at up to \$259 million.

The deal, first reported by Reuters earlier on Monday, moves ahead with the sale of the modernization package for Turkey’s aircraft, after leaders of US congressional committees gave informal approval.

A larger agreement, NATO member Turkey’s request to buy billions of dollars worth of F-16s, remains in limbo amid continuing opposition in Congress.

If it is cleared by Congress during the formal approval process, the package would be the first major military sale to Turkey that Congress has approved for years.

“Türkiye is a longstanding and valued NATO ally,” a State Department spokesperson said in a statement. “The Biden Administration supports Türkiye’s efforts to bring the avionics of its F-16 fleet up to standard.”

The spokesperson noted that the upgrade will improve the interoperability between Turkish and NATO systems by updating

its communications and also provide upgrades to enhance safety measures such as a ground collision avoidance system.

The F-16 modernization deal follows Turkey approving Finland’s accession to the NATO military alliance and signs of easing tensions between Turkey and neighbor Greece ahead of Turkish elections next month.

Lockheed Martin Corp (LMT.N) will be the principal contractor on the deal.

The package is separate from the proposed \$20 billion sale of new Lockheed Martin F-16 fighters and nearly 80 modernization kits that Turkey requested in October 2021.

The smaller package was approved after the administration pushed the lawmakers to approve it to send a “positive signal” to Ankara, according to one source familiar with the deal.

The approval does not mean the bigger sale will receive a green light from Congress as US lawmakers are seeking assurances from Turkey on issues that go beyond the Nordic NATO expansion.

Those issues include easing tensions with Greece for good, refraining from an invasion in northern Syria and enforcing sanctions against Russia.

## Russian, Armenian FM’s Meet Again

TALKS, from page 1

Armenian-Azerbaijani border which left at least seven soldiers from both sides dead. He described the deadly clash as “yet another manifestation of Azerbaijan’s aggressive policy.”

The two ministers held fresh talks amid unprecedented friction between their countries. It stems in large measure from what Yerevan sees as Moscow’s reluctance to support its main regional in the protracted conflict with Azerbaijan.

The rift deepened further late last month after Armenia’s Constitutional Court gave the green light for parliamentary ratification of the International Criminal Court’s founding treaty. The ruling followed an arrest warrant issued by the ICC for Russian President Vladimir Putin over war crimes allegedly committed by Russia in Ukraine.

Moscow warned on March 27 that recognition of The Hague tribunal’s jurisdiction would have “extremely negative” consequences for Russian-Armenian relations. The official readouts of Lavrov’s latest meeting with Mirzoyan made no mention of this issue.

# Community News

## St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral Easter Service Brings Renewal and Hope To the Faithful

By Stephan S. Nigohosian

NEW YORK — Before a full-capacity gathering of the faithful at New York City's St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, Diocesan Primate the Very Rev. Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan celebrated his inaugural Easter Sunday badarak on April 9, 2023.

In addition, the physical presence of hundreds of participants, as well as the return of the "Release of Doves" ceremony following the close of the service, was another step toward the pre-pandemic normalcy that so many have prayed for. How fitting that this renewal of the sacred Easter Liturgy occurred during the celebration of the most glorious new beginning: the Resurrection and victory over death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan celebrates the Badarak. (Photo: Levon Mark)

Streams of sunlight cascaded through St. Vartan Cathedral's stained-glass windows, bathing the sanctuary in rich hues of color as the spiritually-moving Easter service began. Following Parsamyan's entrance accompanied by a procession of clergy and altar servers, he moved through the sanctuary, bestowing his blessings among the faithful.

Upon his reaching the altar, angelic strains of the choir swelled to further heighten the joy and triumph of Christ's Resurrection. White lilies adorning the altar represented new life and the purity of Christ our Savior, providing a sacred backdrop for this hallowed event.

Multiple cameras placed throughout the sanctuary provided those participating in the Easter service at home with immersive views of the service, including an intimate, front-facing view of Fr. Merop praying on the holy altar during the Synaxis (teaching) section of the badarak. Among the clergy and altar servers assisting Fr. Mesrop throughout the liturgy were Cathedral Vicar Fr. Davit Karamyan and Fr. Hovel Ohanyan.

see EASTER, page 8



San Francisco Mayor London Breed enthusiastically holds up a copy of the San Francisco Chronicle removed from the time capsule on April 1, 2023, exactly ninety years after it was placed in the ground (photo Greg Nemet)

## Time Capsule Unearthed At San Francisco's Mt. Davidson Cross from 1933

SAN FRANCISCO — On Saturday, April 1, a time capsule was unearthed from the foot of Mt. Davidson Cross in San Francisco in front of a large crowd of on-lookers. Ninety years ago to the day, San Francisco officials and community members gathered at the top of Mt. Davidson Cross to witness Boy Scouts of America Troop 88 bury a sealed copper box at the foot of the Cross to commemorate the first Easter Sunrise Service held there ten years earlier on April 1, 1923.

"Historic moments like these held at Mt. Davidson Cross illustrates how our Armenian-American communities can enrich and inspire society by bringing people together under the ancient canopy of our resilience and hope," commented Fr.

Mesrop Ash, Pastor of St. John's Armenian Apostolic Church in San Francisco and Board Member of the Mt. Davidson Cross Armenian Council.

During the time capsule unearthing, representatives from the San Francisco Historical Society were present to delicately receive the items which will be prepared for archiving and placed on display for the public to view at their San Francisco museum in June.

Among the items found in the capsule — which were much more plentiful than the organizers were expecting — were a leather-bound Bible, a San Francisco telephone book, pamphlets, a Boy Scout pin, a municipal record of 1933 and several newspapers including the March 27, 1932, edition of the San Francisco Chronicle, featuring a full front-page photo collage of an Easter celebration, and several other newspapers from the time, many with headlines referencing a murder case.

Following the unearthing of the old time capsule, a new, larger copper time capsule was buried at the same spot. Memorable items were presented by various local



Members of the Homenetmen San Francisco Chapter, along with members of Scout Troop 88 of San Francisco led the color guard to kick off the historic ceremony (photo Greg Nemet)

clergy leaders including Archbishop Salvadore Cordileone, Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco and Metropolitan Gerasimos, Metropolitan of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco.

In front of the crowd, Archbishop Cordileone read a poignant quote from Pope Francis in 2015 during his visit to Tsitsernakaberd, the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Armenia and placed a copy of that inside the new capsule.

see CAPSULE, page 12

## Author Hermine Avagyan, Director Of Artsakh Office Of Hamazkayin, Speaks in New York

NEW YORK — St. Illuminator's Cathedral and the US Eastern Regional Executive of Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society organized an event featuring author Hermine Avagyan, director of the Artsakh (NKR) office of Hamazkayin.

Representatives of ARF Eastern Regional Central Committee, ARS Eastern Regional Executive, Hamazkayin Central and Eastern Regional Executives were in attendance.

During the event, the audience had a chance to learn about the programs and projects of the Hamazkayin's Artsakh office, watch the "Hamazkayin with the Children of Artsakh" short documentary film, and enjoy the exhibition of original paintings



Hermine Avagyan

by children involved in the Hamazkayin's programs.

The evening's program also included the presentation of two recently published books by Hermine Avagyan: *Days Torn from the Calendar* and *I am Running, Wait for Me*. The author also displayed books by several writers from Artsakh. These books were subsequently donated to the Library of Congress. We are glad that literary works of Artsakh authors became a part of the permanent collection of the foremost library in the United States.

Rev. Mesrop Lakissian, pastor of the St. Illuminator's Cathedral and untiring supporter of Hamazkayin's initiatives, made opening remarks and expressed his appreciation for Hamazkayin's accomplishments throughout the world, and particularly in Artsakh.

Hasmig Aprahamian, chairperson, made brief remarks on behalf of the Eastern Regional Executive Committee of Hamazkayin, and introduced Avagyan.

Arevig Caprielian, member of the Hamazkayin's Central Executive Committee, thanked Lakissian, his family, and the Board of Trustees for their sustained support of and participation in Hamazkayin's activities.

Avagyan stated, "Diaspora has always supported the Motherland and especially Artsakh; its potential strength served for the further development of education, arts and culture."

## COMMUNITY NEWS

# St. Vartan Cathedral Easter Service Brings Renewal and Hope

EASTER, from page 7

## Witnesses to the Glory of the Resurrection

After the reading of Scripture in Armenian and English by the deacons, prayers and hymns were sung together by the choir and congregation, underscoring our steadfast conviction as one unified body in Christ. Thereafter, the chalice containing bread and wine representing the body and blood of Christ was presented to Parsamyan, who blessed and raised it to the heavens with humility and reverence for the faithful to witness and experience the revelation of our Lord and Savior.

As is the case each Sunday, the soaring voices of the St. Vartan Cathedral Choir, conducted by Mekanejian with accompaniment by organist Florence Avakian, punctuated the centuries-old service and surrounded participants with an aural sense of peace and redemption.

Following the blessing and distribution of the Holy Eucharist, Parsamyan delivered his first Easter Sunday homily as Primate of the Eastern Diocese, joyfully declaring, “Krisdos haryav ee merelotz!” (Christ is risen from the dead!) — to which the congregation exuberantly responded in unison, “Orhnyal eh harootiunun Krisdosee!” (Blessed is the resurrection of Christ!).

“Today, we stand as witnesses to the glory of our Lord’s Resurrection,” he continued. “As children of the very first Christian nation, we can proclaim this miracle to the world.”

Parsamyan’s sermon described the challenges and tribulations that early Christians faced as a result of their faith, without the experience of history to calm their spirits. He explained how the apostle Peter, whose perspective was forever changed when he witnessed the miracle of the Resurrection, spread the Good News across the world with his fellow apostles.

“Peter affirmed that although the pain of loss is real, no one is alone in their suffer-

ing,” he said. “God always cares for you and, when the time comes, He will restore every person that places his or her faith in the Resurrection of the Lord, just as Christ was restored to life after dying a painful and horrible death on our behalf.”

Fr. Mesrop told how Peter assuaged the struggles and challenges his Christian brothers and sisters experienced by writing: “Place your worries on God, for He cares about you. Stand firm in your faith, for you know that a whole family of believers throughout the world suffers along with you. But after you’ve suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who in Christ, called you to His eternal glory, will restore you all by Himself...make you strong, firm, and steadfast.”

He also drew parallels to how instrumental God was in his own physical rehabilitation process following his car accident, granting him renewal throughout the entire ordeal. “Out of His love for us, God sent His only Begotten Son, and took upon Himself the broken human condition and restored it to what it was meant to be,” he said. “Through Christ’s victory over death, we were saved.”

