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INDEPENDENT AMERICAN ARMENIAN WEEKLY
AMN HYE KIANK SHABATATERT-USA ARMENIAN LIFE Magazine

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JOURNALISTS & MAGAZINE

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Celebrating our 40th year Magazine

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BREAKING NEWS: SEE THE 36-PAGE COURT OF APPEAL OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DOCUMENT ON PAGES 4-9, 16-19. SEE RELATED ARTICLES ON PAGES 3,11,16-19

IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT: WESTERN DIOCESE'S ARCH. HOVNAN DERDERIAN LOSES COURT CASE AGAINST USA ARMENIAN LIFE/APPO JABARIAN ON ALL 15 STATEMENTS

IN THE COURT OF APPEAL OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA: WESTERN DIOCESE'S ARCH. HOVNAN DERDERIAN LOSES COURT CASE AGAINST USA ARMENIAN LIFE/APPO JABARIAN ON 4 OUT OF 6 STATEMENTS



PAGES 3,11: A SUMMARY OF THE FIFTEEN STATEMENTS THAT DERDERIAN USED IN HIS SUPERIOR COURT LAWSUIT/COMPLAINT AGAINST JABARIAN. (Los Angeles County Superior Court Case No. 23STCV24374)

PAGES 3,11: A SUMMARY OF THE SIX STATEMENTS THAT DERDERIAN APPEALED IN HIS CA COURT OF APPEAL CASE AGAINST JABARIAN. (Appeal Case no. B343954)

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY: THE CASE FOR AN **P. 10** INFORMED COMMUNITY



KHACHKAR STUDIOS UNVEILS A NEW WORLD-CLASS TEMPLATE FOR U.S. ARMENIAN CHURCHES ANNUAL FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY **P. 8-9**

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2019 FROM THE USA ARMENIAN LIFE ARCHIVES: AUG. 16, 2019

TWENTY PLUS Reasons Why Hovnan Derderian's Time Has Come to End

E2 818.241.5777 ARMENIANLIFE.COM ISSUE 1690 AUGUST 16 - 22, 2019 USA ARMENIAN LIFE Magazine

Twenty-Plus Reasons Why Hovnan Derderian's Time Has Come to End

A REPORT BY ARMENIAN CHURCH REFORM UPDATED AS NEW FACTS AND EVIDENCE COME TO LIGHT. MONDAY AUG. 12, 2019

1) ARCH. DERDERIAN HAS BROKEN HIS CELIBACY VOWS CAUGHT IN ENGAGING SEXUAL ACTS
Read article in issue #1671, Apr., 5, 2019:
Sex and Hovnan Derderian: As a Celibate Priest, Derderian has broken his own religious vows!
BY APPO JABARIAN
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/04/05/sex-and-hovnan-derderian-as-a-celibate-priest-derderian-has-broken-his-own-religious-vows/>

2) ARCH. DERDERIAN'S PRESENCE ON THE ALTAR IS DESECRATION OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH; AND BLASPHEMY TO CHRISTIAN RELIGION. PREACHING GODLY LOVE WHILE DOING EVIL DEEDS
Read article in issue #1643, Sep., 21, 2018:
Armenian Church Must Be Saved From In-House Charlatans Masquerading as Spiritual Leaders
BY APPO JABARIAN
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2018/09/21/armenian-church-must-be-saved-from-in-house-charlatans-masquerading-as-spiritual-leaders/>

3) SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE HAMMOCK DETERMINES GROSS MISREPRESENTATION OF ARCH. HOVNAN DERDERIAN, PASTOR MARKARYAN AND HAROUT MARKARYAN UNDER OATH. DENIES COURT MOTION OF WESTERN DIOCESE. JUDGE ORDERS WESTERN DIOCESE TO PAY ALL LEGAL COSTS.
Read article in issue #1678, May., 24, 2019:
FORGERY, FRAUD PERPETRATED BY WESTERN DIOCESE'S ARCH. HOVNAN DERDERIAN, PASTOR MARKARYAN, EXEC. DIR. HAROUT MARKARYAN.
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4) ARCH. DERDERIAN HAS REPEAT-

EDLY VIOLATED WESTERN DIOCESE'S BY-LAWS
Read article in issue #1675, May., 3, 2019:
Did Joseph Kaninian, Esq., Adrienne Krikorian, Esq., Arch. Derderian Conspire to Commit Massive Violations of Western Diocese By-Laws at 2016 Dioc. Assembly in Las Vegas?
BY APPO JABARIAN
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/05/03/did-joseph-kaninian-esq-adrienne-krikorian-esq-arch-derderian-conspire-to-commit-massive-violations-of-western-diocese-by-laws-at-2016-diocesan-assembly-in-las-vegas/>

5) WHILE SERVING IN CANADA AS PRIMATE, ARCH. DERDERIAN SWINDLES MONEY OUT OF THE CHAKMAKIAN FUND SET UP TO HELP THE NEEDY SINGLE MOTHERS AND CHILDREN IN ARMENIA AND ARTSAKHA
Read article in issue #1670, Mar., 29, 2019:
SOME FACTS ABOUT HOVNAN DERDERIAN
BY CHRIS CHAKMAKIAN, A CONCERNED CANADIAN ARMENIAN
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/03/29/some-facts-about-hovnan-derderian/>

6) ILLEGITIMATE DEFROCKING/ILLEGAL FIRING OF INNOCENT PRIESTS WHO DO NOT WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN ARCH. DERDERIAN'S CORRUPT SCHEMES
Read article in issue #1667, Mar., 8, 2019, pages 1, and 4-5:
- DENMARK ISN'T THE ONLY PLACE WHERE SOMETHING IS ROTTEN: Facts About the Relationship Between the St. John Garabed Trust Committee and the Diocese/Primate
- WHAT REALLY HAS TRANSPIRED AT ST. JOHN GARABED ARMENIAN CHURCH OF SAN DIEGO? — A SUMMARY
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/03/17/denmark-isnt-the-only-place-where-something-is-rotten-facts-about-the-relationship-between-the-st-john-garabed-trust-committee-and-the-diocese-primate/>

7) ARCH. DERDERIAN'S WESTERN DIOCESE LACKS TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY
Read article in issue #1688, Aug., 2, 2019, page E4:
ARMENIAN CHURCH REFORM notes that it is not a secret that Hovnan Derderian operates under a non-transparency policy at the Western Diocese. See press release facts page. We would like to forewarn the public to demand a certified audit, preferable from one of the major accounting firms like KPMG, before making any further donations. KPMG should pay special attention of the management of various funds, especially the "Endowment Fund".

8) ARCH. DERDERIAN: A DECEPTIVE RELIGIOUS LEADER AND A MASTER CON ARTIST.
Read article in issue #1670, Mar., 29, 2019:
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BY CHRIS CHAKMAKIAN, A CONCERNED CANADIAN ARMENIAN
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/03/29/some-facts-about-hovnan-derderian/>

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<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/06/14/12-arch-derderian-collaborator-of-archenemies-of-the-armenian-people-terrorist-turkish-grey-wolves-on-anti-armenian-turkish-protocols-plus-other-criminals/>

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Henchen of Corrupted Karekin II and U.S. Western Diocese Primate Hovnan Derderian Issue Death Threat Against USA Armenian Life Magazine Editor Apopo Jabarian
BY APPO JABARIAN
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/02/22/henchen-of-corrupted-karekin-ii-and-u-s-western-diocese-primate-hovnan-derderian-issue-death-threat-against-usa-armenian-life-magazine-editor-apopo-jabarian/>

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LIKE VULTURES, CERTAIN CORRUPTED AND FAKE CLERGY OF ARMENIAN CHURCH PANDER TO WEALTHY ARMENIAN SENIORS FOR INCLUSION OF THEIR NAMES IN THEIR WILLS. LET THEM BE LEFT OUT!
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BY T. BAGRAMYAN (MOSCOW, RUSSIA)
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/07/26/12-armenian-communities-of-russia-level-complaints-against-catholico-karekin-ii-s-brother-and-arch-derderian-s-collaborator-arch-yezras-of-russia/>

22) MISTREATMENT OF ARMENIAN WOMEN OF VARIOUS CHURCH COMMITTEES
Mistreated Armenian women have resigned from various Los Angeles area church and/or other organizational committees being disgusted by abusive and corrupted pastors/laypeople operating under the direct supervision and with full "protection" by Archbishop Derderian.
(Facts are in. Article coming soon.)

23) HYPOCRISY: PREACHING GODLY LOVE BUT CARRYING OUT EVIL DEEDS.
Read article in issue #1669, Mar., 22, 2019, page E1:
PREACH WATER, BUT DRINK WINE: THE TWO-FACED MORALITY
BY Z. S. ANDREW DEMIRDJIAN, PH.D.
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/03/22/preach-water-but-drink-wine-the-two-faced-morality/>

24) UNPRECEDENTED CORRUPTION WITHIN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH UNDER KAREKIN II, DERDERIAN AND YEZRAS
Unprecedented level of corruption within the Armenian Church under Karekin II, Arch. Derderian, Yezras of Moscow. A revealing public statement by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.
Read article in issue #1654, Dec., 7, 2018, page 1:
THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH HAS NEVER BEEN MORE CORRUPTED, THAN DURING THE YEARS (1998-2018) OF THE RULING REPUBLICAN PARTY
STATEMENT BY ARMENIA PM NIKOL PASHINYAN
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/02/12/the-armenian-apostolic-church-has-never-been-more-corrupted-than-during-the-years-of-the-ruling-republican-party/>

25) ARCH. DERDERIAN AND KAREKIN II SCAM TO SIPHON OFF MONEY FROM CHURCH CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS
See issue #1690, Aug., 16, 2019, page 1:
"WORLD HOLY ETCHMIADZIN PRESERVATION COMMISSION" needed to ensure no siphoning of funds by Derderian and Karekin II
BY APPO JABARIAN
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/08/16/world-armenian-commission-to-ensure-no-siphoning-of-funds-by-arch-hovnan-derderian-and-karekin-ii/>

26) "SAVE ARARAT HOME FROM ARCH. DERDERIAN"
BY KATHRYN JAMES / LATV
REPORTING FROM ARARAT HOME OF LOS ANGELES
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/06/29/save-ararat-home-from-arch-derderian/>

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Cont'd. from p. E2 benefactor out of millions of dollars
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/03/14/national-social-highly-corrupted-hovnan-derderian-manuk-markaryan-and-son-harout-markaryan-complot-to-defraud-a-major-armenian-american-benefactor-out-of-millions-of-dollars/>

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<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/07/26/12-armenian-communities-of-russia-level-complaints-against-catholico-karekin-ii-s-brother-and-arch-derderian-s-collaborator-arch-yezras-of-russia/>

22) MISTREATMENT OF ARMENIAN WOMEN OF VARIOUS CHURCH COMMITTEES
Mistreated Armenian women have resigned from various Los Angeles area church and/or other organizational committees being disgusted by abusive and corrupted pastors/laypeople operating under the direct supervision and with full "protection" by Archbishop Derderian.
(Facts are in. Article coming soon.)

23) HYPOCRISY: PREACHING GODLY LOVE BUT CARRYING OUT EVIL DEEDS.
Read article in issue #1669, Mar., 22, 2019, page E1:
PREACH WATER, BUT DRINK WINE: THE TWO-FACED MORALITY
BY Z. S. ANDREW DEMIRDJIAN, PH.D.
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/03/22/preach-water-but-drink-wine-the-two-faced-morality/>

24) UNPRECEDENTED CORRUPTION WITHIN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH UNDER KAREKIN II, DERDERIAN AND YEZRAS
Unprecedented level of corruption within the Armenian Church under Karekin II, Arch. Derderian, Yezras of Moscow. A revealing public statement by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.
Read article in issue #1654, Dec., 7, 2018, page 1:
THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH HAS NEVER BEEN MORE CORRUPTED, THAN DURING THE YEARS (1998-2018) OF THE RULING REPUBLICAN PARTY
STATEMENT BY ARMENIA PM NIKOL PASHINYAN
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/02/12/the-armenian-apostolic-church-has-never-been-more-corrupted-than-during-the-years-of-the-ruling-republican-party/>

25) ARCH. DERDERIAN AND KAREKIN II SCAM TO SIPHON OFF MONEY FROM CHURCH CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS
See issue #1690, Aug., 16, 2019, page 1:
"WORLD HOLY ETCHMIADZIN PRESERVATION COMMISSION" needed to ensure no siphoning of funds by Derderian and Karekin II
BY APPO JABARIAN
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/08/16/world-armenian-commission-to-ensure-no-siphoning-of-funds-by-arch-hovnan-derderian-and-karekin-ii/>

26) "SAVE ARARAT HOME FROM ARCH. DERDERIAN"
BY KATHRYN JAMES / LATV
REPORTING FROM ARARAT HOME OF LOS ANGELES
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/06/29/save-ararat-home-from-arch-derderian/>

USA ARMENIAN LIFE Magazine ISSUE 1690 AUGUST 16 - 22, 2019 ARMENIANLIFE.COM 818.241.5777 E4

E4 818.241.5777 ARMENIANLIFE.COM ISSUE 1690 AUGUST 16 - 22, 2019 USA ARMENIAN LIFE Magazine

Twenty-Plus Reasons Why Derderian's Time Has Come to End

Cont'd. from p. E3

- ARCH. DERDERIAN: A COLLABORATOR ON ANTI-ARMENIA TURKISH PROTOCOLS
- ARCH. DERDERIAN'S "TURKISH GREY WOLVES" CONNECTION
- MERUZHAN HARTENIAN ASSASSINATED: International Money Launderer — Drug Trafficker Diocesan Council Chair Handpicked by Karekin II
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/06/15/meruzhan-hartenian-assassinated-international-money-launderer-drug-trafficker-diocesan-council-chair-handpicked-by-karekin-ii/>

13) OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE. CONTEMPT TO CHURCH PARISHIONERS AND ARMENIAN COMMUNITY.
Read article in issue #1668, Mar., 15, 2019 Pages E1-6:
WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS SHOULDN'T ALWAYS STAY IN VEGAS: ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE ON THE 89TH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE WESTERN DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA CONVENED ON FRIDAY, MAY 6, 2016 AT THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF LAS VEGAS.
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2018/03/15/what-happens-in-vegas-shouldnt-always-stay-in-vegas/>

14) SERIES OF DEATH THREATS AGAINST PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATORS, DETRACTORS INCLUDING JOURNALISTS.
Read article in issues #1658, Jan., 4, 2019, page E1,
Read article in issue #1657, Dec., 28, 2018, page E2 and
Read article in issue #1665, Feb., 22, 2019 page E1:
Henchen of Corrupted Karekin II and U.S. Western Diocese Primate Hovnan Derderian Issue Death Threat Against USA Armenian Life Magazine Editor Apopo Jabarian
BY APPO JABARIAN
<http://www.armenianlife.com/2019/02/22/henchen-of-corrupted-karekin-ii-and-u-s-western-diocese-primate-hovnan-derderian-issue-death-threat-against-usa-armenian-life-magazine-editor-apopo-jabarian/>

15) MISTREATMENT, TERRORIZATION OF OWN PEOPLE THROUGH VIOLENT THREATS, AND COVERT AND OVERT BULLYING
Read article in issue #1668, Mar., 15, 2019:
WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS SHOULDN'T ALWAYS STAY IN VEGAS: ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE ON THE 89TH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE WESTERN DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA CONVENED ON FRIDAY, MAY 6, 20

BREAKING NEWS:

IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT:

WESTERN DIOCESE'S ARCH. HOVNAN DERDERIAN LOSES COURT CASE AGAINST USA ARMENIAN LIFE/ APPO JABARIAN ON ALL 15 STATEMENTS

IN THE COURT OF APPEAL OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA:

WESTERN DIOCESE'S ARCH. HOVNAN DERDERIAN LOSES COURT CASE AGAINST USA ARMENIAN LIFE/ APPO JABARIAN ON 4 OUT OF 6 STATEMENTS

On October 6, 2023 Derderian had filed a complaint against Jabarian for defamation. Derderian only focused on 15 statements out of nearly 60 exposés made by Jabarian during the years 2015-2023. He left nearly 45 statements unchallenged.

On February 7, 2024 Jabarian filed a special motion to strike Derderian's all 15 statements at issue against USA ARMENIAN LIFE.

On November 22, 2024, "after a hearing, the Los Angeles County Superior Court granted Jabarian's motion, striking Derderian's complaint in its entirety," the court documents showed. They concluded "Derderian failed to show actual malice as to the first six alleged defamatory statements, and the treason statement was nonactionable opinion." The Superior Court Judge (Case No. 23STCV24374) granted

the anti-SLAPP motion on all fifteen statements. The Court also ordered Western Diocese's Arch. Derderian to pay Jabarian's legal fees.

On January 15, 2025, Derderian filed an appeal. The Appellate Court documents show: "On appeal Derderian does not challenge the trial court's ruling striking all nine statements as "fair and true report[s]" of judicial proceedings under Civil Code section 47, subdivision (d)(1).

The court documents also mention: "Derderian failed to make a prima facie showing of actual malice regarding the child abuse statement." It was further elaborated: "The fact the Western Diocese prior to publication sent a letter claiming the child abuse statement in the media inquiry were not true does not show actual malice. ... The Western Diocese's letter denied the allegation and stated it had evidence demonstrating the statement was false, but it did not describe or attach any evidence."

On May 14, 2026, The Court of Appeal of The State of California issued an unpublished order upholding the California Superior Court's decision to uphold the Superior Court's granting USA ARMENIAN LIFE/Appo Jabarian's motion to strike 4 out of 6 statements by Western Diocese's Arch. Hovnan Derderian. (Appeal Case no. B343954; Los Angeles County Superior Court Case No. 23STCV24374).

Below is a summary of the fifteen statements that Derderian used in his Superior Court Lawsuit/complaint against Jabarian.

SUPERIOR COURT GRANTED JABARIAN'S MOTION TO STRIKE ALL 15 STATEMENTS.

Statement No. 1: Embezzlement of Armenian Genocide Victims Settlement Funds

"The person behind the team in the embezzlement of Armenian Genocide

Victims Settlement Funds: Western Diocese's Arch. Hovnan Derderian ... Arch. Derderian is directly involved in the numerous acts of misappropriation of funds"

Media Inquiry/Statement No. 2: Child Abuse ... hush-hush money

"According to certain sources, Primate of the Western Diocese, Hovnan Derderian, 'committed child abuse.' ... However, at the last moment, the mother of the child must have received a 'large amount of hush-hush money from Archbishop Hovnan Derderian to remain silent and suspend the court case."

Statement No. 3: Arch. Derderian expelled... for breaking his celibacy vows

"Arch. Derderian Expelled from Cilician Catholicosate in Lebanon for Breaking His Celibacy Vows. He Was Caught in Engaging [sic] Illegal Sexual Acts"

Statement No. 4: Arch. Derderian gets caught in an illegal sexual act

"[T]he young Derderian's mother received complaints from other mothers for [the Archbishop's] sexual pass at other boys... [and] decides to cover up his sexual tendencies by enlisting him as a young student-priest for celibate priesthood. But he gets caught in an illegal sexual act. He gets expelled from the convent."

Statement No. 5: American judge declared as 'liars' Arch. Derderian, pastor Manouk Markaryan, his son, Harout

"[A]n American Judge in the California Superior Court declared as 'liars' Arch. Derderian, pastor Manouk Markaryan and his son, the Executive Director of the Western Diocese, Harout Markaryan."

Statement No. 6: Catholicos Karekin II, Arch. Hovnan Derderian, Arch. Yezras et al perpetrated treason

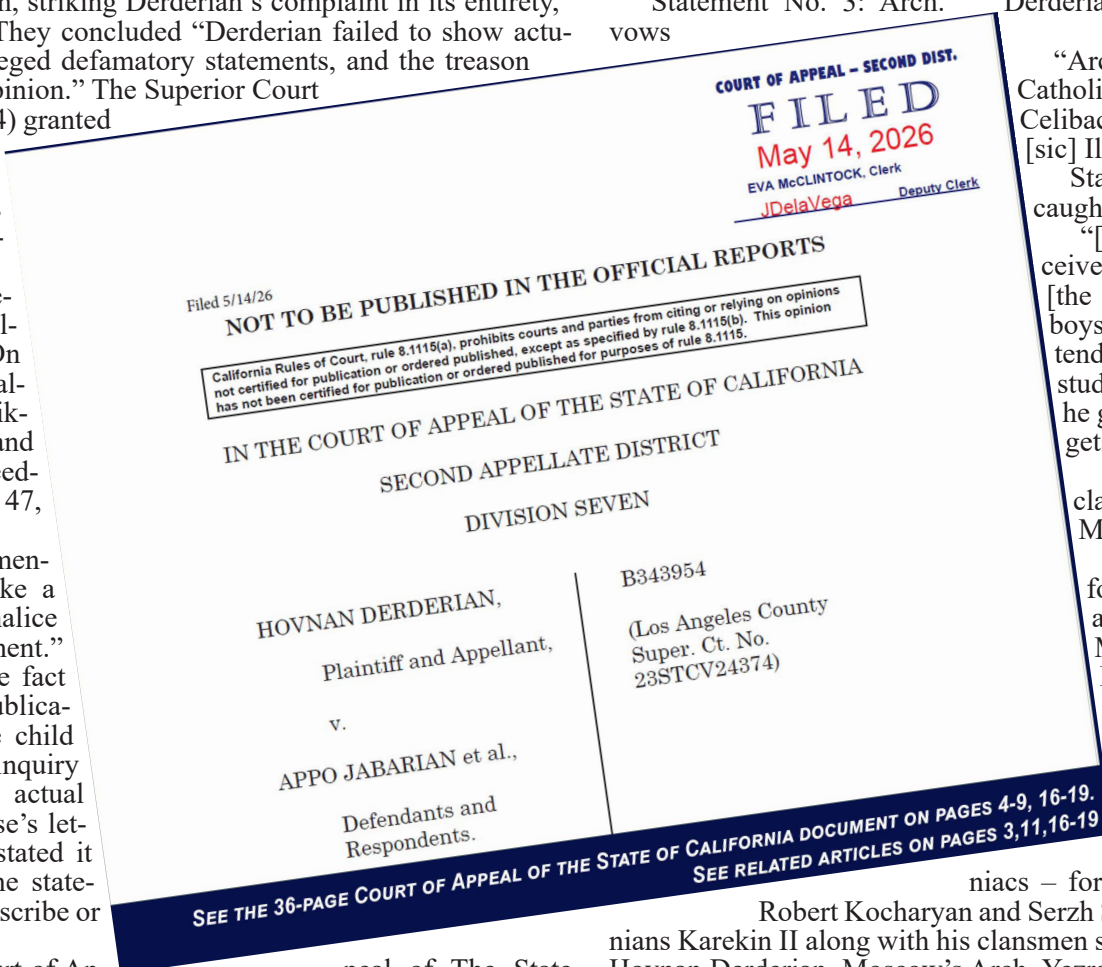
"Many are now convinced that the three former regime kleptomaniacs – former Presidents Levon Ter-Petrosyan,

Robert Kocharyan and Serzh Sargsyan with Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II along with his clansmen such as Western Diocese primate Arch. Hovnan Derderian, Moscow's Arch. Yezras have perpetrated treason against the Armenian nation. Their treasonous acts range from acts of sabotage of Armenia/Artsakh's war efforts behind the front line, cutting off military supply by bribed Army general officers; corrupt army general officers' unwarranted withdrawal of Armenian army units from strategic positions, old regime assets' false propaganda designed to demoralize Armenian frontline soldiers, to massive misappropriation of funds from Diaspora designated for the twin Armenian republics' economic development and humanitarian mission."

Statement No. 7: Arch. Derderian misappropriated money from [Artsakh War I] Fallen Soldier's Widows and Orphan Fund

"While he was the primate [of] the Canada Diocese, Arch. Derderian misappropriated thousands of dollars from [Fallen Soldier's Widows and Orphan Aid] fund."

Please see page 11



RUSSIAN KGB/FSB AGENT KAREKIN II CATHOLICOS FELLOW CLANSMAN, WESTERN DIOCESE'S ARCH. HOVNAN DERDERIAN LOSES TWIN COURT BATTLES AGAINST USA ARMENIAN LIFE/APPO JABARIAN

FILED

May 14, 2026

(9S□0F&.172&, Clerk

JDeLaVega Deputy Clerk

Filed 5/14/26 Derderian v. Jabarian CA2/7

NOT TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE OFFICIAL REPORTS

California Rules of Court, rule 8.1115(a), prohibits courts and parties from citing or relying on opinions not certified for publication or ordered published, except as specified by rule 8.1115(b). This opinion has not been certified for publication or ordered published for purposes of rule 8.1115.

IN THE COURT OF APPEAL OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

SECOND APPELLATE DISTRICT

DIVISION SEVEN

HOVNAN DERDERIAN, Plaintiff and Appellant, v. APPO JABARIAN et al., Defendants and Respondents.	B343954 (Los Angeles County Super. Ct. No. 23STCV24374)
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APPEAL from a judgment of the Superior Court of Los Angeles County, Bruce G. Iwasaki, Judge. Reversed and remanded with directions.

Harder Stonerock, Dilan A. Esper, Ryan J. Stonerock; Newport Harbor Law Group and Mark V. Asdourian for Plaintiff and Appellant.

Davis Wright Tremaine, Diana Palacios and Joel Richert for Defendants and Respondents.

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Hovnan Derderian, the Archbishop of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, appeals from the judgment entered after the trial court granted publishers Appo Jabarian and HYE Media Group's (collectively, Jabarian)¹ special motion to strike under Code of Civil Procedure section 425.16.² Derderian alleged, as relevant on appeal, that Jabarian published seven defamatory statements about Derderian in *USA Armenian Life*, a weekly magazine owned by Jabarian. Derderian does not dispute that he is a public figure.

Derderian contends he met his burden of showing a probability of producing clear and convincing evidence of actual malice with respect to six of the alleged defamatory statements, including those alleging child abuse, misappropriation of funds, and improper conduct at a seminary in Lebanon. With respect to the seventh statement regarding alleged treason, Derderian contends the trial court erred in finding it was a nonactionable opinion. Finally, he argues the trial court abused its discretion in denying his request for discovery to meet his burden in opposing the motion to strike, specifically, his request to depose three declarants Jabarian relied on as sources for some of the statements.