## Restoring an Easter Tradition

At the conclusion of the service, a procession of clergy and the faithful exited the cathedral to gather outside on the plaza for the “Release of Doves” ceremony, symbolizing Christ’s sending out His apostles into the world to preach the Gospel. The special ceremony, a decades-long Easter tradition at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, was suspended during the pandemic but has once again been restored. The godparents of this year’s ceremony were Brian and Maria Stepanian, co-chairs of the special committee to commemorate this year’s 125th anniversary of the Eastern Diocese.

The Easter Sunday service marked two of the Armenian Church’s days of note: the culmination of Holy Week, the sacred commemoration of the events leading to



Diocesan Primate Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan concluded the Easter Sunday liturgy at New York’s St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral with the “Release of Doves” ceremony. Alongside the Primate were the godparents of this year’s ceremony, Brian and Maria Stepanian, co-chairs of the committee to commemorate this year’s 125th anniversary of the Eastern Diocese. The service on April 9, 2023, marked Fr. Mesrop’s first Easter service since his election as Primate. (Photo: Levon Mark)

the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as well as the beginning of Eastertide, the 50-day period known as *Heenoonk* in Armenian, that lasts from Easter to Pentecost. The latter is dedicated to the mystery of our Resurrected Savior and His encounters with His followers.

As in previous years, the viewing audience for St. Vartan Cathedral’s Easter Sunday liturgy included thousands of people from across the Diocese and around the world, sharing in the service as it was broadcast over the Internet. The small, dedicated production team included Yervant Keshishian, who directed the program, and host and narrator Christopher Zakian. Levon Mark photographed the Easter Sunday service.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

# Parishes of Eastern Diocese Celebrate ACYOA Day

NEW YORK — On the weekend of April 1-2, members of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) Central Council visited parishes around the Eastern Diocese to celebrate ACYOA Day. Held every Palm Sunday, the purpose of ACYOA Day is to focus attention on the vitality of the ACYOA, its members, its accomplishments, and its role in local parish communities. It is also an opportunity for the ACYOA to promote its ministries and honor individuals who have made an impact on youth in the church.

ACYOA Day luncheons were organized by ACYOA Juniors and Seniors chapters at many parishes in the Diocese, with Central Council making visits and connecting with youth at the following parishes: St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Church, Wynnewood, PA (Andrew Yenicag); Holy Resurrection Church, New Britain, CT (Christine Beyleirian McNally and Lucine Sabounjian); St. Gregory the Illuminator Church, Chicago, IL (Madeline Ovassapian) and Soorp Haroutiun Church, Orlando, FL (Mardig Klachian and Michael Sarafian).

On Saturday, the Central Council conducted “Chapter Connections” with ACYOA Seniors at Holy Resurrection (New Britain) and Soorp Haroutiun (Orlando). The Chapter Connections program was introduced in 2019 as an initiative to workshop with each ACYOA chapter on a personal level. Its objective is to develop relationships, identify each chapter’s strengths, analyze struggles, and assist each chapter with developing a plan for future ministries and programs.

Parishes interested in organizing a “Chapter Connection” for their local ACYOA chapter should contact [acyoacc@gmail.com](mailto:acyoacc@gmail.com).

On Palm Sunday, April 2, visiting Central Council members participated in the Divine Liturgy at their respective parishes, and during fellowship hour gave presentations to highlight their experiences in the organization and share upcoming programs.



## INTERTWINED LEGACIES

GOMIDAS VARTABED (1869-1935)  
& KOHARIK GAZAROSSIAN (1907-1967)




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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# At Promise Institute Program Documentarian Explores Kerr Family's Legacy of Humanitarian Efforts

KERR, from page 1

The Kerr families ties to the Middle East goes back two generations. Stanley and Elsa Kerr were American humanitarian relief workers who travelled to the former Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I as part of the US-based Near East Relief organization, which saved thousands of refugees and orphans of the Armenian Genocide. They met and married during their service there. Afterward, they remained in the region as faculty at the American University of Beirut, where most of their children were born, and where son Malcolm in particular followed in their footsteps as a professor at the same institution, eventually becoming its president.



Elsa Reckman Kerr

Malcolm, who was assassinated in 1984 by members of an Iranian-backed militant group during the Lebanese Civil War, gave his life to improving the education and quality of life of the people of the Middle East, as did his parents.

His wife, Ann, continues his mission of education and building cultural bridges in her career as a professor at UCLA. The rest of the children, grandchildren and now great-grandchildren of Stanley and Elsa Kerr, also carry on the legacy of human rights and helping others while achieving great success. One of the sons of Malcolm and Ann, Steve Kerr, head coach of the NBA's Golden State Warriors, has been outspoken about his pride in his family's role providing relief to Armenian Genocide survivors.

## Inaugural Lecture Dedicated to Kerr Family

After welcoming remarks by Promise Institute director Prof. Ann Karagozian, UCLA's Prof. Emeritus Richard Hovannisian delivered an introduction giving context to the main presentation, which would be given by his daughter, Ani.

The introduction gave the background of the US involvement in relief efforts, by outlining the history of American missionary presence in the Ottoman Empire. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), an umbrella group mostly

backed by New England Congregationalists, had been sending missionaries to Turkey for nearly a century, setting up a vast network of schools, colleges, hospitals, churches, and mission stations throughout the country. Most of the students in their schools in Anatolia were Armenians, with smaller numbers of Greeks and Bulgarians. They viewed themselves as not only bringing the Christian religion to underdeveloped countries, but as bringing enlightenment and education to such areas, and their edu-

menian Catholic girls' school to teach their students English. Little did she know she would soon marry into an American family with deep connections to the Armenian community.

At AUB, Ann met and fell in love with a young graduate student, Malcolm Kerr, who, she found out, was the son of the school's dean of women students, Elsa Kerr, and venerable biochemistry professor, Stanley Kerr.

Malcolm had been born in Beirut where his parents



Near East Relief workers in Marash, 1920. Stanley Kerr is third from the right.

cational work among Ottoman Armenians was extremely influential. As Hovannisian described it, Americans were everywhere in Turkey and when the Genocide happened, many of them heroically stood by their students when the deportations started in 1915.

Notably, the largest missionary presence was in the Kharpert region, which is likely why more Armenian immigrants in the US prior to World War II hailed from that region rather than from any other part of the world.

With this background, when the war ended, the US government chartered the non-sectarian Near East Relief organization which coordinated almost all the previous missionary institutions along with new volunteers arriving from the US into one unified front, for the purpose of overseeing refugee camps, orphanages, and newly established schools mostly in places like Syria and Lebanon where the Genocide survivors had arrived. Near East Relief workers also went to the cities of Cilicia, where there was an attempt to allow Armenians to return to live in the region (even if they were not originally from there) under French military protection. Stanley Kerr was first stationed in Aleppo, Syria, and then assigned to Marash, Cilicia, until the Kemalists forced all remaining or returnee Armenians to leave in 1922.

## Documentary in the Works

Ani Hovannisian then took the floor and began to discuss her upcoming documentary on the Kerr family. Her presentation took the form of a quest back in time, beginning with the fact that she had gone to high school in Los Angeles with Steve Kerr, while knowing that Steve's parents were academics and close colleagues of her father.

Hovannisian described that it was not until she read Stanley Kerr's 1972 memoir, *The Lions of Marash*, that she really understood how deep the Kerr family's connection to the Armenian community goes.

Her presentation started by focusing on Steve Kerr's parents, Malcolm and Ann, who were both professors. Hovannisian expressed her deep thanks to Ann (Zwicker) Kerr, who was in the audience, and has been a steadfast supporter of her project. The older Kerr is still the Fulbright Coordinator at UCLA's International Institute, and she works with graduate students and exchange students to build cultural bridges between Americans and citizens of other countries.

In 1955, Ann Zwicker, an American student from Occidental College, went on a study-abroad program to Lebanon when she was a junior, attending the American University of Beirut (AUB). Before her classes even commenced, she was asked by the Mother Superior of an Ar-

had already been teaching at AUB, but had attended high school back in the US on the East Coast and college at Princeton. He had returned to AUB for his master's program and after he and Ann married, they embarked on an academic career together that took them throughout the Middle East and the United States, ending up at UCLA before Malcolm Kerr was selected to be president of his alma mater, AUB, in 1982. In the middle of the Lebanese Civil War, Kerr was warned by colleagues not to go, but was resolute in his desire to work for a better world through education and uphold the standards of AUB, especially as a center for medical and science education. Just a year and a half later, in January 1984, he was gunned down.

## Armenian Genocide Relief Work

Hovannisian pointed out that the Kerr family's dedication to education and making the world a better place traces back to Malcolm's parents, Stanley and Elsa Kerr. Before they were on the AUB faculty, they were both young Americans who volunteered to serve with the Near East Relief immediately following WWI. Elsa Reckman was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, to German immigrant parents. Her tough childhood and losing her mother at a young age was cited as a reason for her empathy and desire to



Stanley Kerr's memoir *The Lions of Marash*



Prof. Malcolm Kerr



## COMMUNITY NEWS



Malcolm and Ann Kerr with their four children (Steve Kerr at far right)

help others in need. While attending Beloit College in Wisconsin, she heard about the suffering of minorities in Ottoman Turkey during the war and became interested in the plight of the Armenians. She traveled to Istanbul (then under Allied occupation) with a group of young women and took classes in the Turkish language to prepare her for her work. An opportunity opened up to travel to Marash, known to her and her friends as a city in Eastern Turkey where Armenians had been massacred. Her friends tried to convince her it was too dangerous, but Elsa was driven by her conscience to go and “help the people she had come to help.”

In Marash, Elsa met Stanley Kerr. Kerr, who had a background in chemistry, had volunteered for the Army during the war and been stationed at the Army’s Walter Reed Hospital in Maryland as a clinical biochemist. When the Near East Relief began looking for volunteers, Stanley “jumped,” but his superior officers did not want him to go. They relented, however, when they learned that the government had ordered all branches to allow anyone who was needed by the Near East Relief to be released.

Kerr went overseas in 1919 and was initially stationed in Aleppo, where there were thousands of Armenian Genocide refugees. In addition to helping to run an orphanage, he was assigned to drive around in an REO truck with a fellow aid worker to reclaim Armenian women and children from Bedouin Arab and Kurdish tribes who had captured or adopted them. He also became an unofficial

photographer for the Near East Relief, taking pictures of hundreds of orphans in an attempt to reunite them with their families.

Eventually, Kerr was sent to Marash when it was occupied by the French and the Armenian deportees were encouraged to return. He was in charge of orphanages there as well. He witnessed the survivors of the Genocide attempting to rebuild their lives as well as the continued strife between Armenians and Turks in the region. When the French military pulled out of Marash in the middle of the night during a snowstorm in February 1920, three thousand Armenians attempted to follow them to the railroad station at Islahiye, but only about 2,000 survived the journey — another historical event that Kerr photographed and documented.

Despite the French retreat and the subsequent massacre of Armenians by the Turks that took place in the city, Kerr elected to stay in Marash as long as any surviving Armenians were still living there, in order to help look after their needs. At that time, Elsa was sent from Istanbul to Marash as part of the same relief effort, which is when she met Stanley Kerr. After they newly established Turkish government forced all the Armenians and the western aid workers to leave in 1922, Stanley and Elsa fled alongside many of their Armenian friends and students to Beirut, Lebanon, where they married that summer. They were subsequently put in charge of yet another orphanage, now destroyed, the site of which Hovannisian visited during

her filming journey.

Both Stanley and Elsa Kerr commented many times on the Armenians’ valuing of education. They themselves dedicated their lives to the Armenians and all the peoples of Lebanon as they returned to Beirut after a brief return to the States where Stanley received his Ph.D. in biochemistry. In the 1960s, after a 40-year career during which their children were born and raised, they retired and returned to the US. It was there that Stanley Kerr compiled his memoirs into the book “the Lions of Marash,” published in 1972. He was assisting in the writing of this work by a young man he had met who was studying in Beirut at



Ann Zwicker Kerr

the Nishan Palanjian Jemaran in the 1950s, an Armenian-American with a deep interest in history – Richard Hovannisian.

Bringing the story full circle, Richard’s daughter Ani Hovannisian with the full participation of the Kerr family and descendants has embarked on the making of the documentary telling the full journey outlined here. Her discussion was followed by words of appreciation to the Kerr family and a short Q & A session. Ann Kerr along with her daughter Susie was presented with a framed original print of a Near East Relief poster from the WWI depicting a young Armenian orphan girl with the motto “Lest We Perish.”

To watch the program, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zDB3r5ZbAc>.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

# Time Capsule Unearthed at San Francisco's Mt. Davidson Cross

CAPSULE, from page 7

On behalf of the Armenian-American community, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese, placed a New Testament Bible from Constantinople (Istanbul) from 1884 belonging to a Genocide survivor and an Armenian Cross Stone (Khachkar) made especially for this event into the new time capsule.

Aside from the clergy, it was an honor to have many state and city politicians in attendance for this historic event. CA Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis, San Francisco Mayor London Breed, as well as San Francisco Supervisors Myrna

Melgar and Ahsha Safai all provided brief remarks and ceremonially added their own small San Francisco-related memento into the new time capsule.

The historic event was organized by the Council of Armenian-American Organizations of Northern California (CAAONC), a coalition of more than 30 Armenian-American organizations that purchased the Mt. Davidson Cross through a City of San Francisco public auction in 1997. The CAAONC has renovated the Cross and maintains it and the hilltop as an offer of thanks to San Francisco for becoming a safe haven for survivors of the



San Francisco clergy and religious leaders gathered together to honor this historic event. Representatives from the Catholic Archdiocese, Greek Orthodox Metropolis, Episcopal Diocese and Armenian Western Diocese and Prelacy were present to participate in the ceremony (photo Greg Nemet).

Armenian Genocide.

"The San Francisco Armenian American community was gratified to save the Cross from demotion in 1997 and serve as its caretaker for the past 25 years in memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide committed by the Turkish government, remarked Roxanne Makasdjian, founding Board Member of CAAONC and the event's master of ceremonies.

"We do this as a way of thanking San Francisco for taking in the Armenian refugees a century ago, and as a way to honor our history, both as the first nation to adopt Christianity in A.D. 301, and as descendants of Armenian Genocide survivors. For us, this Cross and this time capsule embody the importance and purpose of remembrance," commented Makasdjian.



San Francisco Mayor London Breed enthusiastically with the unearthed time capsule on April 1, 2023, exactly ninety years after it was placed in the ground (photo Greg Nemet)



San Francisco clergy and religious leaders gathered together to honor this historic event. Representatives from the Catholic Archdiocese, Greek Orthodox Metropolis, Episcopal Diocese and Armenian Western Diocese and Prelacy were present to participate in the ceremony (photo Greg Nemet).

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# Arts & Culture

## Nordica Trio To Perform In Portland in Remembrance of Armenian Genocide

PORTLAND, Maine — The Nordica Trio will perform live in concert in commemoration of Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day at the Portland Conservatory of Music (PCM) on Sunday, April 23, at 2 p.m. The Armenian Cultural Association of Maine (ACAME) is co-presenting the concert with the PCM as part of an initiative to share and expose the vibrant music of other cultures with the Portland community.

A limited number of tickets are available for sale by visiting [portlandconservatoryofmusic.org](http://portlandconservatoryofmusic.org). Tickets for the April 23 concert will be sold for \$20 advance, \$25 door, and \$5 student rates. Advance ticket sales will end at noon (12:00 p.m.) on April 23. Remaining tickets will be available at the door on a first come, first served basis.

The Nordica Trio brings together a harmony of violin, clarinet, and piano music performed respectively by Graybert Beacham, Karen Beacham, and Martin Perry. Moreover, this concert will additionally feature a world premiere of an exciting new work, inspired by Armenian folk music, written for the Nordica Trio by Maine composer and PCM Jazz Studies Director Titus Abbott.

Recently, the managing director of Somm Recordings in the United Kingdom approached the trio to record a CD for its label. The managing director was particularly impressed with a live recording of the Nordica Trio's performance of Bela Bartok's *Contrasts*. The CD will include works by Armenian composers as well as *Contrasts*. Recording sessions are planned for August, 2023.

On April 23, the Nordica Trio will perform works by Armenian composers (Aram Khachaturian, Alexander Harutunian and Alan Hovhanness) plus the world premiere of a piece composed by Abbott. The concert is in support of Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, observed each year on April 24 to commemorate the 1.5 million Armenian victims of the 1915 genocide by Ottoman Turkey.

Martin Perry has distinguished himself as a consummate interpreter of contemporary classical piano music, with appearances across the United States and abroad from the Boston Pops to the Moscow Philharmonic. His three recent CDs on Bridge Records featuring the works of Carter, Bartók, Ives and Hindemith have drawn raves from the critics, calling his playing "supremely assured" (International Piano), "commanding and virtuosic" (Clavier) and "quite dazzling!" (American Record Guide). In a lighter vein, see NORDICA, page 14



Lawyer turned winemaker Ruben Lokk hit the market in 2021 with his Shoror wines made from Areni grapes

## Yerevan NGO Promotes Wines of Armenia at Home and Abroad

By Paul Vartan Sookiasian  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN — By now word has gotten out about the up-and-coming Armenian wine sector, but there's much more to be done to make it a global name. One of the organizations invested in that mission is the NGO Wines of Armenia (WoA), which organized the Zatik ["Easter"] Wine Festival on April 7 and 8 at Diana Apar Park in the center of Yerevan in cooperation with and supported by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). Their events aim to raise the populace's awareness about Armenian wines and increase domestic demand for it. Yerevan residents browsed a large selection of booths featuring WoA's member brands sold at cost price, along with others featuring various locally-sourced food products and handicrafts. The timing of the festival, as the name suggests, was on the eve of Easter, giving shoppers the perfect chance to fill their tables for the upcoming holiday celebration. Children also had the chance to paint their own eggs, and after a priest's blessing of the festival, enjoyed a traditional "Easter egg duel." This Zatik Festival complemented WoA's Christmastime "Wine Meets Art" event, which paired wines with jazz composers, sculptors, and painters, representing how both wine and art have their own great cultures behind them — and provide the inspiration required for creation.

Wines of Armenia is a relatively new NGO, founded in 2021 as an umbrella brand to promote Armenian wines and facilitate their sale, especially abroad. This is particularly important because of the blistering pace at which the Armenian wine sector has been growing: its number of registered companies has jumped from 30 in 2018 to 160 in 2022. "We established Wines of Armenia in order to have our say to the world about the ongoing renaissance of Armenian wines," said Executive Director Lilit Grigoryan. Headed by nine board members, WoA already includes 27 member companies and counting. It caters to a sweet spot in the field at the intersection of mature mid-sized companies with high-quality wine. "We want to be represented through quality, not quantity, working with medium- and high-priced wines which retain that personal, hand-crafted touch," explained Grigoryan. "Wines of Armenia serves as a common trademark for certifying wine, promotes exports and demand at home, and develops marketing strategies for making that happen."

Members need to be at least a year old and produce at least 5,000 bottles of wine a year. To ensure quality and filter for the best brands, members participate in an annual blind taste test judged by a panel of experts to rate their wines. Failure to pass the rigorous standards for three years in a row results in a loss of membership. However, the intention is not to punish but encourage. "The intention is to keep the producers in line with the ever-changing market, while allowing them the freedom to innovate. The vintners receive important feedback — for example, whether one of their wine's attributes, such as aroma or finish, is perceived as lacking, which they can take into account for their next batches," described Grigoryan. "Through this cooperation, everyone wins, and Armenian wines continue their advance." Another benefit for

see WINES, page 14

## Lin-Manuel Miranda Surprises Mass. High School Performing 'In the Heights'

By Eli Curwin

REVERE, Mass. (Boston.com) — High School students performing in Revere High School's rendition of the Broadway musical "In the Heights" earlier this April received a surprise message in anticipation of their show's premiere this week.

As students sat in one of the school's classrooms, they were greeted by the familiar voice of the Tony award-winning creator of "Hamilton" and "In the Heights" — Lin-Manuel Miranda.

At first, Miranda appeared to be singing the opening number of "In the Heights," but as he finished the verse, Revere students erupted as he wished them good luck.

"Hey Revere, good morning, break a leg on your show!" Miranda said. "Congratulations, remember to be a community every second you're on that stage."

While teachers recorded their reaction, some students excitedly screamed and others gasped when they heard the video.

After weeks of exhausting rehearsals, Revere High School drama teacher Kristina Menissian told Boston.com that the video provided the boost students and faculty needed.

"[The students] were screaming ... just in shock, and then they watched it a million times more," she said. "And then they posted it everywhere they could. Just super excited, what we needed for the morale boost."

Menissian says that she received the video unprompted from the acclaimed writer and director.



Drama teacher Kristina Menissian

"Normally I order T-shirts shirts through a local business, and because this show is such a huge show musically, set-wise, and costumes ... we contacted the official merchandizing site for 'In the Heights,'" Menissian said. "And we told the gentleman on the phone just about our story and the kids."

"He kept asking us questions about it, which was a little odd. ... And by the end of the conversation, he said 'I don't know if you know, but I'm Lin's brother-in-law ... let me see what I could do,'" the drama teacher recounted. "We weren't expecting anything, but it was just cool to talk to him. Then about two weeks later, he sent the video. And I held on to the video for probably another week and a half, and [I] knew that the week before our show week is just a tough time."

see HEIGHTS, page 17

## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Yerevan NGO Promotes Wines of Armenia

WINES, from page 13

members is that their wines are offered on WoA's eCommerce platform, which has a warehouse in Berlin from which anyone ordering from Europe has the opportunity to receive their wines within 24 hours. This has turned Europe into a strategic market for many of the wines.