The trial court erred in granting Jabarian's special motion to strike with respect to Derderian's allegations that Jabarian made false statements that Derderian misappropriated funds

¹ Derderian's complaint alleged Jabarian "owned and/or controlled" HYE Media Group, and the parties' briefing refers to the defendants collectively as Jabarian.

² Further undesignated statutory references are to the Code of Civil Procedure. Section 425.16 is commonly referred to as the anti-SLAPP statute.

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from the Armenian genocide settlement fund. However, we agree with the trial court that Derderian has not met his burden of proof with respect to the other statements he alleges were defamatory. Derderian also has not shown the court abused its discretion in denying his motion for discovery. We reverse the judgment and remand for the trial court to issue a new order denying Jabarian's special motion to strike with respect to allegations regarding the Armenian genocide settlement fund and granting the special motion to strike with respect to all other alleged defamatory statements.

FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

A. The Complaint

On October 6, 2023 Derderian filed a complaint against Jabarian for defamation. The complaint alleged Derderian was the current Archbishop (also referred to as a "Primate") of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, and he was the "spiritual leader of Christian Armenian communities throughout the [Western] Diocese." The Western Diocese was comprised of 44 individual parishes across the western United States with its headquarters in Burbank, California. The complaint alleged Jabarian, as the "editor, owner and operator" of the magazine *USA Armenian Life*, had published seven false and defamatory statements about Derderian in the magazine's October 14-20, 2022 edition (the October 2022 publication).³

³ The complaint also alleged Jabarian published nine other defamatory statements about two judicial proceedings involving the Western Diocese. On appeal Derderian does not challenge the trial court's ruling striking all nine statements as privileged

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Derderian attached a copy of the October 2022 publication to his complaint.

1. Child abuse allegations (statement 1)

The October 2022 publication included a heading, "Alleged Child Abuse Cover Up by Arch. Hovnan Derderian?" followed by the phrase "Armenian clergy child molester?"⁴ Under the heading was titled a "Media Inquiry" directed to the Executive Director of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, asking him to "confirm or deny the veracity of these allegations": "According to certain sources, Primate of the Western Diocese, Hovnan Derderian, 'committed child abuse.' [¶] Reportedly, the mother of the child turned to the well-known lawyer – now deceased, Vartkes Yghaiyan, to initiate a lawsuit against the Diocesan Primate Hovnan Derderian. . . . [¶] . . . However, at the last moment, the mother of the child must have received a 'large amount of hush-hush money['] from Archbishop Hovnan Derderian to remain silent and suspend the court case."

2. Misappropriation of funds (statements 2, 3 & 4)

The October 2022 publication alleged three statements about embezzlement and misappropriation of funds:

- *Statement 2:* "The person behind the team in the embezzlement of Armenian Genocide Victims Settlement Funds: Western Diocese's Arch. Hovnan Derderian";

"fair and true report[s]" of judicial proceedings under Civil Code section 47, subdivision (d)(1).

⁴ Capitalization and boldface are omitted in the quotations from the October 2022 publication.

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RUSSIAN KGB/FSB AGENT KAREKIN II CATHOLICOS FELLOW CLANSMAN, WESTERN DIOCESE'S ARCH. HOVNAN DERDERIAN LOSES TWIN COURT BATTLES AGAINST USA ARMENIAN LIFE/APPO JABARIAN

- *Statement 3*: “Arch. Derderian is directly involved in the numerous acts of misappropriation of funds”; and
- *Statement 4*: “Looting of 1st Artsakh War Fallen Soldier’s Widows and Orphan Aid Fund in Canada: While he was the primate [of] the Canada Diocese, Arch. Derderian misappropriated thousands of dollars from that fund.”

3. *Expulsion from seminary in Lebanon* (statements 5 & 6)

The October 2022 publication made two statements regarding Derderian’s alleged expulsion from a seminary in Lebanon:

- *Statement 5*: “Arch. Derderian expelled from Cilicia Catholicosate in Lebanon for breaking his celibacy vows. He was caught in engaging illegal sexual acts.”
- *Statement 6*: “[T]he young Derderian’s mother received complaints from other mothers for his . . . sexual pass at other boys. [His] mother decides to cover up his sexual tendencies by enlisting him as a young student-priest for celibate priesthood. But he gets caught in an illegal sexual act. He gets expelled from the convent.”

4. *Treasonous acts (statement 7)*

The October 2022 publication also quoted a statement by Jabarian purportedly made during a television broadcast of *USA Armenian Life TV*: “Many are now convinced the three former regime kleptomaniacs,” i.e., three former Armenian presidents, “with [chief bishop] Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II along with his clansmen such as Western Diocese primate Arch. Hovnan Derderian . . . have perpetrated treason against the

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Armenian nation. Their treasonous acts range from acts of sabotage of Armenia/Artsakh’s war efforts behind the front line, cutting off military supply by bribed Army general officers; corrupt army general officers’ unwarranted withdrawal of Armenian army units from strategic positions; old regime assets’ false propaganda designed to demoralize Armenian frontline soldiers, to massive misappropriation of funds from Diaspora designated for the twin Armenian republics’ economic development and humanitarian mission.”

In his answer, Jabarian asserted as affirmative defenses that Derderian was a public figure and could not present clear and convincing evidence of actual malice, and that some of the alleged defamatory statements were “rhetorical hyperbole or subjective statements of opinion.”

B. *Jabarian’s Special Motion To Strike*

On February 7, 2024 Jabarian filed a special motion to strike under section 425.16 in which he argued that Derderian had conceded he was a public figure and could not show clear and convincing evidence of actual malice with respect to six of the statements that Derderian alleged were defamatory. Jabarian supported the motion with his declaration and declarations from Reverend Father Kevork Halladjian, Vosgan Mekhitarian, and Reverend Petros Bagramyan setting forth the basis for his belief that the six statements were true.

Jabarian argued the seventh statement about alleged treason was a nonactionable opinion because it was punctuated by vigorous insults, passionate declarations, and hyperbolic comments, and it expressed Jabarian’s belief that Derderian was

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aligned with political and church figures who were working against Armenia’s best interests in “the 44-Day War.”⁵

1. *Halladjian’s declaration*

Halladjian was a deacon in charge of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Upland, California. He declared that while he was attending St. James Theological Seminary of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem in 1978, he saw two visitors enter through the seminary’s gate, and the gatekeeper told him that Derderian was one of the visitors and he was there to apply for admission. Two years later, Halladjian was attending a seminary class during which the Armenian Patriarch told the

⁵ On September 27, 2020 a war broke out between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region in the South Caucasus. The region had been controlled by Armenia since an earlier war in 1994. (Encyclopedia Britannica, Nagorno-Karabakh (updated Mar. 18, 2026) <https://www.britannica.com/place/Nagorno-Karabakh> [as of Mar. 26, 2026].) Over the course of 44 days, “Azeri forces captured one-third of the [Nagorno-Karabakh] region, including two ethnic Armenian population centers, as well as all of the surrounding areas that . . . [were] occupied as a buffer zone.” (Epstein, *Grassroots Narrative Building As an Answer to State-Controlled Disinformation: Creating an “Artsakh Archive” to Document Ethnic Displacement in Nagorno-Karabakh* (2024) 26 Loy. J. Pub. Int. L 1, fns. omitted.) The war resulted in significant displacement of the 120,000 ethnic Armenians in the region” (*ibid.*) and substantial casualties on both sides. (Tom Ruys & Felipe Rodríguez Silvestre, *Illegal: The Recourse to Force to Recover Occupied Territory and the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War*, (2021) 32 Eur. J. Int’l L. 1287, 1287-1288.)

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class that Derderian was not accepted to the St. James seminary because he had been expelled from a seminary in Lebanon and “was not worth ordaining as a celibate priest.” At some point between 1982 and 1985, three visiting priests said during one of Halladjian’s classes that Derderian had been expelled from the Lebanon seminary for having a homosexual relationship with another seminarian. Halladjian shared this information with Jabarian in 2021.

Halladjian stated regarding Derderian’s alleged abuse of children that Halladjian taught at an Armenian youth camp in Dunlap, California from 2005 to 2008, and at some point he noticed that a teenage boy had stopped attending the camp. In 2022 Halladjian called the boy, who stated Derderian had invited him and two other boys to his house several years prior, and they realized when they arrived that they were alone with Derderian. “The boy did not share with [Halladjian] the specific details of what had occurred,” but the boy stated “he was disgusted with the Archbishop” and “the Archbishop had abused his power.” According to Halladjian, “[the boy] was angry with his mother because she had not protected him.” Halladjian explained that “given the way the boy was talking and my decades of experience working with young persons . . . , it was my impression that the boy had been abused in some manner by the Archbishop . . . and was harmed psychologically by what had happened.” Halladjian shared this information with Jabarian in 2022.

2. *Mekhitarian’s declaration*

Mekhitarian formerly worked as an ordained priest for the Armenian Apostolic Church in the 1960s and 1970s. Since the 1990s he worked as an investigative journalist and paralegal in

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Los Angeles and contributed articles to *USA Armenian Life*. From 2000 to 2005 he worked as a paralegal for attorney Vartkes Yeghiayan. Mekhitarian averred he “heard it discussed within the Armenian community on numerous occasions” that Derderian was caught engaging in sexual activity with another seminarian while at the Lebanon seminary. Mekhitarian learned through his “network within the Armenian community” that the other seminarian involved was “Father Ararat.” Mekhitarian located Ararat “at least twenty years ago selling jeans in the garment district in downtown Los Angeles” and told him several people had identified him as the seminarian who engaged in sexual acts with Derderian at the Lebanon seminary. Ararat stated he did not want to discuss the matter, but he did not deny the allegation. Mekhitarian told Jabarian this information “[a]t least fifteen years ago.”

3. *Bagramyan’s declaration*

Bagramyan served as the pastor of St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church of Glendale, California. He declared that in 2021 a painting contractor assisting with a church remodel told Bagramyan that a “female acquaintance” had told the contractor that Derderian molested a child several years ago. The child’s family had “initiated steps to file a lawsuit” against Derderian, but the case was not pursued. Bagramyan believed what the contractor told him and had no reason to doubt the information. Bagramyan shared the information with Jabarian in 2022.

In addition, from 1979 to 1991 Bagramyan attended a seminary in Armenia while Derderian was serving as a deacon. Bagramyan heard students and reverends at the seminary discuss that Derderian had been expelled from a Lebanese

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seminary for engaging in homosexual activity. Bagramyan did not state whether he shared this information with Jabarian.

4. *Jabarian’s declaration*

Jabarian averred that in 2016, Yeghiayan told him that a boy’s family had asked Yeghiayan to file a lawsuit against Derderian for child molestation, but the boy’s mother stopped pursuing the lawsuit after Derderian paid her a large sum of money. Yeghiayan asked Jabarian to wait three years to publish the information, but he did not explain why. Jabarian later learned the California State Bar had recommended Yeghiayan be disbarred for misappropriating Armenian genocide settlement funds, but this did not cause Jabarian to have any doubts about Yeghiayan’s report because he “had known . . . Yeghiayan for many decades and knew that he was a very well-respected attorney.” Yeghiayan also “was a fervent advocate for important Armenian issues and causes,” and his work to help a child “pursue justice for abuse suffered at the hands of an Armenian Church official was entirely consistent with Mr. Yeghiayan’s character as I knew him.”

In addition, the late California Supreme Court Associate Justice Armand Arabian, who was “one of the pillars of the Western Diocese,” told Jabarian that Derderian had abused a boy. What Halladjian and Bagramyan told Jabarian in 2022 about reports of sexual abuse of boys “reinforced [his] belief that Mr. Yeghiayan had told [him] the truth.” Further, Yeghiayan, Halladjian, and Bagramyan had previously proven to be reliable and accurate sources of information for Jabarian’s reporting in the *Armenian Weekly*. On October 6, 2022 Jabarian sent an email titled “Media Inquiry” to Derderian and other Western

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Diocese officials, asking them to confirm or deny the child abuse allegations. (Capitalization omitted.) Western Diocese attorney Brian Kabateck responded with a letter on October 11 stating the accusations were false and the Diocese had “evidence which proves that the story you have concocted is a complete farce”; however, no evidence was provided with the letter.

Jabarian declared the statements he made about Derderian being “directly involved” in misappropriating funds and being “behind” the team that embezzled from the Armenian genocide settlement fund were based on a March 23, 2022 Los Angeles Times article, which he attached to his declaration. The article stated that attorney Mark Garagos reported that \$450,000 in settlement funds for Armenian victims had been paid to the “local diocese in Burbank” for routing to the Armenian Apostolic Church in Armenia, but church officials told the newspaper that the church never received the money. Jabarian knew “from [his] discussions with numerous members of the [Western Diocese] over the years” that Derderian had complete control over the Western Diocese and that nothing important was done without his approval; thus, Jabarian believed Derderian would have noticed such a large payment.