There are numerous interesting stories among Wines of Armenia's brands. For example, QOTOT Wines is run by a mother-daughter team from a vineyard in the town of Chiva near Areni. Its name is based on a legend from Chiva about a young boy and a bear cub [*qotot* in Armenian] who forged a friendship seeking out the best berries to eat. Like the little bear, QOTOT says it picks the best grapes for its wines, using the native Areni and Voskehat varieties. While it is still quite rare to have a female-run wine company, its CEO Lilit Ghazaryan says "I don't feel disadvantaged as a woman in the field. In fact, I feel it's appreciated." Through WoA, she's had the opportunity to present QOTOT abroad such as in Germany at Prowein, one of the world's premiere wine trade shows. At 25,000 bottles a year, QOTOT is already on the Russian, French, and German markets, and has eyes on more international partners, especially the US. "It has helped

us in our mission to represent Armenian wine and show the world how high quality it is," Ghazaryan said, pointing to the rare grape varieties, volcanic soil, and high-altitude growing which each enhance the wine's flavor as some of the best aspects of Armenian wines for the world to discover.

One of WoA's newest members is Ruben Lökk, who calls himself the Areni grape's biggest fan. His wine Shoror is named after a traditional Armenian sway dance, just as how a sommelier might sway after drinking. Born in Ganja (Gandzak), Azerbaijan, Lökk's family moved to Armenia shortly before the fall of the Soviet Union. He became a lawyer and practiced for years in Moscow, but as he described it, "I wanted to pursue a career that was closer to my soul." Moving back to Yerevan, he happened to live on Saryan Street just as its first wine bar, In Vino, opened. He started attending events there to see what all the fuss over wine was about and became hooked. "In Vino is my first alma mater in the wine world," Lökk said, then taking it a step further by attending EVN Wine Academy and starting Shoror, which hit the market in 2021. He doesn't do blends, but instead is committed to 100% Areni grape wines. Why? "Areni is a noble indigenous grape variety to Armenia. It can be com-



All the wines presented at the Zatik Festival

pared to Pinot Noir, having similar cherry notes, fruitiness and light tannins. It's hard to get a bad batch of it, it's such a good grape."

So what can you do to be part of this exciting movement? Ghazaryan says "we would encourage people to visit Armenia where you can visit the wineries for tastings and enjoy the attractions like the popular Wine Days celebration organized by the festival company EventToura in June."

If you're in Europe, why not order some bottles and try it yourself, and hopefully there will be more opportunities to do so in the United States as well. "Armenia is the cradle of winemaking and we are striving to recover this image. Buying these wines will boost that mission," Ghazaryan encouraged. And what will the future bring? No one can know for sure, but Lökk has an idea, boldly declaring: "Armenian wines will conquer the world!"

## Nordica Trio to Perform in Portland in Remembrance of Armenian Genocide

NORDICA, from page 13

as musical director and pianist for Stephen Sondheim's musical "Marry Me A Little," he can be heard on the best-selling RCA Red Seal cast recording. Closer to home, Perry has appeared as concerto soloist with the Portland Symphony Orchestra on many occasions, served on the piano faculties of Bowdoin and Bates Colleges, and enjoyed numerous collaborations with the DaPonte String Quartet and the Nordica Trio (member since 2008). A native Californian and proud Armenian American, Perry is a graduate of the Juilliard School, where he studied with the renowned pedagogue Adele

versity of Maine at Farmington Orchestra and Mid-Coast Symphony. Chamber music collaborations include both the Portland and DaPonte String Quartets. Karen has participated in numerous festivals, including the Sunriver Music Festival in Oregon, Kneisel Hall Chamber Music Festival, Sebago-Long Lake Region Chamber Music Festival, Aspen Music Festival, New College Music Festival, and Norfolk Chamber Music Festival/Yale School of Music. She has performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, performs regularly with the Portland Symphony Orchestra and serves as Principal Clarinet for the Maine State Ballet Orchestra. Faculty affiliations include Colby College, the University of Maine at Farmington, and most recently at the University of New Hampshire for the 2022-23 fall semester. Karen received her Bachelor of Music in Clarinet Performance from Philadelphia College of the Performing Arts as a student of Donald Montanaro, and a Master of Music Degree from the New England Conservatory of Music as a student of Harold Wright, Principal Clarinetist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Other major teachers include Peter Hadcock, William Wrzesien, and George Silfies. She is a founding member of the Nordica Trio.

Graybert Beacham has been an active performer and teacher throughout the United States and internationally. He was the recipient of the Dr. Jerome Gross Prize in Violin at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he received both a Bachelor of Music and Master of Music in Violin Performance as student of David Cerone. Other teachers include Bernhard Goldschmidt (Principal Second Violin, Cleveland Orchestra), and Emanuel Borok (Concertmaster, Dallas Symphony). Graybert has been a member of the Mexico City Philharmonic, Tulsa Philharmonic (Principal Second Violin), Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería, and Kansas City Philharmonic. He has also served as Acting Concertmaster of the Vermont Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Jaime Laredo, and as Concertmaster and soloist for the Cascade Festival of Music

in Oregon. Graybert was violin soloist with the New Sousa Band during their tour of China.

Graybert has collaborated with the Portland String Quartet as both a violist and guest first violinist. He serves as Concertmaster for the Maine State Ballet Orchestra and has performed as both violinist and violist in various capacities with the Portland Symphony Orchestra over the past thirty

years. Recorded performances have been broadcast over public radio stations across the United States and Mexico. Graybert has been a member of the violin/viola faculty of the University of Southern Maine and Colby College. He has recorded for Albany Records where he can be heard on a disc of compositions by Maine composer Peter Ré, and he is a founding member of the Nordica Trio.



Members of the Nordica Trio, from left, Karen Beacham, Martin Perry, and Graybert Beacham

Marcus.

Karen Beacham has been active as a performer across the United States and internationally. She has held the position of Principal Clarinet with the Mexico City Philharmonic, Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería in Mexico City, and the Tulsa Philharmonic Orchestra. She has appeared as soloist with Mel Tormé and the Tulsa Philharmonic Orchestra, Maine Chamber Ensemble, Colby Symphony Orchestra, Uni-





**Tekeyan Cultural Association  
of the United States and Canada**  
PRESENTS

# VEM ENSEMBLE

Movses Pogossian, violin; Ela Kodzas, violin; Damon Zavala, viola; Niall Taró Ferguson, cello

MAY 9, 2023 <b>DETROIT</b>	MAY 11, 2023 <b>BOSTON</b>	MAY 13, 2023 <b>MONTREAL</b>
<p>St. John Armenian Church Cultural Hall 27001 Northwestern Hwy, Southfield, MI Cospnsored by the Cultural Society of Armenians from Istanbul, and AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School 7 pm; for more info call 248 505 6159</p>	<p>Cospnsored with Holy Trinity Armenian Church 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA For info call 617-924-4455 7:30 pm</p>	<p>Tekeyan Center 825 Manoogian St. Saint-Laurent, Canada \$20/ticket, call 514 747-6680 8 pm</p>

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MUSIC BY KOMITAS, KHACHATURIAN, MANSURIAN, KHOSROVIDUKHT, MIRZOYAN, SHOSTAKOVICH, SCHUBERT



## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Recipe Corner



by Christine  
Vartanian



## Jon Koobation's Pan-Seared Halibut With Cilantro Herb Sauce

FRESNO — Fresno's award-winning Chef Jon Koobation says, "Halibut is among the tastiest fish you can eat, and some would argue that it's THE best-tasting fish. The majority of halibut in the United States is sourced from Alaska — which I love because it's sustainably caught. A naturally lean and light fish, Alaska Halibut has earned its well-deserved reputation as the world's premium whitefish. Combining a sweet, delicate flavor with firm texture and a pure, snow white flesh, Alaska Halibut is a natural for a variety of signature dishes and attractive plate presentations and sweet, delicate flavor. The main reason we love halibut so much is that it's incredibly versatile but also very easy to cook."



Jon was the chef/proprietor, owner and head chef at the acclaimed Jon's Bear Club in Reedley, California, for several decades until his retirement in 2013.

"Halibut is a healthy menu choice for lunch or dinner. It's delicious baked, grilled, poached, or steamed. Fresh halibut season runs from March through mid-November, when you'll find it fresh in markets. To ensure the most delicious fish, you want it to be as fresh as possible. It should be mild-smelling with no strong 'fishy' odors. The flesh should be firm and vibrant in color, not dull, milky, or mushy."

"Using the freshest seasonal ingredients and attention to detail when creating each menu item was appreciated by our Jon's Bear Club patrons through the years, and one of the main reasons so many of them chose to return again and again," he adds.

Here's Jon's signature recipe for Pan-Seared Halibut with Cilantro Herb Sauce that is sure to please your family and guests at your next dinner party or celebration, he says.

### INGREDIENTS:

2 lbs. Alaska halibut  
2-3 cloves garlic, minced  
Juice of 1 large lemon and lemon zest  
1/2 cup dry white wine, to taste  
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, to taste  
Kosher or sea salt and coarse black pepper, to taste  
2-3 tablespoons unsalted butter  
One small bunch chopped fresh cilantro or parsley  
Fresh dill  
Fresh lemon wedges  
Olive oil

### PREPARATION:

First, make the Cilantro Herb Sauce: Add chopped cilantro (or parsley), lemon juice, and zest buzzed to a blender with some olive oil, salt and pepper. Blend these ingredients for about a minute until you have a smooth sauce. Set aside.

In a large, shallow dish, combine minced garlic, lemon juice, wine and olive oil.

Use a sharp knife to cut halibut into 4 equal portions. Place portions into the dish with the marinade, turning to coat. Refrigerate for about 30 minutes.

When you're ready to cook, heat the olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Remove halibut from the marinade and season with salt and pepper.

Place halibut filets in the hot pan and cook until a golden crust forms on the bottom of the fish, about 3-5 minutes. Try not to move the fish around the pan a lot until the crust forms to decrease sticking. Flip fish and cook on the other side until cooked through, another 3-5 minutes or until the internal temperature reaches 130-135°F (for medium).

Add butter to the pan and let it melt, then spoon it over the top of the fish. Spread the Cilantro Herb Sauce on each plate, and place the halibut on top. Serve with fresh coleslaw. Garnish with lemon wedges and fresh dill.

Suggestion: Try baking halibut on baking sheets in the oven at 400 to 450°F until halibut is just opaque and flesh flakes when cut with a fork, about 10 to 15 minutes. Or poach halibut in tomato sauce or a broth flavored with lemon and white wine, or butter, garlic, and parsley.

Serves 4.

### Fresh Coleslaw

### INGREDIENTS:

2-3 cups shredded green cabbage  
1 cup shredded red cabbage  
2 large carrots, grated  
2 medium scallions, thin sliced  
2 tablespoons rough cut cilantro  
In a large enough bowl, combine all the ingredients.

### DRESSING:

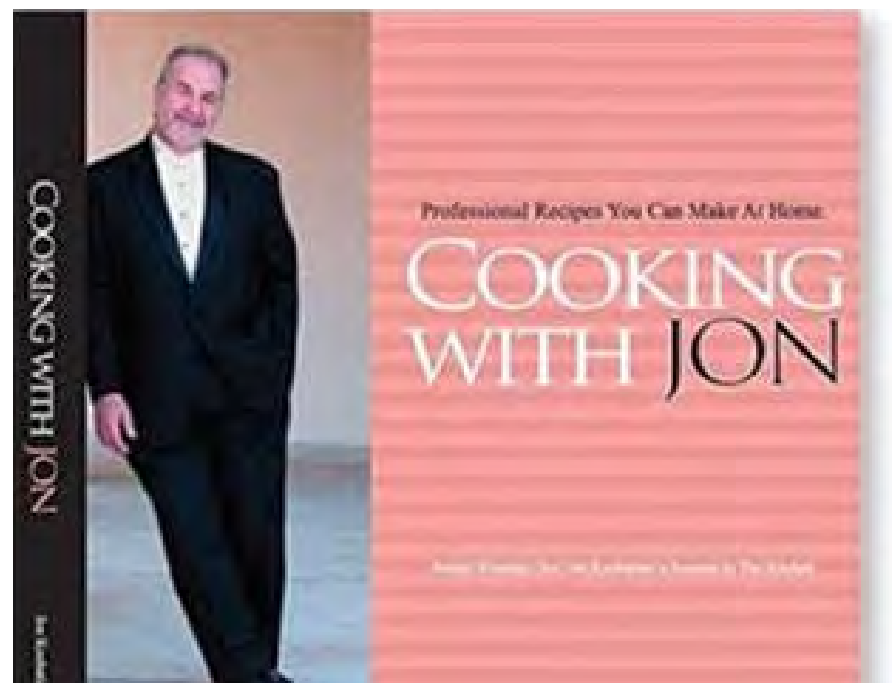
1/3 cup light mayonnaise  
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice + the zest  
1/2 teaspoon Truvia or to taste  
1/2 teaspoon coriander or celery seeds  
Salt and cracked black pepper

Whisk the dressing together and adjust seasoning. Combine the dressing with the coleslaw and mix well.

Serves 4.

*Cooking With Jon* is a comprehensive collection of some of his favorite recipes through the years, and the favorites of many of his patrons at the acclaimed Jon's Bear Club before he retired. Also included are wonderful photos to go with the recipes -- photos that make you feel like you could just reach down and pick up the delicious food. Some of Jon's recipes included are: Charred Asparagus Roll-Ups, New York Steak, Lobster Bisque, Tortilla Crusted Salmon, Shish Kebab, and how to make your own kettle corn at home.

But this book is way more than just a cookbook — it is a walk down memory lane for Jon about his life growing up in the Central Valley in an Armenian fam-



ily — interspersed among the recipes are these very interesting stories. Stories of how he came to be a chef, of his love for racing, what it was like going from just being the chef to owning his own restaurant, and his lifetime love of food and family. "Cooking has been my passion in life. It has filled my life with joy," says Jon.

**ORDER TODAY:** Enjoy professional recipes you can make at home from one of Fresno's most highly respected and celebrated chefs.

Contact Jon at: [chefjonkoobation@gmail.com](mailto:chefjonkoobation@gmail.com) to order his cookbook and for a personally signed copy. His cookbook is also available for sale at The Market Grocery Store and at Sam's Deli & Cucina in Fresno.

# Books

## New Book on Denial of Genocides In the 21st Century Edited by Professor Der Matossian

LINCOLN, Neb. — The University of Nebraska Press (UNP) recently announced the publication of *Denial of Genocides in the Twenty-First Century*, an edited volume on denial of genocides by Bedross Der Matossian. The edited volume is the first book that analyzes the nature of denial of genocides in the twenty-first century from an interdisciplinary and comparative perspective. While the denial of the Armenian Genocide represents the classic case



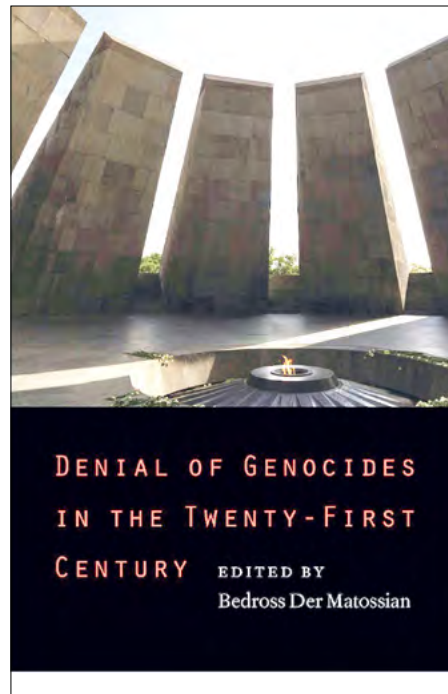
Prof. Bedross Der Matossian

of genocide denial in the modern period, other genocides of both the premodern and the modern periods have seen their share of denialism. This edited volume discusses the ongoing denial mechanisms of some of the most horrendous genocides of the premodern and modern periods. There is no genocide in the course of history that has

not been denied by states or non-state actors, often including “professional” historians and pseudo-historians.

Throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century, genocide denial has evolved and adapted with new strategies to augment and complement established modes of denial. In addition to outright negation, denial of genocide encompasses a range of techniques, including dispute over numbers, contestation of legal definitions, blaming the victim, and various modes of intimidation, such as threats of legal action. Arguably the most effective strategy has been denial through employing intentional misinformation.

*Denial of Genocides in the Twenty-First Century* brings together leading scholars from across disciplines to add to the body of genocide scholarship that is challenged by denialist literature. By concentrating on factors such as the role of communications and news media, global and national social networks, the weaponization of information by authoritarian regimes and political parties, court cases in the United States and Europe, freedom of speech, and postmodernist thought, this volume discusses how genocide denial is becoming a fact of daily life in the twenty-first century.



The volume covers the denial of the indigenous, Armenian, Cambodian, Guatemalan, Rwandan, Bosnian and Syrian genocides as well as the Holocaust.

“I think this is a unique opportunity to bring together the leading experts of genocide in order to understand what makes the twenty-first century denial of genocides different from those of the earlier period. Despite that fact that other examples of the denial of genocide in this volume are not as sophisticated as the mechanisms used by the Turkish state in denying the Armenian Genocide, nevertheless they use similar techniques in pursuing their shameful actions. The techniques include, but are not limited to, using social media, academic platforms, intimidation through legal actions, and disguising denial under the cloak of legitimate scholarship among others. I am sure that the reader will appreciate and benefit from the wide range of cases covered in this volume.” stated editor Bedross Der Matossian.

The list of contributors in the order of

their contribution are Bedross Der Matossian, “Introduction: Genocide Denial in the Twenty-First Century”; Robert K. Hitchcock, “Denial of Genocide of Indigenous People in the United States”; Talin Suciyan, “Armenian Genocide and Its Denial: A Comprehensive Tool of Supremacism?”; Marc A. Mamigonian, “Weaponizing the First Amendment: Denial of the Armenian Genocide and the U.S. Courts.”; Eldad Ben Aharon “Coalition Politics and Parliamentary Paralysis: The Armenian Genocide Bill during the Netanyahu Administration, 2009–2021”; Gerald J. Steinacher, “Denying the Shoah: Distorting History in the Twenty-First Century”; Ben Kiernan, “Aversions to Acknowledging the Khmer Rouge Genocides in Cambodia, 1990–2021”; Samuel Totten, “Denial of the Guatemalan Genocide, 1981–2020”; Jelena Subotić, “Regional Political Implications of Bosnian Genocide Denial”; Roland Moerland, “Mainstreaming the Denial of the Genocide against the Tutsi”; Uğur Ümit Üngör and Annsar Shahhoud “A Multifront War of Narratives: The Assad Regime’s Emerging Denialism”; and Israel W. Charney, “Epilogue: Denials of Reality Remove the Capacity to Think Straight and Logically in Order to Feel Protected and Safe.”

Copies of *Denial of Genocides in the Twenty-First Century* are available for purchase from the University of Nebraska Press website. Use code: 6AS23 to receive a 40% discount.

**Bedross Der Matossian** is the vice-chair, professor of Modern Middle East History, and Hymen Rosenberg Professor in Judaic Studies at the Department of History at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). He is the past president of the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS). He is the author, co-editor, and editor of six volumes including his latest *The Horrors of Adana: Revolution and Violence in the Early Twentieth Century* (Stanford University Press, 2022).

## University of Toronto Press Issues New Edition of *Centuries of Genocide*

WASHINGTON — The Armenian National Institute (ANI) announced the release by the University of Toronto Press of a new edition of *Centuries of Genocide: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*. Extensively updated, the publication, which has been in print for the past 30 years, has been a leading college textbook on the subject of genocide and human rights.

The new edition, overseen by Samuel



Dr. Samuel Totten

Totten, professor emeritus of education at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, includes 15 chapters on genocide ranging from California’s Yana Indians, the Soviet manmade famine in Ukraine, the Holocaust, Cambodia, Iraqi Kurdistan, Rwanda, to Darfur, and more.

Besides the introduction, Totten also contributes a chapter on the ISIS genocide of the Yazidis. A chapter on the Armenian

Genocide, authored by ANI Director Dr. Rouben Adalian, has been included in every edition of the publication. The contextualization of the Armenian experience in relation to all the other significant examples of crimes against humanity gives a special depth to the significance of that historic catastrophe.

The essays in *Centuries of Genocide* are supplemented by accounts which provide vivid eyewitness testimony about each specific instance of genocide. The chapter on the Armenian Genocide is augmented with the testimony of four survivors: Helen Tatarian of Dertyol, Sarkis Agojian of Chemeshgadsak, Takhouhi Levonian of Keghi, and Yevnig Adrouni of Hoghe.