With respect to misappropriation of funds from the charitable foundation for Canadian widows and orphans, Jabarian believed the article was true because it was based on a firsthand account of the misappropriation written by Chris Chakmakian, a “respected financial consultant,” who established and funded the foundation with his wife. Jabarian attached as exhibits to his declaration a copy of Chakmakian’s article and an email Chakmakian sent to Jabarian a few days before the article was published that explained what had happened.

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Jabarian stated as to the seminary expulsion statements that he had relied on Mekhitarian’s and Halladjian’s accounts, and he had no reason to doubt them.

5. *Derderian’s opposition*

In his opposition, Derderian argued Jabarian’s statements regarding child abuse and misappropriation of funds demonstrated actual malice because Derderian made serious charges that were “based purely on sketchy sources, often multiple levels of hearsay, and rumors, without obtaining any detailed information, questioning any of the sources, or confirming the stories.” Further, Yeghiayan’s alleged child abuse report was “incredible on its face” because the report would have violated the lawyer-client privilege, and the Los Angeles Times article Jabarian relied on for two of the statements about misappropriation of funds named many individuals but not Derderian.

Derderian argued Jabarian’s statements about expulsion from the seminary were based on “third-hand rumors,” and Jabarian could have contacted the Lebanon seminary to confirm the information. Derderian submitted a 2024 letter from the Lebanon seminary certifying he had graduated from the institution. Derderian further argued two of Jabarian’s sources were unreliable: The California State Bar had disciplined Yeghiayan, and Mekhitarian was a convicted felon. Finally, the treason statement was not an opinion because it identified specific acts committed by Derderian “on the battlefields of Armenia,” for example, cutting off military supplies, withdrawing troops, and sabotaging the war effort.

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6. The trial court's ruling

On November 22, 2024, after a hearing, the trial court granted Jabarian's motion, striking Derderian's complaint in its entirety. In its order, the court noted there was "no real dispute" that Derderian's claims arose from protected activity. The court then considered whether Derderian's defamation claims had "minimal merit" in light of his status as a public figure, and whether Derderian had demonstrated by clear and convincing evidence that Jabarian acted with actual malice in publishing the statements. The court concluded Derderian failed to show actual malice as to the first six alleged defamatory statements, and the treason statement was nonactionable opinion.

C. Derderian's Discovery Motion

While Jabarian's special motion to strike was pending, Derderian filed a discovery motion under section 425.16, subdivision (g), requesting to serve written discovery and to depose Jabarian, Halladjian, Mekhitarian, and Bagramyan. Derderian argued that taking the declarants' depositions would enable him to prove actual malice by determining what they told Jabarian and revealing their inherent unreliability and the lack of evidence to support their statements. The depositions would also enable Derderian to rebut Bagramyan's testimony that Derderian had "complete control" over the Western Diocese and to examine the specific facts supporting the statements in Halladjian's declaration. Derderian averred he could use this information to show "Jabarian had to entertain serious doubts about [their] reliability." Jabarian opposed the motion.

After a hearing, on April 12, 2024 the trial court granted Derderian's motion in part, allowing him to depose and serve

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written discovery on Jabarian but not the three other declarants. The court reasoned as to the declarants, "The veracity of their statements [was] only tangentially related to showing whether Defendant Jabarian had actual malice . . ." "[W]hat Defendant Jabarian was told and what he did to verify the accounts" was relevant to the actual malice inquiry, and that information "c[ould] be obtained directly from Defendant Jabarian." Further, Derderian did not state what specific facts he expected to obtain from the declarants that would show malicious intent. Instead, Derderian sought to "test and negate" the three declarations, which was not a proper basis for discovery.

On August 23, 2024 Derderian's counsel deposed Jabarian and inquired about Jabarian's sources for the statements in the complaint, the reliability of those sources, and Jabarian's investigation into the veracity of their reports (among other topics).

DISCUSSION

A. Special Motions To Strike Under Section 425.16

A cause of action arising from an act in furtherance of a defendant's constitutional right of petition or free speech in connection with a public issue is subject to a special motion to strike unless the plaintiff demonstrates a probability of prevailing on the claim. (§ 425.16, subd. (b)(1); see *Serova v. Sony Music Entertainment* (2022) 13 Cal.5th 859, 871.) An "act in furtherance of a person's right of petition or free speech under the United States or California Constitution in connection with a public issue" includes, in relevant part, "any written or oral statement or writing made in a place open to the public or a

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public forum in connection with an issue of public interest." (§ 425.16, subd. (e)(3).)

"Litigation of an anti-SLAPP motion involves a two-step process. First, 'the moving defendant bears the burden of establishing that the challenged allegations or claims "aris[e] from" protected activity in which the defendant has engaged.' [Citation.] Second, for each claim that does arise from protected activity, the plaintiff must show the claim has 'at least "minimal merit." [Citation.] If the plaintiff cannot make this showing, the court will strike the claim.' (*Bonni v. St. Joseph Health System* (2021) 11 Cal.5th 995, 1009.)

"Only a cause of action that satisfies both prongs of the anti-SLAPP statute . . . is a SLAPP, subject to being stricken under the statute." (*Barry v. State Bar of California* (2017) 2 Cal.5th 318, 321.) Where, as here, the parties do not dispute that the challenged allegations arise from protected activity, courts have bypassed the first-prong analysis. (See *Issa v. Applegate* (2019) 31 Cal.App.5th 689, 701 (*Issa*); *Cruz v. City of Culver City* (2016) 2 Cal.App.5th 239, 250.)

"As to the second step, a plaintiff seeking to demonstrate the merit of the claim 'may not rely solely on its complaint, even if verified; instead, its proof must be made upon competent admissible evidence.' (*Monster Energy Co. v. Schechter* (2019) 7 Cal.5th 781, 788; § 425.16, subd. (b)(2) ["In making its determination, the court shall consider the pleadings, and supporting and opposing affidavits stating the facts upon which the liability or defense is based."]) "We have described this second step as a "summary-judgment-like procedure." [Citation.] The court does not weigh evidence or resolve conflicting factual claims. Its inquiry is limited to whether the plaintiff has stated a

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legally sufficient claim and made a prima facie factual showing sufficient to sustain a favorable judgment. It accepts the plaintiff's evidence as true, and evaluates the defendant's showing only to determine if it defeats the plaintiff's claim as a matter of law." (*Monster Energy*, at p. 788.)

We review de novo the grant or denial of a special motion to strike, "evaluating the context and content of the asserted activity." (*Wilson v. Cable News Network, Inc.* (2019) 7 Cal.5th 871, 884-885.)

B. The Trial Court Erred in Granting Jabarian's Special Motion To Strike Two Statements Regarding Alleged Misappropriation of Armenian Genocide Settlement Funds but Not the Other Statements

1. Governing law

The elements of a defamation claim are "(a) a publication that is (b) false, (c) defamatory, and (d) unprivileged, and that (e) has a natural tendency to injure or that causes special damage." (*Taus v. Loftus* (2007) 40 Cal.4th 683, 720.) Where, as here, the plaintiff is a public figure, the plaintiff must prove, by clear and convincing evidence, "that the libelous statement was made with "actual malice"—that is, with knowledge that it was false or with reckless disregard of whether it was false or not." (*Reader's Digest Assn. v. Superior Court* (1984) 37 Cal.3d 244, 256-257 (*Reader's Digest*); accord, *Edward v. Ellis* (2021) 72 Cal.App.5th 780, 793.) In the context of a special motion to strike, "[a] public figure suing for libel must therefore establish a probability that [he or] she will be able to produce clear and convincing evidence of actual malice." (*Annette F. v. Sharon S.*

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KHACHKAR STUDIOS Unveils a New World-Class Template For U.S. Armenian Churches Annual Financial Transparency



2025 Financial Transparency Analysis

Pilot Candidate:
Saints Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church - Providence, RI
Pilot Candidates can be recommended by individuals or groups.

May 2026

- Takeaway #1.** The U.S. and Rhode Island Failing Ecosystem – Church Attendance: Actuals, Misconceptions, and Rankings
- Takeaway #2.** 2025 Financial Transparency Profile and Support
- Takeaway #3.** Biblically Inspired World-Class Benchmarking and Management Excellence "Framework" – Transparency, Accountability, and Performance (T+A+P)
- Takeaway #4.** Pilot Candidates Materials and Management Best Practices



Takeaway #1.
The U.S. and Rhode Island Failing Ecosystem – Church Attendance: Actuals, Misconceptions, and Rankings



#1A. 3% of U.S. Armenians are "Faithful" – KPI #1

U.S. Armenian "Faithful" refers to the total number of individuals of all ages present in the sanctuaries of all 164 Armenian churches during sermons on non-holiday Sundays, based on on-site, in-person, and photo verified field research.

Number of Armenian Churches in the U.S.	164
Pew Seat Capacity (file code)	23,964
Number of Non-Holiday Sunday Attendees ("Faithful") - KPI #1	12,894
Armenians per U.S. Census - 2020	469,254
"Faithful" % of U.S. Census	2.8%
Unofficial Estimate of Armenians in the U.S.	1,000,000
"Faithful" % of Unofficial Estimate	1.3%

Notes:
 1) "Faithful" definition is the median number of attendees at non-holiday Sunday church (KPI #1). U.S. Armenian "Faithful" 2024. Source: J-Analytics model of all 164 active parish Armenian churches in the U.S. is based on 243 on-site, in-person, and photo verified field research Sunday visits at 100 of the 164 churches (61%) in 20 U.S. states with 95% of the U.S. Armenian population. Numbers documented included attendance, ages, gender, and capacity. U.S. supporting data from the United States Government Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov>
 2) Other "Faithful" comparable terms are "Regulars", "four-or-more-times-per-month attendees, average attendance count, etc. Organizations that report this metric include, but are not limited to the Association of Dioceses of American Bishops (ADAB), the Council of Orthodox Christian Churches (COCC) and (2023) U.S. Religious Census: The Orthodox Studies Institute, the Hartford Institute for Religious Research, the Pew Research Center, Gallup, the University of Chicago Pope Study of GPS cell phone data, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the European Research Consortium, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University (CARA), Faith Communities Today (FACT), and the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA).

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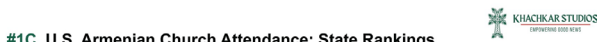
#1B. A Highly Destructive Massive Systemic Misconception Perpetuated by the Most Widely Cited U.S. Armenian Sampling Surveys and Leaders

- The most widely cited and most recent U.S. Armenian sampling survey reports regular church attendance rates of 35% for the total population and 35% for the population up to 34 years of age, perpetuating a highly destructive massive systemic misconception.
- Countless conversations with Armenian senior religious leaders who believe both that the non-holiday attendance is 30%+ of total population, and that the U.S. Census of 460,000 Armenians is understated and the real number is 1,000,000+.

# Groups	% Weekly Attend Church (1)	Source or Sources	Date
1A. U.S. Armenians - total population	35%	Armenian Diocese Survey, Gulbenkian Foundation, Hatch, Tollypian, Kilar	2018
1B. U.S. Armenians up to 34 years of age	35%	Pasadena (2014) and Boston (2015) Up to 34 y.o. Question #1, location adjusted. Survey size: 206 Armenians based in Boston and 151 Armenians based in Pasadena.	
2. U.S. Armenians	27%	Melikian Center of Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies at Arizona State University. Survey size: 657 Southern California Armenians.	2011
3. U.S. Armenians	28%	AGBU. Survey size: 294 Central California Armenians.	1998
U.S. Armenian Church Survey Average	30%		

Notes:
 1) Weekly: A universally agreed upon definition of regularly attending church 4 or more times a month. Khachkar Studios refers to those who attend regularly as the "Faithful".