Dr. Rouben Adalian

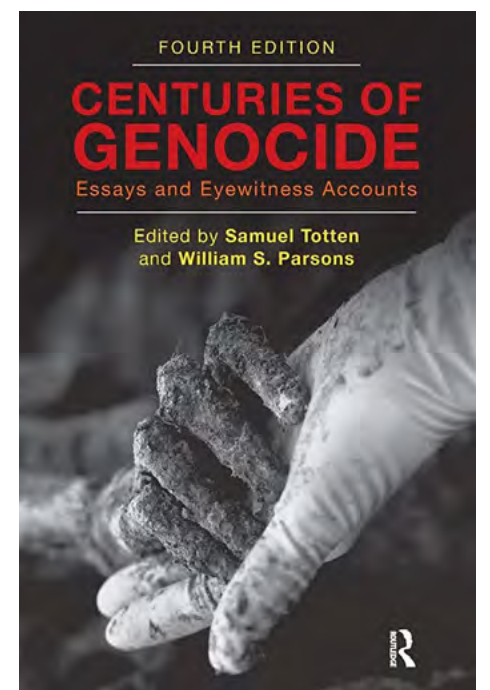
“When it comes to concise and insightful overviews, several chapters in *Centuries of Genocide* are as good as any, and Dr. Adalian’s chapter on the Armenian Genocide is a prime example. This is why time and again, I have included earlier editions of the book among required and suggested readings in my teaching,” said Dr. Khatchig Mouradian, Lecturer in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University.

Originally issued under the editorship of William Parsons, Israel Charney and Samuel Totten, earlier editions of *Centuries of Genocide* were released by Routledge, a publishing firm that specializes in professional and academic books.

The fifth edition issued by the University of Toronto Press was extensively revised and updated to current scholarship.

Besides Totten and Adalian, contributors to the publication include Benjamin Madley, Dominik J. Schaller, James Mace, Donald L. Niewyk, Rounaq Jahan, Craig Etcheson, Natasha Zaretsky, Susanne Jonas, Michiel Leezenberg, Gerald Caplan, Martin Mennecke, and Ken MacLean, some of whose essays have been part of the publication since its initial issue.

As with previous editions, the chapters remain consistent in their format to allow for student understanding of this challenging subject. Authors address the same set of questions about each genocide: Who committed the genocide? How was the genocide committed? Why was the genocide committed? Who were the victims? What were the outstanding historical forces and trends at work that led to the geno-



cide? What was the long-term impact of the genocide on the victim group? *Centuries of Genocide* continues to expand upon the extensive list of instructional resources provided through the ANI website where over 200 multimedia, digital, interactive, and published resources can now be viewed.

Founded in 1997, the Armenian National Institute (ANI) is a 501(c)(3) educational charity based in Washington, D.C., and is dedicated to the study, research, and affirmation of the Armenian Genocide. The ANI website can be consulted in English, Turkish, Spanish, and Arabic. ANI also maintains the online Armenian Genocide Museum of America (AGMA).





## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# CALENDAR

## OF EVENTS & PROGRAMS

### CONNECTICUT

**APRIL 22** — The Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee of Connecticut will hold its annual program, on the 108th anniversary of the Genocide, on Saturday April 22 2023 at 11:00 am. The event will take place at the historic Connecticut House Chamber at the State Capitol, 210 Capitol Avenue, Hartford. The program will include the Martyrs' Service, which was created in 2015 on the occasion of the centennial of the Genocide and the canonization of the Martyrs. Clergy from Armenian Churches in Connecticut will participate in the service. The keynote speaker will be Aram Hamparian, Executive Director of the Armenian National Committee of America, (ANCA). A reception will follow the commemoration. For questions call Melanie at 860-651-0629

### MASSACHUSETTS

**APRIL 21-23** — Greater Boston Armenian Community will be commemorating the 108th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide with events at the Massachusetts State House and at the Armenian Heritage Park on Boston's Greenway. The State House Commemoration will be held on Friday April 21 at 10.30 a.m. Keynote address at the State House will be delivered by Robert Avetisyan, Permanent Representative of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in the United States. An outdoor commemoration will be held at the Armenian Heritage Park on Sunday, April 23 at 4 p.m. The Keynote remarks will be delivered by Professor Christina Maranci, Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University. The program will include a musical performance by Teni Apelian, accompanied by Datev Gevorkian. For more information, contact Boston Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee at [bostonagcc@gmail.com](mailto:bostonagcc@gmail.com).

**APRIL 29** — The Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe and the Amaras Art Alliance will present a special concert of the world famous Nairyan Vocal Ensemble from Armenia. Sponsored by Hye Pointe ACYOA. Saturday, 6 p.m. doors open, social hour. 7 p.m. concert starts. After concert, meet and greet with singers. \$50 per person. Cash bar, coffee and dessert intermission. Gata will be available for sale. 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill, MA. For reservations call (978) 372-9227.

**MAY 1** — St. James Armenian Church Monthly dinner meeting. Featured speaker; Robert Avakian, director of Oppenheimer & Co. in Boston, serves as a "holistic" financial planner and he has acted as a consolidator of financial statistics and a risk manager for his clients families over the past 25 years. Topic "The Current Market." Monday, 6.15 p.m. Mezza, 7 p.m. Losh Kebab and Kheyra dinner. \$20 per person. All are welcome. 465 Mt. Auburn street Watertown.

**MAY 11** — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada and the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music's Armenian School Program present the VEM Ensemble. Cosponsored by the Holy Trinity Armenian Church, the performance will take place at the church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge, on 7.30. For more info, call 617-924-4455.

**MAY 12** — The Erebuni Armenian School presents a performance by renowned international comedian Kev Orkian. 7-9.30 p.m., Get ready for an evening of fun and laughter as Kev entertains us with his brand new live show "COVID MOVID!" Tickets can be purchased at <https://buytickets.at/erebuni/866438> starting at \$40. All tickets are final sale! If you purchase a

student ticket, ID is required at the door. The show is 90% in English and 10% in Armenian. JFK Middle School, 655 Lexington St., Waltham.

**MAY 12** — Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Music and Theater Arts Department, MIT History, and UCLA Armenian Music Program Present: "Intertwined Legacies: Gomidas Vartabed (1869-1935) and Koharik Gaza-rossian (1907-1967)" Lecture and mini-concert by Dr. Melissa Bilal and UCLA VEM Ensemble. Friday, 12:30 p.m. MIT Building 4, Classroom 231 <http://whereis.mit.edu/> Co-sponsors: National Association of Armenian Studies and Research, Tekeyan Cultural Association.

**JUNE 9** — 70th Annual Armenian Night at the Pops, Symphony Hall, Boston. Featuring violinist Eva Aronian and the Boston Pops Orchestra, in a performance of the Allegro Vivace movement from the violin concerto by Aram Khachaturian, marking the iconic composer's 120th anniversary of birth. The evening will feature A Symphonic Journey, a musical tour of Europe and Armenia, presented by the Boston Pops and Maestro Keith Lockhart, in collaboration with European travel authority and writer Rick Steves. Visit [www.FACSBoston.org](http://www.FACSBoston.org) to select seats and purchase tickets. **OCTOBER 27-28** — SAVE THE DATE. The Armenian Mirror-Spectator will celebrate its 90th anniversary with two programs, a panel featuring top-notch journalists on October 27 and a banquet on October 28. Details to follow.

### MICHIGAN

**MAY 9** — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada and the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music's Armenian School Program present the VEM Ensemble. St. John Armenian Church Cultural Hall, 22001 Northwestern Hwy., Southfield. 7 p.m. Co-sponsored by the Cultural Society of Armenians From Istanbul and the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School. For more information call 248-505-6159.

### MONTREAL

**MAY 13** — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada and the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music's Armenian School Program present the VEM Ensemble. 8 p.m. Tekeyan Center, 825 Manoogian St., Saint Laurent, Canada. Tickets \$20. Call 514-747-6680.

### NEW JERSEY

**MAY 10** — The Armenian Missionary Association of America will host a book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian on her father's memoirs, Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army. Venue/ Time - AMAA Headquarters, 31 West Century Road, Paramus. 7 p.m. Registration requested - Call Magda Poulos at (201) 265-2607 x 107 or e-mail [mpoulos@amaa.org](mailto:mpoulos@amaa.org) Book signing during reception. All proceeds from the sale of books will benefit the AMAA Syrian Relief Fund.

**MAY 13** — Save the Date! The Tekeyan Cultural Association Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group will mark its 25th anniversary with a gala. Details to follow.

### RHODE ISLAND

**APRIL 30** — The Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Committee of Rhode Island sponsoring the 108th Commemoration of the 1915 Armenian Genocide and Service for the Holy Martyrs Sunday, 12:30pm at Armenian Martyrs' Memorial. North Burial Ground, Branch Avenue, Providence. Guest speaker, Dr. Taner Akcam with participation of the 3 Armenian churches and local organizations and public officials. Public is invited to attend.

Send Calendar Items to the Mirror-Spectator: To send calendar items to the Mirror-Spectator, email [alin@mirrorspectator.com](mailto:alin@mirrorspectator.com) or [alin.gregorian@gmail.com](mailto:alin.gregorian@gmail.com). You can also visit our website, [www.mirrorspectator.com](http://www.mirrorspectator.com), and find the "calendar" section under the heading "More." You can also mail them to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472. All calendar entries must be received by noon on Monday before publication. There is no fee for calendar entries.

## Lin-Manuel Miranda Surprises Mass. High School Performing 'In the Heights'

HEIGHTS, from page 13

Menissian said the department decided to perform "In the Heights," a musical about the Latino community in New York City's Washington Heights neighborhood, specifically, because 70% of Revere's student body is Hispanic, with many of the young people having faced similar obstacles to characters in the show.

"There's a lot of things that our City of Revere has gone through, so I know that [the students] experience it for themselves," Menissian said. "I mean, the characters in the show cope with the same things that any immigrant family goes through in terms of language barriers, missing family members that are still in their home countries, and working a million jobs just to try to make ends meet. ... I know that our kids go through the same things that these characters in the show go through as well."

The performance will be the first musical production at the school in over 30 years, Menissian said. The school is hoping to promote other students' artistic and musical work during the performance as well.

"I tried to make it more of a community effort to try to also have representation in the band," Menissian said. "And I also sent out a thing to our district to ask kids to produce poetry, artwork, and photography of what makes Revere their home. Because one of the major themes [of the musical] is home."



Lin-Manuel Miranda in the original Broadway cast of "In the Heights"

## COMMENTARY

THE ARMENIAN  
**MIRROR  
SPECTATOR**

SINCE 1932



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# Is Azerbaijan Interested In Peace?

By Benjamin Poghosyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

As Armenia – Azerbaijan peace talks stalled and Azerbaijan resumed its military pressure tactics against Armenia and the self-proclaimed Nagorno Karabakh Republic (NK), international actors accelerated their calls for regional peace and stability. The European Council President Charles Michel had phone calls with Prime Minister Pashinyan and President Aliyev, seeking to revitalize the Brussels format; Moscow heralded the upcoming Armenia - Azerbaijan summit in Russia, and the US organized a high-level Armenia - Azerbaijan meeting at the Munich Security Conference. Meanwhile, the recent actions by Azerbaijan, the killing of three policemen in Nagorno Karabakh on March 5, 2023, the assassination of the Armenian soldier near Yerashk on March 22, and the attack against Armenian soldiers in Togh village on April 11, as a result of which four Armenian servicemen were killed, have raised a legitimate question about the ultimate goal of Azerbaijan.

If we are to rely on the rhetoric of Azerbaijani officials, including President Aliyev, the latter seek to reach a peace deal with Armenia and secure long-lasting security in the region. However, the Azerbaijani understanding of peace in general, and the peace treaty in particular, have some

nians in Nagorno Karabakh. No political force in Armenia, including the ruling party, will probably accept these demands, as it will be perceived by at least part of the population as an apparent capitulation.

Thus, we may argue that Azerbaijan pushes forward demands which comprise a non-starter for Armenia. It resembles a negotiation tactic when a party is not interested in any deal and simultaneously seeks to blame another side for being non-constructive. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan has launched serious efforts to develop so-called the “Western Azerbaijan” concept, according to which part of Armenia, including the capital Yerevan, is a historical land of Azerbaijan, and hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis should settle in Armenia – and later perhaps make these territories part of Azerbaijan. Currently, Azerbaijan argues that the concept of “Western Azerbaijan” was created as leverage to force Armenia to accept Azerbaijani demands; however, very soon, this concept may become an official Azerbaijani position.

Meanwhile, as Azerbaijan continues its aggressive policy towards Armenia and the self-proclaimed Nagorno Karabakh Republic, many in Baku argue that Azerbaijan would receive what it wants, with or without a peace agreement. According to this logic, if Armenia rejects Azerbaijani demands to “forget about Nagorno Karabakh” and implement border delimitation and demarcation according

“THE AZERBAIJANI UNDERSTANDING OF PEACE IN GENERAL, AND THE PEACE TREATY IN PARTICULAR, HAVE SOME PECULIAR FEATURES. AZERBAIJAN BELIEVES THAT A PEACE TREATY SHOULD FINALIZE THE NONEXISTENCE OF NAGORNO KARABAKH AS A TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT, WITH NO SPECIAL STATUS FOR ARMENIANS LIVING THERE AND NO INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE TO GUARANTEE THE RIGHTS OF ARMENIANS.”

peculiar features. Azerbaijan believes that a peace treaty should finalize the nonexistence of Nagorno Karabakh as a territorial administrative unit, with no special status for Armenians living there and no international presence to guarantee the rights of Armenians. As for relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan argues that any peace treaty should fix the current line of contact as a base for border delimitation and demarcation, which means that Armenia should recognize up to 200 square kilometers of Armenian sovereign territory currently under Azerbaijani occupation as legally part of Azerbaijan, and should give to Azerbaijan so-called “enclaves,” which will allow Azerbaijan to control strategic highways connecting Armenia with Iran and Georgia.

Thus, Azerbaijan pushed very tough demands on Armenia for the signature of the peace treaty. The leaders in Baku know very well that it will be very challenging for the government in Armenia to accept all these demands. The Armenian government has already made significant concessions, at first agreeing to discuss NK’s autonomous status within Azerbaijan, then dropping the term “status” from their vocabulary, focusing only on an international presence in Nagorno Karabakh to secure the rights of Armenians there. To drop also this point, and to agree that the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh should live under Azerbaijani jurisdiction with no status and no international presence, would mean for the Armenian government to effectively agree to the hard or soft ethnic cleansing of Armenians and accept the vision of no or very few Arme-

to the Azerbaijani vision, then Azerbaijan will continue its policy of increasing pressure on Nagorno Karabakh Armenians, and ultimately, drive them out. Simultaneously, Azerbaijan may continue its “salami tactics” against Armenia, taking more and more strategic heights and creating a springboard for a large-scale attack against Armenia to open the so-called “Zangezur corridor” by force as soon as a window of opportunity emerges.

Azerbaijani policy and rhetoric create the perception that Baku is not interested in a peace agreement, and its primary concern is to blame Armenia for the failure of negotiations. In these circumstances, Armenia faces hard choices. Yerevan cannot fully accept Azerbaijan’s demands regarding the content of the peace treaty as it equals capitulation. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan will use the absence of a peace treaty as a “justification” for further military attacks against Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh. Perhaps the only way to cut this vicious circle is to make Azerbaijan pay a higher price for its military provocations and simultaneously reach out to external players, including Russia, the US, and the EU, with an Armenian vision of the future regional security architecture and seek to obtain their support in pushing forward these ideas.

(Benjamin Poghosyan is chairman of the Center for Political and Economic Strategic Studies in Yerevan, and Senior Research Fellow at the Applied Policy Research Institute [APRI] of Armenia.)



## COMMENTARY

## MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

## Armenia Ranks Better than Azerbaijan and Turkey in the Prosperity Index

The UK-based Legatum Institute published its comprehensive 2023 Prosperity Index for 167 countries, including Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. The index covers 12 separate spheres or “pillars,” which are composed of 67 sub-sections.

The Institute defined prosperity as people having “the opportunity to thrive by fulfilling their unique potential and playing their part in strengthening their communities and nations. Ultimately, prosperity is not just about what we have; it is also about who we become. Prosperity is underpinned by an inclusive society, with a strong social contract that protects the fundamental liberties and security of every individual.”

Overall, Armenia is ranked in the Prosperity Index much higher than Azerbaijan and Turkey. Armenia is 61st place in 2023, slightly down from 59th in 2022, but considerably up from 76th in 2013. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan is ranked much lower at 92nd in 2023, the same as in 2012 — somewhat higher than 104th in 2013. Turkey is ranked even lower at 95th in 2023, the same as in 2012 — substantially down from 68th in 2013.

The Legatum Institute described Azerbaijan as “the least prosperous country in the region,” despite its vast income from billions of petrodollars.” This means that the country’s wealth is not trickling down to the population.

Here is how Legatum Institute described Turkey’s dismal Prosperity Index. “Turkey has seen its governance deteriorate significantly over the last 10 years, falling 60 places to 128th, with political accountability deteriorating at the greatest rate globally. Constitutional reforms in 2017 concentrated more power in the hands of the executive, removing key checks and balances. Personal Freedom has also deteriorated at the second greatest rate globally, with the government consistently suppressing dissent.... The current government has ruled Turkey since 2002. As noted by Freedom House, after initially passing some liberalizing reforms, the government has pursued a wide-ranging crackdown on critics and opponents since 2016. For example, Amnesty International points out that hundreds of people, including journalists, social media users and protesters, have been detained in Turkey in 2019 due to their criticism of Turkey’s military offensive in Syria.”

Here are the rankings of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey on each of the 12 pillars of the Legatum Institute’s Prosperity Index:

1) “The Safety and Security pillar (War & Civil Conflict, Terrorism, Politically Related Terror & Violence, Violent Crime, and Property Crime) measures the degree to which war, conflict, and crime have destabilized the security of individuals, both immediately and through longer-lasting effects”: Armenia (75th), Azerbaijan (111th), and Turkey (147th).

2) “The Personal Freedom pillar (Agency, Freedom of Assembly & Association, Freedom of Speech & Access to Information, and Absence of Legal Discrimination) measures progress towards basic legal rights, and individual liberties”: Armenia (70th), Azerbaijan (144th), and Turkey (152nd).

3) “The Governance pillar (Executive Constraints, Political Accountability, Rule of Law, Government Integrity, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, and Institutional Trust) measures the extent to which there are checks

and restraints on power and whether governments operate effectively and without corruption”: Armenia (64th), Azerbaijan (113th), and Turkey (128th).

4) “The Social Capital pillar (Personal & Family Relationships, Social Networks, Interpersonal Trust, Social Tolerance, and Civic & Social Participation) measures the strength of personal and social relationships, social norms, civic participation in a country, and social tolerance”: Armenia (125th), Azerbaijan (132nd), and Turkey (137th).

5) “The Investment Environment pillar (Property Rights, Investor Protection, Contract Enforcement, Financing Ecosystem, and Restrictions on International Investment) measures the extent to which investments are adequately protected and are readily accessible”: Armenia (75th), Azerbaijan (54th), and Turkey (68th).

6) “The Enterprise Conditions pillar (Domestic Market Contestability, Environment for Business Creation, Burden of Regulation, Labor Market Flexibility, and Price Distortions) measures the degree to which regulations enable businesses to start, compete, and expand”: Armenia (44th), Azerbaijan (47th), and Turkey (65th).

7) “The Infrastructure and Market Access pillar (Communication, Energy, Water, Transport, Border Administration, Open Market Scale, Import Tariff Barriers, and Market Distortions) measures the quality of the infrastructure that enables trade and distortions in the market for goods and services”: Armenia (71st), Azerbaijan (72nd), and Turkey (50th).

8) “The Economic Quality pillar (Fiscal Sustainability, Macroeconomic Stability, Productivity & Competitiveness, Dynamism, and Labor Force Engagement) measures how well an economy is equipped to generate wealth sustainably and with the full engagement of the workforce”: Armenia (83rd), Azerbaijan (65th), and Turkey (71st).

9) “The Living Conditions pillar (Material Resources, Nutrition, Basic Services, Shelter, Connectedness, and Protection from Harm) measures the degree to which a reasonable quality of life is experienced by all, including material resources, shelter, basic services, and connectivity”: Armenia (76th), Azerbaijan (65th), and Turkey (59th).

10) “The Health pillar (Behavioral Risk Factors, Preventative Interventions, Care Systems, Mental Health, Physical Health, and Longevity) measures the extent to which people are healthy and have access to the necessary services to maintain good health, including health outcomes, health systems, illness and risk factors, and mortality rates”: Armenia (68th), Azerbaijan (85th), and Turkey (63rd).

11) “The Education pillar (Adult Skills, Tertiary Education, Secondary Education, Primary Education, and Pre-primary Education) measures enrolment, outcomes, and quality across four stages of education as well as the skills in the adult population”: Armenia (59th), Azerbaijan (79th), and Turkey (74th).

12) “The Natural Environment pillar (Preservation Efforts, Oceans, Freshwater, Forest, Land and Soil, Exposure to Air Pollution, and Emissions) measures the aspects of the physical environment that have a direct effect on people in their daily lives and changes that might impact the prosperity of future generations”: Armenia (99th), Azerbaijan (149th), and Turkey (86th).

In addition to Armenia’s better ranking than Azerbaijan and Turkey in the overall Prosperity Index, Armenia exceeds its two neighboring countries in six categories. It is worse than both of them only in three categories, but better than Azerbaijan and worse than Turkey in three other categories.

# A Slow Death of an Ancient People Goes Unnoticed

By Harry N. Mazadoorian

We are told that we live in a modern world. Technology is thought to have shrunk the globe so that whatever happens in the farthest corner is known by everyone in nanoseconds. Cameras are ubiquitous and supposedly nothing goes undetected.