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#1C. U.S. Armenian Church Attendance: State Rankings

#	State	"Faithful" as % of U.S. Census Population	"Faithful" as % of Armenian Community Unofficial Pop. Number	U.S. Census Population	Armenian Community Unofficial Population Number	# of "Faithful"	"Faithful" % of Total Population	# of Churches	% of Total Churches
1	Louisiana	19.0%	9.0%	50	434	243	1%	1	1%
2	District of Columbia	2.4%	3.4%	74	999	2,171	1%	1	1%
3	New Jersey	6.0%	3.0%	1,076	16,245	26,119	1%	10	6%
4	Massachusetts	5.0%	2.0%	469	6,629	10,748	2%	10	6%
5	Washington	5.0%	1.0%	396	9,971	8,266	1%	10	6%
6	Connecticut	5.4%	2.5%	271	4,976	10,616	2%	10	6%
7	Massachusetts	5.2%	2.0%	1,621	28,009	62,922	1%	10	6%
8	Florida	4.2%	2.2%	167	13,355	30,200	0%	30	7%
9	Maryland	4.3%	2.0%	187	4,366	9,460	1%	30	7%
10	Texas	4.2%	1.9%	289	16,209	30,200	2%	30	7%
11	Massachusetts	4.0%	1.7%	242	4,866	12,455	2%	30	7%
12	Illinois	3.3%	1.6%	300	6,971	16,622	2%	30	7%
13	Ohio	3.0%	1.4%	184	4,862	10,662	1%	30	7%
14	New York	3.0%	1.4%	110	3,092	8,022	1%	30	7%
15	New York	3.0%	1.4%	308	20,327	50,028	0%	30	7%
16	North Carolina	3.0%	1.4%	110	3,092	8,022	1%	30	7%
17	Arizona	2.4%	1.3%	137	6,860	12,268	1%	30	7%
18	Washington	2.0%	1.2%	177	6,644	14,110	1%	30	7%
19	Missouri	2.0%	1.2%	36	1,108	4,417	0%	30	7%
20	Nevada	2.0%	1.2%	173	6,774	14,718	1%	30	7%
21	California	2.0%	0.9%	1,437	201,710	64,771	40%	30	60%
22	Georgia	2.0%	0.9%	70	3,425	7,437	0%	30	7%
23	Virginia	1.5%	0.8%	87	4,664	14,697	1%	30	7%
24	Colorado	1.2%	0.8%	36	4,862	9,912	0%	30	7%
25	New Hampshire	1.2%	0.8%	37	3,081	6,694	0%	30	7%
All other U.S. States				21,698	46,948				
Total		2.8%	1.3%	469,254	1,000,000	100%		164	100%

Notes:
 1) Top 10 States: TX, Top Quarters: MD, Median: RI, Bottom Quarter: RI, Bottom Densities.
 2) "Faithful" definition is the median number of attendees at non-holiday Sunday church. U.S. Armenian "Faithful" 2024. Source: J-Analytics model of all 164 active parish Armenian churches in the U.S. is based on 243 on-site, in-person, and photo verified field research Sunday visits at 100 of the 164 churches (61%) in 20 U.S. states with 95% of the U.S. Armenian population. Numbers documented included attendance, ages, gender, and capacity.
 3) U.S. supporting data from the United States Government Census Bureau: <https://www.census.gov>

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#1D. Rhode Island Armenian Churches "Faithful" Compared to Benchmarks

Rhode Island 3 Churches	U.S. Benchmarks
Benchmark	"Faithful" Percentage
"Faithful" (median non-holiday attendance)	242
Number of Armenians in R.I. (U.S. Census 2020)	5,806
"Faithful" % of R.I. U.S. Census	4.2%
Fire Code Capacity	800
"Faithful" % of Capacity	30%
18 to 29 Years of Age Female "Faithful"	5
18 to 29 Years of Age Female "Faithful" % of R.I. U.S. Census	1.1%
U.S. Protestants	30%
U.S. Catholics	28%
U.S. Orthodox Median	15%
U.S. Protestants	32%
U.S. Catholics	31%

Source: Khachkar Studios on-site visits database 2024.

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#1E. Rhode Island and All Other States U.S. Census Armenian Population Change: 1980 to 2020

- Parish world-class financial transparency is especially essential in RI as Armenian population has declined by 7% since 1980.
- RI is one of only two states to have a declining Armenian population from 1980 to 2020.
- All other U.S. States have a 120% increase in Armenian population from 1980 to 2020.

	1980	2020	% Change	# Change
Rhode Island	6,240	5,806	-7%	-434 decline
All Other U.S. States	206,381	454,448	120%	248,067
Total	212,621	460,254	116%	247,633

Notes:
 1. All states includes 25 U.S. states with 95% of the total U.S. Armenian population.
 2. Numbers from U.S. Census 1980 and 2020.

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Takeaway #2.
2025 Financial Transparency Profile and Support



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#2A. Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church: 2025 Financial Transparency Profile

#	Metric	St. Sahag & Mesrob	Orthodox Benchmark	#	Metric	St. Sahag & Mesrob	Orthodox Benchmark
1.	Financial Assets (FA)	\$14,509,016	\$1,114,028	7.	Spending per "Faithful"	\$6,549	\$2,133
2.	Financial Assets per "Faithful"	\$193,454	\$4,207	8.	Number of "Faithful" - KPI #1	75	147
3.	Total Income % of Total Spending	486%	110%	9.	2024 to 2025 Change in "Faithful"	-13 decrease	24 increase
4.	Total Spending 2020 to 2025 - Annual rate of change	7%	7%	10.	Number of 18 to 29 years old Female "Faithful" - KPI #2	2	12
5.	Spending: 2025 Actual to 2026 Budget % Change	12%	1%	11.	"Faithful" % of Capacity	18%	69%
6.	Church-Related Income (CRI) % of Spending	32%	89%	12.	Social Return on Investment (SROI)	3.1x	9.4x



#2B. Saints Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church: 2025 Budget vs. Actual

	2025 Budget	2025 Actual	\$ Difference	% Difference
Income:				
Church Related - CR	\$159,000	\$157,274	-\$1,726	-1%
Non-Church Related	\$349,165	\$2,229,826	\$1,880,661	539%
Total Income	\$508,165	\$2,387,101	\$1,878,936	370%
Total Spending	\$508,165	\$491,202	-\$16,963	-3%
Net Income / Loss	\$0	\$1,895,898	\$1,895,898	n.m.

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#2C. U.S. Armenian Parishes: Correlation Between Total Spending per "Faithful" and "Faithful" % of Capacity

- The correlation between Total Spending per "Faithful" and "Faithful" % of Capacity for U.S. Armenian Parishes is moderately negative at -0.45.
- Sample of 23% (37) of the 164 U.S. Armenian churches.

Church	State	City	Affiliation	Total Spending per "Faithful"	"Faithful" % of Capacity	Rank
St. John Armenian Church	CA	San Francisco	Western Diocese	\$15,420	33%	Max
Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church	RI	Providence	Eastern Diocese	\$6,549	18%	15
St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church	MA	Indian Orchard	Eastern Presby	\$5,568	15%	Median
St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church	AZ	Scottsdale	Western Diocese	\$1,717	43%	Min

Church	State	City	Affiliation	"Faithful" % of Capacity	Total Spending per "Faithful"	Rank
Holy Resurrection Armenian Church	WA	Redmond	Western Diocese	118%	\$3,570	Max
St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church	AZ	Scottsdale	Western Diocese	43%	\$1,717	Median
Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church	RI	Providence	Eastern Diocese	18%	\$6,549	31
St. James Armenian Apostolic Church	CA	Los Angeles	Western Diocese	10%	\$12,257	Min

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#2D. Khachkar Studios & Affiliates Historical Financial Support for Sts. Sahag & Mesrob: 2008 to 2025

Khachkar Studios Affiliates Financial Support to Sts. Sahag 2008 to 2025		Sts. Sahag Financial Statement Income 2024 Income			
Total	\$321,133	Church Related Income	Non-Church Related Income		
1.	2025	Church Contributions	\$72,170	Church Affairs	\$137,762
2.	2024	Quasi Sponsorship	\$27,000	Real Estate	\$220,701
3.	2023	Basement and Other Services	\$26,915	Investment Income	\$2,263,780
4.	2022			Transfer/Contributions	\$215,017
5.	2021			Auxiliary Organizations	\$11,100
6.	2020			Subtotal	\$2,229,826
7.	2019				
8.	2017				
9.	2016				
10.	2015				
11.	2014				
12.	2013				
13.	2012				
14.	2011				
15.	2010				
16.	2009				
17.	2008				
18.	2008				

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KHACHKAR STUDIOS Unveils a New World-Class Template For U.S. Armenian Churches Annual Financial Transparency



Takeaway #3. Biblically Inspired World-Class Benchmarking and Management Excellence "Framework" – Transparency, Accountability, and Performance (T•A•P)



#3A. World-Class Benchmarks in Biblically Inspired Transparency, Accountability, and Performance (T•A•P)

Sample of 20 Orthodox Parishes with Publicly Available Annual Financials or IRS Form 990 Filings

6 Khachkar Studios Pilot Churches with World-Class Benchmark Financial Disclosure

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#3B. World-Class Sunday Attendance Importance and Transparency

Premier organizations that track Sunday weekly attendance:

Why Sunday attendance is the first indicator of church performance?

- Sunday church attendance for Orthodox Christian leaders in America is the sun and the moon of why we exist. It's the starting point for every decision. – Leading Orthodox Advisor
- Regularly tracking worship attendance allows congregations to identify patterns of vitality, stability, or decline and to make informed decisions about leadership, ministry, and mission. – Hartford Institute for Religion Research
- Mass attendance is the central indicator of parish engagement and vitality, and tracking it over time allows church leaders to assess participation, plan pastoral responses, and evaluate the effectiveness of ministry. – Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)
- Regular worship service attendance is the most common indicator of religious commitment. – Pew Research Center
- The singular focus on Sunday church attendance is like the famous Notre Dame football teaching: focus on What's Important Now – to WIN. – Highly respected U.S. Catholic leader, drawing on Lou Holtz's legendary performance mindset.

World-class benchmark pilot churches that publish Sunday attendance with the mobile app

- St. Mary Orthodox Christian Church (Wichita, KS)
- St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church (Lexington, MA)
- Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church (Harrisburg, PA)
- Saints Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church (Providence, RI)
- St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church (Charlotte, NC)
- Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church (Belmont, MA)

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Takeaway #4. Pilot Candidates Materials and Management Best Practices



#4A. Saints Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church Has Been Recommended and is Being Vetted as a Pilot to Increase the Number of U.S. Armenian Sunday Church Parishioners – the "Faithful" – by 100%

* All pilots enthusiastically must embrace the best practices of financial discipline of Biblically inspired world-class benchmarking and management excellence – the "Framework".

* Pilots will be coached to achieve the extraordinary BENEFITS, which are listed on the next slide.

* The performance-based funding is historically unprecedented.

#4B. U.S. Catholic Parish Financial Transparency is One of the Strongest Predictors of Whether Parishioners Recommend Their Parish

- The relationship between parish financial transparency and parishioners strongly recommending the parish has a very high positive correlation of 0.94.
- Responses do not vary sufficiently by age, gender, household income, household contributions, or approach to financial giving.

My Parish Provides Financial Transparency

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
	No Financial Transparency	Little Financial Transparency	Average Financial Transparency	Good Financial Transparency	Excellent Financial Transparency
1. Strongly Would Not Recommend	20%	2%	1%	0%	0%
2. Would Not Recommend	9%	7%	4%	2%	0%
3. Indifferent	16%	16%	14%	7%	2%
4. Recommend	36%	33%	38%	38%	11%
5. Strongly Recommend	20%	42%	44%	52%	87%

Source: Questions, responses and labeling based on Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI) Portal survey database 2025 of 35,000 responses of U.S. Catholic parishioners. Numbers may not total to 100% due to rounding. Vertical axis: I would recommend my parish to a friend by what level? Horizontal axis: My parish helps me connect with the local Catholic community by providing transparency information to me about the finances of the parish.

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#4C. Extraordinary BENEFITS from Financial Discipline of World-Class Benchmarking and Management Excellence – the "Framework"

- Biblical Wisdom*** - Practice Biblically inspired financial wisdom
- Education*** - Educate communities never taught financial discipline
- New "Faithful"*** - Attract high value-add new "Faithful"
- Environment*** - Build environments of trust & confidence, not dysfunction
- Financial Strength*** - Strengthen financial position and performance
- Identity*** - Anchor community identity in intellectual integrity
- Track Record*** - Build track record-based, not political, decisions
- Stewards*** - Develop high-value, lead-by-example stewards

"Accountability accelerates Biblical wisdom", ECFA advises
 "Are you aware? Do you care?", CLI asks

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#4D. Introducing SROI – Social Return on Investment

SROI is a new concept for many, but a cornerstone in best practice financial and faith performance management for churches.

SROI math for 2026 is the average number of non-holiday Sunday church attendees – the "Faithful" – times \$20,000, divided by the Church's total annual spending.

SROI measures how effectively spending strengthens faith, builds community, and enables comparison over time and across peers.

Social Return on Investment (SROI): Social Value divided by Total Spending. Social Value (SV) for 2026 is the number of "Faithful" KPI#1, Ecosystem Body Part (EBP) (1) times \$20,000. 2027 adds SV of 18 to 29 years old "Faithful" KPI #2, EBP (2). 2028 adds SV of transparency of church Sunday attendance KPI#3, EBP (3). 2029 adds SV of public transparency of financial information KPI#4, EBP (4). 2030 adds SV of outreach plans to increase church Sunday non-holiday attendance KPI #5, EBP (5).

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#4E. The First 4 Steps U.S. Armenian Parishes are Taking to Grow by 100% the "Faithful" in 5 Years

- Step #1:** Parishes are using Khachkar Studios' free Sunday attendance counter app each week.
- Step #2:** Parishes are publishing weekly attendance (KPI #1 and KPI #2) prominently across bulletins and all six social media platforms.
- Step #3:** Parishes are posting weekly Saturday "Bring a friend. Bring a family member." invitation videos across all six social media platforms (52 weeks/year).
- Step #4:** Parishes are building and implementing monthly outreach plans to increase the "Faithful" across two groups: ages 18-29 and 30+.