That may be true in some instances, but not in connection with a little known region in the Southern Caucasus known as Artsakh (also known as Nagorno-Karabakh) between the countries of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Artsakh is a self-proclaimed republic populated overwhelmingly by ethnic Armenians. It is a mountainous, rugged but beautiful land. Its history is ancient with deep, meaningful and inextricable ties to Armenian history, religion and culture. In 1921, the land was ceded, some say arbitrarily, by Josef Stalin to Soviet Azerbaijan and thereafter sharp differences ensued.

In the recent past, following a referendum with exceptionally high voter turnout, Artsakh declared independence and emerged as an independent state. While it has not received recognition as such, it has operated independently. The past several decades have witnessed continued fighting between the forces of Artsakh and Azerbaijan with intermittent cease fires. Artsakh prevailed in the early 1990s. In 2020, however, Azeri forces took the offensive and regained much of the land. The most recent Azerbaijan war efforts were orchestrated by Turkey with highly effective weaponry and technologically sophisticated drones. Incursions into Artsakh were accompanied by brutality, continued desecration of centuries old Armenian religious and cultural treasures, and highly inflammatory racist and genocidal language. After the latest war, Russian peacekeepers entered to area to

curtail hostilities. The initially strong Russian presence has not proven effective for a number of reasons, including the focus on Russia’s war against Ukraine.

The most recent development in this saga has been a blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the only route and direct connection Artsakh has with Armenia and its principal supply line for food, fuel, medicines and critical supplies. With the blockade those in Artsakh are in danger of starving and the sick, without medical supplies and medicine, of dying. Cleverly, the blockade is claimed not to be imposed by the government of Azerbaijan, but by its private citizens claiming to be public minded environmental activists. Thus Azerbaijan claims the blockade is not a state action. 120,000 thousand men, women and children are at risk. The choice for the population of Artsakh seems clear: leave and never return abandoning your historic land, ancient houses of worship and possessions ----- or stay and die.

Putting aside the competing claims by Artsakh and Azerbaijan to rightful ownership of the land in question, the blockade violates the terms of an existing trilateral agreement as well as basic principles of humanity and international law.

Despite the strategic importance of the region and interest of major powers such as Russia, Iran, Turkey, the United States and all of Europe, the blockade has not been widely covered in the mainstream press. This is even more surprising in light of the imminent danger to the 120,000 occupants of Artsakh.

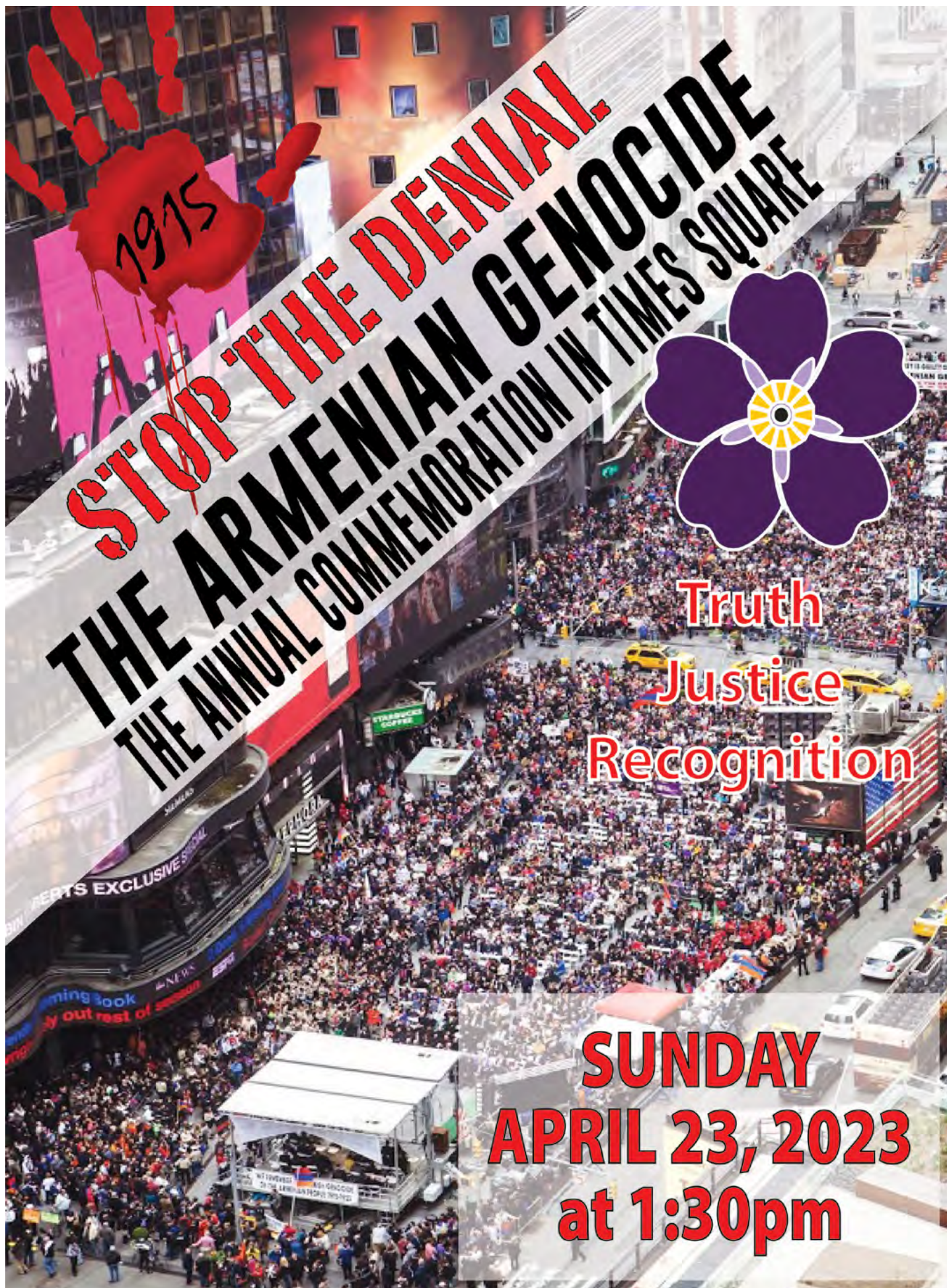
Those in the international community who are aware of the situation have expressed condemnation and concerns about the blockade. Significantly, the International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, ordered unimpeded movement along the corridor

both ways. But to no avail. Further humanitarian concerns and advocacy for peaceful solutions have been expressed by Pope Francis, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz just to name a few. Commentators refer to it as a second genocide against Armenians. Indeed, a recent program at Columbia University’s Program on Peace Building and Human Rights focused on the unfolding events in just those terms. Speakers at forthcoming commemorations of the 1915 Armenian Genocide also warn of the portending next Genocide.

Swift and meaningful condemnation of the blockade must be expressed by the international community. Remedies are available but the will to use them is needed. As an example, the United States should reverse its waiver of the Freedom Support Act in connection with Azerbaijan. Russia’s inability to serve as an effective peacekeeper and mediator, because of its obsession with the war in Ukraine or for other reasons, has become glaringly evident. This role must be augmented by other international powers such as the United States and France, both members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk group, which was originally charged with the issue of Artsakh’s status.

Time is running out. Armenians throughout the world who will soon be commemorating the 108th anniversary of the barbaric Genocide of 1915 now are astonished and disheartened to see the specter of genocide looming once again. If the blockade doesn’t end very soon, thousands of lives will once again be lost.

(Harry N. Mazadoorian has served as an attorney and mediator. He is the son of Genocide survivors; three of his grandparents perished in the 1915 Genocide. This commentary originally appeared in the *New Britain Herald* on April 14.)



## 2023 Tekeyan Cultural Association Artsakh Crisis Aid Campaign

The Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of the United States and Canada embarked on helping our sisters and brothers in Artsakh, surrounded by Azeris, by wiring a total of \$21,200 to 212 families, directly to their personal bank cards via the TCA Armenia Representative's office in Yerevan. The TCA Central Board thanks the following for their contributions to this project.

TCA Montreal \$6,000 Quebec  
 Ara Tcholakian \$2,600 NV  
 Tomas Azarian \$1,100 VT  
 Ron Arakelian \$500 CA  
 Edmond Azadian \$500 MI  
 Diran Depanian \$500 CA  
 Esther Stepanian \$400 MA  
 Dicran Antreassian \$250 MA  
 Tatiana Novobrantseva \$250 MA  
 Khajag H. Tchakerian \$200 PA  
 Dr. Richard Mikaelian \$100 NY  
 Alan Seferian \$100 MA  
 Vivian Taskalian \$100 CA  
 Jirair and Ani Hovsepian \$100 MA  
 Robin and Eugene Newman \$75 MI  
 Gail Alexanian \$50 MA  
 Berjouhy Gulesserian \$50 NY  
 Mark Mckertich \$50 MA  
 Raymond A. Davidian \$50 MA  
 Yetvart Eddie Istanbul \$50 NJ  
 Annie Malkhassian \$50 Quebec  
 Thomas Merjanian \$25 NY

### TCA Metro LA \$2,500 total from the individuals listed below

Greg and Nora Chilingirian \$500 CA  
 Armen Jesrayelian \$500 CA  
 Dr. and Mrs. Nubar and Aida Sethian \$500 CA  
 Vartan and Kimberly Demirjian \$150 CA  
 Kapor Foundation \$150 CA  
 Carl and Maria Bardakian \$100 CA  
 Aleksan Giragosian \$100 CA  
 Rebecca and Talene Hachikian \$100 CA  
 Stephen and Arda Haratunian \$100 NY  
 Chris Kesici \$100 CA  
 Armen and Jeanie Keuilian CA \$100  
 Mihran and Talene Toumajan \$100 CA  
**TOTAL \$15,500**



UNDER THE AUSPICES OF  
 His Eminence  
**Archbishop HOVNAN DERDERIAN**, Primate  
 WESTERN DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA

AN EVENING OF REMEMBRANCE - DEDICATED TO  
**TAMAR ASADOURIAN**  
 HER WRITINGS, MUSIC AND ART

With the collaboration of  
 TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION  
 ZVARTNOTS CULTURAL COMMITTEE  
 ARMENIAN GENERAL BENEVOLENT UNION  
 ARMENIAN INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Program participants  
**Silva Katchiguan**  
**Lilit Keheyán**  
**Caroline Tufenkian**  
**Dr. Simon Simonian**  
**Vatche Mankerian**  
**Shahe Mankerian**

**THURSDAY, MAY 25, 2023 at 7:30 PM**  
 Agajanian Auditorium – AGBU Manoogian-Demirjian School  
 6844 Oakdale Ave., Canoga Park CA 91306