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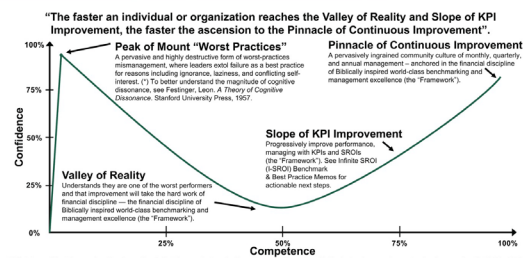
#4F. The 3 Financial Transparency Steps U.S. Armenian Parishes are Taking to Grow by 100% the "Faithful" in 5 Years

- Step #5: Historical and Projected** (5-year look back and forward view). Parishes are transparently sharing 5-year historical and projected financial and attendance data with their community.
- Step #6: Financial Audit Transparency** (independent verification). Parishes are transparently sharing independently audited financial statements and findings with their community.
- Step #7: Quarterly** (ongoing accountability). Parishes are transparently sharing quarterly financial and attendance updates with their community.

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#4G. The Failing U.S. Armenian Christian Ecosystem: 12 Body Parts – A Dunning-Kruger Textbook Example



(*) Totally confident they are best-in-class, when in fact they are bottom decile performers. Example, a highly destructive massive systemic misoperation that 30% of U.S. Americans regularly attend Sunday services, which is among the best, when in fact it is 1% to 3% and one of the worst performers. Recommended reading: the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1999, Vol. 77, No. 8, 1121-1134. Justin Kruger and David Dunning. This Ecosystem is a customized Dunning-Kruger Framework. The actual names of the four stages in the Dunning-Kruger framework are "Peak of Mount 'Worst Practices'", "Valley of Reality", "Slope of Edge/Improvement", and "Pinnacle of Sustainability".

TRANSPARENCY • ACCOUNTABILITY • PERFORMANCE

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#4H. To Quickly Recognize and Overcome Potentially Hostile Barriers to Change, We Recommend You Study the Following 8 Sources of Knowledge

- Ecosystem systems map
- Dunning-Kruger diagram
- Why 68 years of zero transparency I-SROI memo
- Conflicted self-interest I-SROI memo
- The true cost of concealment I-SROI memo
- 25 examples of self-conflict of interest I-SROI memo
- FIQ and FTA materials
- New Philanthropy Benchmarking: Wisdom for the Passionate (2002)

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THE INVISIBLE ENEMY: THE CASE FOR AN INFORMED COMMUNITY

BY STEPAN PILIGIAN
THE ARMENIAN WEEKLY

I grew up in a small Armenian parish in Indian Orchard that required our limited resources to work together to function as a community. There was no time or tolerance for long-term disagreements. When you live in a community with a small local population, you learn to “count the house” at an early age. Would everyone show up for Sunday school this week? What kind of a turnout would we have at our May 28 celebration? Critical mass was a constant challenge. Everyone was cross-trained in the core work of the church to survive if a few people were unable to attend that week. As I look back on those years, we were a highly functioning community, and our anxiety was probably a reaction to living in a culture with limited resources. Living in that environment also gave us the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of responsibilities.

Young people were encouraged to organize events and participate in weekly, labor-intensive activities such as setting up the Sunday school classrooms and cleaning the church facility. We also had the opportunity to develop public speaking skills by offering greetings during community events and preparing for elected positions. It was under these circumstances that I was first elected as a delegate to the Prelacy’s National Representative Assembly in my mid-20s. The encouragement I received from the elders of the parish gave me the confidence to overcome my inexperience. Having always considered myself a student of our journey, I was quite familiar with the history of the See of Cilicia and the establishment of the



St. Vartan Cathedral, located at the corner of Second Avenue and 34th Street in Midtown Manhattan. (Photo: Armenian Church)

Prelacy in 1956-57. Fortunately, I was young enough that some of the pillars who laid the foundation of what we have today were present at the assembly. One of the elders in my community advised me to acquire knowledge to help our people. These were the titans of our foundation. My own father was there during those critical early years of building the Prelacy. I was fortunate to be mentored by several of these leaders, who helped me navigate Please see page 14

DAILY HOLY BIBLE VERSES

PREPARED BY JACK NALJIAN

DAY 1: FRI. JUNE 5, 2026

*In you, LORD my God,
I put my trust.
I trust in you;
do not let me be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.
(Psalm 25:1-2)*

ens:

*Who created all these?
He who brings out the starry host one
by one
and calls forth each of them by name.
Because of his great power and mighty
strength,
not one of them is missing. (Isaiah
40:28)*

DAY 2: SAT. JUNE 6, 2026

*Truly I tell you, this generation will
certainly not pass away until all these
things have happened. Heaven and
earth will pass away, but my words will
never pass away. (Matthew 24:34-35)*

DAY 5: TUE., JUNE 9, 2026

*For all those who exalt themselves will
be humbled, and those who humble
themselves will be exalted. (Luke 14:11)*

DAY 3: SUN. JUNE 7, 2026

*Rather, we have renounced secret and
shameful ways; we do not use decep-
tion, nor do we distort the word of God.
On the contrary, by setting forth the
truth plainly we commend ourselves to
everyone’s conscience in the sight of
God. (2 Corinthians 4:2)*

DAY 6: WED., JUNE 10, 2026

*Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.
Even so, I will defend my own ways be-
fore Him. (Job 13:15)*

DAY 4: MON., JUNE 8, 2026

Lift up your eyes and look to the heav-

DAY 7: THU., JUNE 11, 2026

*And without faith it is impossible to
please God, because anyone who
comes to him must believe that he ex-
ists and that he rewards those who ear-
nestly seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)*

June 01, 2026

HELLO JUNE HAPPY MONDAY

Dear Lord,

We welcome this new month, this new week, with **grateful** hearts and **hopeful** spirits.

May June bring **fresh opportunities, brighter days, stronger faith, and blessings** beyond our expectations.

As we begin this Monday and the week ahead, **protect** our families, **guide** our steps, and remind us that every new sunrise is proof of **Your love and mercy.**

Whatever June holds, whatever this week brings, we know we will not walk through it alone.

Amen. ❤️

Breakthroughs

For Judeo-Christian
Leaders A New
Biblically Inspired
Masterclass Series

KHACHKAR
STUDIOS
EMPOWERING GOOD NEWS

TRANSPARENCY • ACCOUNTABILITY • PERFORMANCE

BREAKING NEWS: WESTERN DIOCESE'S ARCH. HOVNAN DERDERIAN LOSES COURT CASE AGAINST USA ARMENIAN LIFE/APPO JABARIAN...

Continued from page 3

Statement No. 8: California Appeals Court judges award attorney fees to plaintiffs Petros Taglyan against Western Diocese/Arch. Hovnan Derderian et al.

“On June 28, 2023, California Appeals Court Judges J. Bendix, P.J. Rothschild, J. Chaney unanimously granted an appeals motion to award attorney fees to Plaintiffs Petros Taglyan and his family against Defendants Western Diocese/St. John Church’s Primate Arch. Hovnan Derderian and his spokesperson Archpriest Manoug and son Harout Markarian. Harout Markaryan is the Executive Director of Western Diocese.”

Statement No. 9: Judges Bendix, Rothschild, Chaney join four previous U.S. Court judges confirming Western Diocese’s leaders as ‘liars’ and masters of deception

“Judges J. Bendix, P.J. Rothschild, J. Chaney joined four previous U.S. Court judges confirming Western Diocese’s leaders as ‘liars’ and masters of deception. (In 2019, in the Court, Judge Hammock had found Arch. Derderian’s representative Pastor Markarian as ‘a liar.’ Apparently Markarian was ‘authorized’ by Arch. Derderian and the Exec. Dir. Of the Western Diocese, Pastor Markarian’s son, Harout Markarian to deny the written agreement with the church benefactor.)”

Statement No. 10: Unanimous Verdict: Western Diocese’s Primate Hovnan Derderian et al knowingly concealed the existence of the written lease

“After a series of legal battles that started in 2018 (Cases No. B321087, B321605 [Los Angeles County Super. Ct. No. 21STCV38713]), the June 28 unanimous verdict highlighted the fact that the “defendants (Western Diocese’s Primate Hovnan Derderian, Priest Manoug and son Harout Markarian) knowingly concealed the existence of the written lease, is sufficient to make a prima facie showing that defendants brought the unlawful detainer action for a wrongful purpose, either to compel Petros (Dr. Taglyan) to pay additional monies to which they were not entitled, or to punish him for refusing to do so.”

Statement No. 11: The benefactor’s declaration makes prima facie showing of animus on the part of the Western Diocese

“In the case ‘Petros Taglyan V. Western Diocese/Hovnan Derderian, Manoug Markarian’ the “defendants (Western Diocese) do not address the malice element in their appellate briefing. In their anti-SLAPP motion, their only response to Divine’s evidence was the conclusory statement that ‘Divine’s claim fails to prove the essential element of actual ‘malice’; an element that requires proof of each Defendant’s subjective hared or actual animus.’ The benefactor’s declaration makes a prima facie showing of animus on the part of Archpriest Manoug and Harout Markarian, and by extension the entities they represent, the Diocese and St. John.”

Statement No. 12: Court documents highlighted Western Diocese’s Arch. Derderian, his attorneys Brian S. Kabateck, Shant A. Karnikian offer no valid basis to strike the cause of action for conspiracy to commit malicious prosecution

“The court documents also highlighted another critical fact according to which ‘Defendants (Western Diocese’s Archb. Derderian Archpriest Markarian and their attorneys Brian S. Kabateck his associate Shant A. Karnikian, Esq. and others) offer no valid basis to strike the cause of action for conspiracy to commit malicious prosecution.’”

Statement No. 13: The Appeals Court Judges further clarified Western Diocese’s Arch. Derderian, his attorneys Brian S. Kabateck, Shant A. Karnikian offer no valid basis to strike the cause of action for conspiracy to commit malicious prosecution

“The Appeals Court Judges further clarified that the ‘Defendants (Western Diocese’s Archb. Derderian Archpriest Markarian and their attorneys Brian S. Kabateck, Esq. his associate Shant A. Karnikian, Esq. and others) offer no other valid basis to strike the cause of action for conspiracy to commit malicious prosecution.’”

Statement No. 14: Judge orders Western Diocese Arch. Derderian et al payment of all court costs incurred by Dr. Taglyan’s

“Judge rejects Western Diocese Arch. Derderian’s, Pastor Manoug Markarian’s request and orders payment of all court costs incurred by Dr. Taglyan’s”

Statement No. 15: Superior Court Judge: Arch. Derderian’s Western Diocese must pay all court costs incurred by Dr. Petros Taglyan

“In Oct. 2019, Western Diocese’s Arch. Hovnan Derderian and Pastor Manoug Markarian were back in court to ask Superior Court Judge Randolph H. Hammock to award a reduction of payment to Dr. Petros Taglyan for the latter’s court costs. The Judge heard the case (no. 18STCV02144) and issued a verdict reconfirming the outcome of a court proceeding that took place earlier in the year. Arch. Derderian’s Western Diocese must pay all court costs incurred by Dr. Petros Taglyan.”

Below is a summary of the six statements that Derderian appealed in his CA COURT OF APPEAL case against Jabarian.

COURT OF APPEAL GRANTED JABARIAN: Child abuse allegations (statement 1)

The October 2022 publication included a heading, “Alleged Child Abuse Cover Up by Arch. Hovnan Derderian?” followed by the phrase “Armenian cler-

gy child molester?”⁴ Under the heading was titled a “Media Inquiry” directed to the Executive Director of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, asking him to “confirm or deny the veracity of these allegations”: “According to certain sources, Primate of the Western Diocese, Hovnan Derderian, ‘committed child abuse.’ [¶] Reportedly, the mother of the child turned to the well-known lawyer – now deceased, Vartkes Yghaiyan, to initiate a lawsuit against the Diocesan Primate Hovnan Derderian. . . . [¶] . . . However, at the last moment, the mother of the child must have received a ‘large amount of hush-hush money[.]’ from Archbishop Hovnan Derderian to remain silent and suspend the court case.”

COURT OF APPEAL GRANTED DERDERIAN: Misappropriation of funds (statements 2 & 3)

The October 2022 publication alleged three statements about embezzlement and misappropriation of funds:

Statement 2: “The person behind the team in the embezzlement of Armenian Genocide Victims Settlement Funds: Western Diocese’s Arch. Hovnan Derderian”; Statement 3: “Arch. Derderian is directly involved in the numerous acts of misappropriation of funds.”

COURT OF APPEAL GRANTED JABARIAN: Statement 4: “Looting of 1st Artsakh War Fallen Soldier’s Widows and Orphan Aid Fund in Canada: While he was the primate [of] the Canada Diocese, Arch. Derderian misappropriated thousands of dollars from that fund.”

COURT OF APPEAL GRANTED JABARIAN: Expulsion from seminary in Lebanon (statements 5 & 6)

The October 2022 publication made two statements regarding Derderian’s alleged expulsion from a seminary in Lebanon:

COURT OF APPEAL GRANTED JABARIAN: Statement 5: “Arch. Derderian expelled from Cilicia Catholicosate in Lebanon for breaking his celibacy vows. He was caught in engaging illegal sexual acts.”

COURT OF APPEAL GRANTED JABARIAN: Statement 6: “[T]he young Derderian’s mother received complaints from other mothers for his . . . sexual pass at other boys. [His] mother decides to cover up his sexual tendencies by enlisting him as a young student-priest for celibate priesthood. But he gets caught in an illegal sexual act. He gets expelled from the convent.”

COURT OF APPEAL GRANTED JABARIAN: Treasonous acts (statement 7)

The October 2022 publication also quoted a statement by Jabarian purportedly made during a television broadcast of USA Armenian Life TV: “Many are now convinced the three former regime kleptomaniacs,” i.e., three former Armenian presidents, “with [chief bishop] Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II along with his clansmen such as Western Diocese primate Arch. Hovnan Derderian . . . have perpetrated treason against the Armenian nation. Their treasonous acts range from acts of sabotage of Armenia/Artsakh’s war efforts behind the front line, cutting off military supply by bribed Army general officers; corrupt army general officers’ unwarranted withdrawal of Armenian army units from strategic positions; old regime assets’ false propaganda designed to demoralize Armenian frontline soldiers, to massive misappropriation of funds from Diaspora designated for the twin Armenian republics’ economic development and humanitarian mission.”

During his tenure as an investigative reporter since 1978, Appo Jabarian has written nearly 400 exposés on various international and Armenian political and religious issues, leaders, and special-interest groups and a host of faith-based and community-based organizations.

His non-partisan approach has earned him a solid reputation as a respected journalist.

On international level his exposés have focused on numerous American, European, Russian, Middle Eastern and other political leaders.

On Armenian level, his exposés focused on various Armenian political and religious leaders as well as nearly a dozen faith-based and community-based organizations without bias, favoritism or discrimination.

Jabarian’s exposés also focused on both Russian-controlled Holy Etchmiadzin Catholicosate (Headquartered in Armenia) and ARF-controlled Great House of Cilicia Catholicosate (Headquartered in Lebanon).

Since 2015, many of Jabarian’s articles served the same purpose: Bring to the forefront of public awareness nefarious activities both within Russian-controlled Holy Etchmiadzin Catholicosate (Headquartered in Armenia) and ARF-controlled Great House of Cilicia Catholicosate (Headquartered in Lebanon).

Blowing the whistle is an important tool for combating fraud and abuse. You blow the whistle. We will expose! Your anonymity is guaranteed!

Editorial Team
USA ARMENIAN LIFE MAGAZINE
HYE KIANK ARMENIAN WEEKLY

See the 36-page Court of Appeal of the State of California document on pages 4-9, 16-19. See related articles on pages 3,11,16-19

RUSSIAN KGB/FSB AGENT KAREKIN II CATHOLICOS FELLOW CLANSMAN, WESTERN DIOCESE'S ARCH. HOVNAN DERDERIAN LOSES TWIN COURT BATTLES AGAINST USA ARMENIAN LIFE/APPO JABARIAN

(2014) 119 Cal.App.4th 1144, 1163 (Annette P.); accord, *Hwang v. Tron* (2021) 68 Cal.App.5th 513, 537.)

"Reckless disregard . . . requires [a] defendant . . . to have a high degree of awareness of probable falsity" (*Callin v. Waters* (2023) 95 Cal.App.4th 78, 73; accord, *Teang v. CBS Broadcasting, Inc.* (2012) 212 Cal.App.4th 551, 553), and "[t]here must be sufficient evidence to permit the conclusion that the defendant in fact entertained serious doubts as to the truth of his publication." (*Hwang v. Tron*, *supra*, 68 Cal.App.5th at p. 532; accord, *Annette P.*, *supra*, 119 Cal.App.4th at p. 1163 ["The existence of actual malice turns on the defendant's subjective belief as to the truthfulness of the allegedly false statement."]) Accordingly, "[g]ross or even extreme negligence will not suffice to establish actual malice." (*Christian Research Institute v. Alcor* (2007) 148 Cal.App.4th 71, 88 (*Christian Research*); accord, *Annette P.*, at p. 1167.)

"Actual malice may be proved by direct or circumstantial evidence. Factors such as failure to investigate, anger and hostility, and reliance on sources known to be unreliable or biased may in an appropriate case, indicate that the publisher himself had serious doubts regarding the truth of his publication." [Citation.] However, any one of these factors, standing alone, may be insufficient to prove actual malice or even raise a triable issue of fact." (*Annette P.*, *supra*, 119 Cal.App.4th at p. 1167; accord, *Reader's Digest*, *supra*, 37 Cal.3d at pp. 257-258.) Further, "such evidence is relevant only to the extent that it reflects on the subjective attitude of the publisher." (*Reader's Digest*, at p. 258.)

COURT VERDICT 18

2. Derderian's evidence of Jabarian's protests against him does not show actual malice

Derderian contends Jabarian published the defamatory statements based on his hostility toward Derderian. He relies on evidence showing that in late 2018 Jabarian held a "peaceful protest" in front of the Western Diocese headquarters by hanging signs from a truck, one of which stated, "New Catholicos, New Patriarch" with an image of Derderian.⁷

"A court may consider a defendant's anger or hostility toward a plaintiff in determining the presence of malice only to the extent it impacts the defendant's actual belief concerning the truthfulness of the publication. [Citation.] The focus is thus on the 'defendant's attitude toward the truth or falsity of the material published. . . [not] the defendant's attitude toward the plaintiff.'" (*Christian Research*, *supra*, 148 Cal.App.4th 71, 83.) Courts have found a publisher's anger or hostility toward a plaintiff supports a finding of actual malice where the statements are made close in time to the published statements and are directly related to those statements. (See, e.g., *Miller v. Hall* (2001) 98 Cal.App.4th 499, 491, 499 (fact scenario that defendant used "retaliation" against plaintiff made a few months before challenged statements showed wrongful motive); *Barrill v. Nair* (2018) 217 Cal.App.4th 853, 874-875, 891 (Barrill defendant threatened plaintiff he would "follow up with . . . the media" before making the first challenged statements (factual omitted)).

⁷ Derderian argues Jabarian conducted multiple protests against him outside the Western Diocese. Although Jabarian admitted he conducted protests before the 2018 protest, there is no evidence that any were directed toward Derderian.

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disapproved on another ground in *Jarof v. Schmitt* (2010) 1 Cal.4th 376, 391, 394-395.)

Although Jabarian's protest shows that in 2018 Jabarian wanted Derderian to be replaced as the archbishop, the protests do not support an inference that Jabarian fabricated the statements four years later or doubted the veracity of the statements when he published them. (See *Pitcher v. San Jose Mercury News* (2000) 216 Cal.App.4d 171, 186 [reporter's statement that plaintiff was a "crook" and he wanted to "get people like [him] out of office" were "personal attitudes" and not linked to defendant's awareness of probable falsity].)

3. Derderian failed to make a prima facie showing of actual malice regarding the child abuse statements

Derderian contends Jabarian had reason to question Yeghiazar's reliability as a source because Derderian knew about the State Bar's proposed disbarment of Yeghiazar for misappropriating money from the Armenian genocide settlement fund. We agree this information should have caused Jabarian to question the veracity of Yeghiazar's report and to investigate his claims of child abuse. (See *Barrill*, *supra*, 217 Cal.App.4th at p. 892 [source's arrest and placement in psychiatric facility provided obvious reason to doubt his reports]; see also *In re Garcia* (2014) 89 Cal.4th 440, 458 ["There is certain conduct involving fraud, perjury, theft, embezzlement, and bribery where there is no question but that moral turpitude is involved."]) But, as Jabarian argues, he waited to publish the accusations until he had three corroborating sources, two of whom provided declarations. In light of the corroboration, Derderian did not

COURT VERDICT 19

meet his burden of making a prima facie showing of actual malice regarding the child abuse statements.⁷

As discussed, all three corroborating sources were prominent members of the Armenian community. Derderian seeks to poke holes in the three accounts, but each source provided some corroboration of Yeghiazar's description of what had happened. Haldjian, a deacon in an Armenian church, recounted that based on his decades of experience with young people, he believed Derderian had abused and psychologically harmed a teenage boy who later spoke with Haldjian. Derderian argues Haldjian's account was not credible because Jabarian's description of what Haldjian told him was different from what Haldjian stated in his declaration, specifically, that Haldjian reported the abuse took place in Derderian's home in Burbank, but Jabarian recalled Haldjian stating the abuse took place at Derderian's house on the congressional. The fact Jabarian in 2014 incorrectly recalled a detail he was told two years earlier does not show that he fabricated the story (which would mean Haldjian did as well) or that Jabarian entertained serious doubts about the truth of the report.

Moreover, Derderian does not on appeal challenge the statements by pastor Bagratyan, who in his declaration corroborated Yeghiazar's account of child abuse and the proposed

⁷ Derderian also argues Jabarian had an obvious reason to doubt Yeghiazar's report of child abuse because the disclosure would have breached the attorney-client privilege. However, clients may waive the privilege by consenting to disclosure (Civil Code § 912, *subd.* (c)), and nothing in the record shows that Jabarian had a reason to believe Yeghiazar's disclosure would have breached the privilege.

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RUSSIAN KGB/FSB AGENT KAREKIN II CATHOLICOS FELLOW CLANSMAN, WESTERN DIOCESE'S ARCH. HOVNAN DERDERIAN LOSES TWIN COURT BATTLES AGAINST USA ARMENIAN LIFE/APPO JABARIAN

law suit. We recognize Bagratyan relied on what the painting contractor for the church heard from a female acquaintance, regarding its reliability, but Bagratyan declared he believed the painting contractor and had no reason to question the veracity of his statements.

The third source was Supreme Court Justice Arabian, who (according to Jabarian) told Jabarian in late 2018 that Derderian had abused a boy. Derderian contends Jabarian's report was not credible because Jabarian claimed Justice Arabian told him he had severed his relationship with Derderian as a result of the abuse, but Derderian and Justice Arabian had a "cordial relationship" until Justice Arabian's death. Further, Derderian stated that in 2017 he presided over an event honoring Justice Arabian's wife, and Justice Arabian thanked Derderian for his kind words at the event. We accept the statements in Derderian's declaration as true for purposes of the special motion to strike, but Derderian submitted no evidence that Jabarian was aware of Justice Arabian's attendance at the 2017 event. Moreover, Justice Arabian could have remained cordial with Derderian in his role as the archbishop and treasurer even for his kind words at the 2017 event but still severed their prior personal relationship.

Derderian also argues the fact that Jabarian published the child abuse statements only after two of his claimed sources died (Yeghiayan and Justice Arabian) shows that Jabarian fabricated the statements and purposefully waited to publish the statements so his sources could not be tested. It is speculation that Jabarian purposefully "waited years until these individuals died" to publish the child abuse allegations. Further, during the two-year interval Jabarian obtained corroboration from

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Halladjian and Bagratyan, both of whom submitted declarations. Finally, Derderian argues Jabarian's failure to provide details of the child abuse, including the full name of the boy, when the incident occurred, or what Derderian did to the boy, shows the "tall tales" of child abuse were fabricated. This too is speculation—it is not surprising that Justice Arabian and the other sources would not have felt comfortable disclosing the boy's full name or details about what had happened.

In sum, the issues raised by Derderian suggest that Jabarian should have responsibly investigated further whether Derderian had sexually abused a boy before publishing that the abuse took place. But a "mere failure to investigate the truthfulness of a statement, even when a reasonably prudent person would have done so, is insufficient to demonstrate actual malice." *Christian Research*, supra, 148 Cal.App.4th at p. 98; see *Reader's Digest*, supra, 37 Cal.3d at p. 209 ("A publisher does not have to investigate personally, but may rely on the investigation and conclusions of reputable sources.")²⁷

²⁷ The fact the Western Diocese prior to publication sent a letter denying the child abuse statement to the media inquiry was not true does not show actual malice. "A denial only serves to buttress a case for actual malice when there is something in the content of the denial or supporting evidence produced in conjunction with the denial that carries a doubt-inducing quality." *Huang v. CBS Broadcasting, Inc.*, supra, 212 Cal.App.4th at p. 904; accord, *OneTaste, Inc. v. Pacific, Inc.*, 20020 118 Cal.App.4th 134, 162; The Western Diocese's letter denied the allegation and stated it had evidence demonstrating the statement was false, but it did not describe or attach any evidence.

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4. Derderian made a prima facie showing of actual malice with respect to misappropriation of funds for the Armenian genocide settlement fund but not as to the Canadian fund

Derderian contends he met his burden to make a prima facie showing of actual malice with respect to Jabarian's statements accusing him of being "directly involved" in and "behind" the fact that misappropriated funds from the Armenian genocide settlement fund. Specifically, he argues the Los Angeles Times article Jabarian relied on did not mention Derderian, and Jabarian's personal belief that Derderian must have been involved was not sufficient to defeat a showing of actual malice. We agree Derderian met his burden.

The Los Angeles Times article supported Jabarian's assertion that \$400,000 in settlement funds were transferred to the "local diocese in Burbank" (the Western Diocese), which was supposed to transfer the funds to a church in Armenia, but the church never received the funds. But the article does not mention Derderian or any role he played in the receipt, transfer, or misappropriation of the funds. Jabarian's reliance on the Los Angeles Times article, without any evidence Derderian was involved, suggests an inference the statement was fabricated or made with reckless disregard for the truth. (See *Barrill*, supra, 217 Cal.App.4th at p. 262 [an "unambiguous inference of fabrication" arose where defendant cited no source supporting his allegation].)

The only other support Jabarian provided for his statements that Derderian misappropriated the settlement funds was his personal belief from conversations with unidentified church members "over the years" that Derderian had "complete

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control" over the Western Diocese; thus Jabarian believed such a large transfer of money would not "go unnoticed" by Derderian. However, it is a large leap from the fact an archbishop has control over a diocese to the conclusion he must have been involved in the theft of funds intended for the church in Armenia.²⁸ As the United States Supreme Court explained in *St. Amant v. Thompson* (1985) 89 U.S. 725, 732, a publisher cannot "insure a favorable verdict by testifying that he published with a belief that the statements were true." Because Jabarian provided no other basis for his statements beyond his personal belief it was true, Derderian has shown a probability he will be able to produce clear and convincing evidence of actual malice.

We reach a different conclusion with respect to Jabarian's statement that Derderian misappropriated funds from a charitable foundation for Canadian widows and orphans, Chakmakjian, a founder of the fund, described in his email to Jabarian how Derderian redirected the funds intended for needy children in Armenia to "children and families of [Derderian's] puppet priests and missions in Armenia." Derderian contends Jabarian had actual malice in reporting the story because Jabarian knew Chakmakjian disliked Derderian, and further, Jabarian admitted he never fact-checked Chakmakjian's

²⁸ Bagratyan made a similar statement in his declaration that, based on his observation of Derderian at church events over the prior five years, "Derderian has complete control over the Western Diocese and that nothing of consequence happens without his knowledge." Neither Bagratyan nor Jabarian state that Bagratyan shared this observation with Jabarian. Moreover, Bagratyan does not provide any basis for the statement other than his observation of Derderian at church events.

COURT VERDICT 24

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY: THE ...

Continued from page 10 the tricky waters of communal democracy. Their kindness during those initial years of service significantly influenced my values on the importance of mentoring in our communities.

The concerns of the church have not changed in the last several decades. Church finances, youth engagement, secular pressure and relevance in the diaspora have been top-tier concerns for many years. In one sense, they can be considered chronic issues and, as such, will always be prominent priorities. During one of the assemblies I attended, there was a passionate debate on the floor concerning the knowledge of future generations. It evolved into a mild indictment of our educational system, which offended some of the delegates. A gentleman from St. Stephen's in Watertown rose and addressed the assembly with a perspective that quieted the forum. He used the term "functional illiterates" to describe both his generation and emerging generations of adherents who may participate in the life of the church but lack knowledge of our canons, protocols, structure and history to be optimally effective. He described it as a creeping phenomenon that would pervade our church if we don't confront the issue. I was stunned by his comments and deeply connected with them. We were losing the generation that bridged life in Armenia and the rebuilt life in America.

Generations born in the diaspora would have to be motivated and taught. Passing on functional knowledge to newer generations born outside the homeland was an arduous task left to part-time education and competition for their attention. The cost of failing would result in "functional illiteracy." That day remains vivid in my mind because I internalized that participation in our communities is not enough. We must be filled with a foundation of knowledge so contributions can be assured. This challenge has become more acute with intermarriage in our communities. Whenever we discuss this issue, defensive-minded people offer examples of non-Armenian spouses serving on boards of trustees or parish councils. My question is this: How equipped do they feel to serve the church, or are they made to feel like "outsiders" when topics requiring church knowledge surface? How often do we sponsor orientation sessions on church history, practices, customs, canons and protocols? In today's environment, these should be held for all participants, whether they are Armenian or not.

The concerns of the church have not changed in the last several decades. Church finances, youth engagement, secular pressure and relevance in the diaspora have been top-tier concerns for many years.

Substantive knowledge has declined, and our church is less effective as a result. It places more pressure on the local priest as a resource and can lead to disagreements when unintended ignorance is displayed. It is a sign of respect to reward commitment with the tools to succeed. Ignorance is not intended to be an insult. It simply implies a lack of knowledge. We need to place a higher value on the critical need for relevant knowledge. The lack of such knowledge has led to conflict, divisions and people leaving our communities.

A simple example of conveying respect is how we greet clergy. The Armenian Church has a series of brief and beautiful greetings that convey respect and warmth instantly. Greeting a married priest with *Orhnetsek Der Hayr* — "Bless me, Father" — or a celibate priest with *Asdvats Oknagan* — "May God be your helper" — sets a clear tone. How often today do we hear an adult say, "Hi, Der Hayr," or "How are you?" I am not advocating this because of tradition, but rather it reflects the importance of the role of the priest in our church. We have all experienced awkward moments trying to remember the greetings, especially with celibate clergy, but maintaining simple signs of respect is how fruitful relationships are initiated.

Our family has been fortunate to experience the fullness of the Armenian Church in America despite the administrative division. It has given us unique perspectives by allowing us to participate fully in both the Diocese and the Prelacy. As noted earlier, the Prelacy has been my foundation of knowledge, experience and identity. Like many of my generation, we were blessed with parents who made participation in the life of the church a priority. The AYF offered us lifelong friendships and practical experience in interpersonal relationships and project planning.

As a young boy, I was drawn to the history of the See of Cilicia. My father had a few books on its history. One of them contained many pictures with captions of historical events of the 20th century, such as the destruction of the See's longtime seat in Sis, Cilicia, during the genocide. It continued with the difficult period when Cilicia had no permanent home until 1930 while attending to the homeless faithful survivors. A separate section was devoted to the *Catholicos* serving the post-1930 Antelias period. I marveled at the strength, courage and determination of these leaders. The rebirth of the Holy See was a microcosm of the global Armenian rebirth during the first half of the 20th century. It was a story that all Armenians should hold close to their heart, yet that is not the real-

RFI launches Armenian service, targeting youth and disinformation

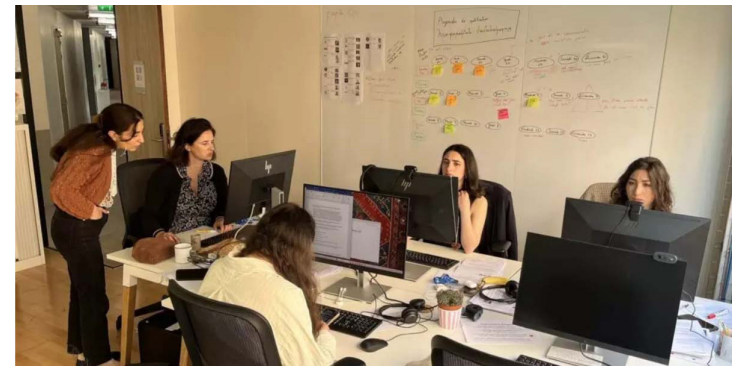
Paris — Radio France Internationale has inaugurated its eighteenth language service, opening an Armenian-language newsroom on Monday, with a team of eight journalists and a mandate to reach young audiences through digital-only content.

The new service will produce content exclusively in Eastern Armenian, the official language of the Republic of Armenia, and will prioritise social media platforms including Instagram, Facebook and TikTok.

"Armenian youth, like most young people in the world today, are ultra-connected. Traditional media have been abandoned. So if we want to reach that audience, we have to go through social media," said Astrig Agopian, the desk's editor-in-chief.

The team's primary aim is to inform, narrate the news and verify facts through innovative formats, drawing on correspondents based in-country.

Reporter Lilit Shahverdyan, origi-



nally from Nagorno-Karabakh, will be deployed to Armenia from the end of May to cover the country's upcoming legislative elections in real time, a posting she described as "a gift from heaven."

Elections and disinformation

Those elections represent the desk's first major test. Armenia has been at the centre of regional tensions in recent years following the conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, and the vote is already being targeted by a Russian disinformation campaign.

As in Hungary last month, the prospect of closer ties with the European Union is one of the campaign's defining themes, and one Moscow has firmly opposed.

ity. One of the most significant impacts of our division is the limits it placed on our learning. Walls were established that prevented dialogue and knowledge for generations. The division here in North America continues, but the relationships have healed, and the overt hatred has been replaced with tolerance and respect. What remains is lingering ignorance.

We need to place a higher value on the critical need for relevant knowledge. The lack of such knowledge has led to conflict, divisions and people leaving our communities.

When our children were in their teens, circumstances led us to begin attending a diocesan church. I immersed myself in the life of the parish and eventually served several years on the parish council and as a Diocesan Assembly delegate. As a former delegate to the Prelacy's NRA and Executive Council, I was able to observe and learn about the state of both segments of our North American Church. From a strategic view, I made two major observations. First, the problems of the Armenian Church in the diaspora are common. The content of both assemblies deals with the same issues: finances, youth, relevance and secularism. The second observation is that years of structural isolation have produced a lack of knowledge that is a loss for the Armenian nation. We replaced knowledge with misconceptions, bias and separation.

In 1991, the diocesan churches in America began displaying the tricolor flag. This decision was not based on embracing history but reflected acceptance of the flag by the newly established Republic of Armenia. It was joyous to see all Armenians embracing the flag, but it was accompanied by an air of superficial ignorance. **The flag was a common theme, but the foundation of history was lost in the Diocese. This rich history, ignored because of unfortunate bias, was now denied to a new generation.** It has resulted in a void of knowledge about 20th-century Armenian history for a significant population.

For many years, I volunteered to teach history at St. Vartan Camp, which is run by the Eastern Diocese. Taking advantage of warming relations, I was able to convey the history of the genocide and post-genocide era with content these children had not known. There were substantive discussions that reminded me that children have open minds and a thirst for knowledge. Included in the curriculum was material on the four hierarchical sees of the Armenian Church, including the See of Cilicia. In a small way, I could hear some of the walls crumbling down and being replaced by knowledge. Instead of viewing Antelias from the lens of division, we reviewed its iconic place

Armenian Mining and Metallurgy Assoc. Becomes a Member of Intern't'l Council on Mining and Metals



YEREVAN — The Armenian Mining and Metallurgy Association (AMMA) has officially become an Association Member of the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM), marking a significant milestone for Armenia's mining industry and reinforcing the sector's commitment to responsible mining, sustainable development and alignment with leading international standards.

Rohitesh Dhawan, President and CEO of ICMM, welcomed AMMA's admission, stating: "It's a great privilege to welcome the Armenian Mining and Metallurgy Association into ICMM at an important moment for our industry and Armenia's development journey."

There's unprecedented demand for minerals and metals and growing expectations that they're produced responsibly. AMMA's admission to ICMM reflects a shared commitment to strengthening standards and meeting the needs of the energy transition without compromising communities or nature."

Vardan Jhanyan, President of the Armenian Mining and Metallurgy Association, said: "AMMA's mission includes helping build a modern, responsible and globally competitive mining industry in Armenia. Becoming a member of ICMM is a major milestone on that journey. It connects Armenia's mining sector to the world's leading platform for responsible mining and provides valuable opportunities to exchange knowledge, strengthen professional capacity and accelerate the adoption of international best practices."

We are proud to join a community that shares the vision of a modern, well managed mining sector and look forward both to learning from global leaders and to contributing Armenia's experience to the global conversation."

The ICMM is a global leadership organization for sustainable development, representing 26 of the world's largest mining companies and 39 national, commodity-specific and professional associations from across the world. It works collaboratively with United Nations bodies, multilateral financial institutions, and international fora including the OECD and the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development (IGF), to strengthen the contribution of mining and metals to sustainable development.

Guided by a strong commitment to responsible mining and open engagement, ICMM brings together industry and global stakeholders to advance high standards of environmental, social, and governance performance across the sector.

AMMA's membership reflects a continued commitment to advancing responsible mining practices in Armenia and further aligning the sector with internationally recognized standards and global best practice.

THE INVISIBLE ENEMY: THE ...

Continued from page 14

in Armenian Church history. It is, and remains, an Armenian treasure.

Why is it that we often approach our history with tainted lenses? The See of Cilicia has been a revered center of spiritual and intellectual leadership for centuries. It was the seat of the Catholicos of All Armenians until political circumstances permitted its return to Etchmiadzin. It is a functioning part of the soul of the Armenian Church, producing such brilliant leaders as Karekin I Hovsepian and Karekin II Sarkissian. Their leadership in ecumenical relations and publications is renowned, yet it is shocking to know how little functional knowledge of the Great House of Cilicia exists in the Diocese outside of the clergy. In many cases, we have rejected knowledge and embraced ignorance. Although to a far lesser degree, the reverse is true. Many Armenians in the Prelacy and Diocese know Etchmiadzin. This dilemma has two main causes.

We don't teach our history, particularly our modern history. This observation is based on decades in classrooms, camps and retreats. The other factor is that history in general, although a key component of identity, is not emphasized in American society. Ignorance weakens our roots and withers our identity. This is a gift that we give to children for them to sustain their identity. Choose knowledge over ignorance.

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statements, reviewed any documents regarding the misappropriation, or recalled if the Canadian fund demanded Derderian repay the money. However, as discussed, a failure to investigate, without more, does not show the publisher had actual malice. (*Christian Research, supra*, 148 Cal.App.4th at p. 90.) Nor does the fact that Chakmakian severed ties with Derderian after learning of the misdirection of the Canadian funds show he was biased in his reporting of what had happened (or that Jabarian would have had serious doubts about the reporting). (See *Reader's Digest, supra*, 37 Cal.3d at p. 260 [individual's statement that plaintiff seemed "very, very nasty . . . and litigious as hell" did not demonstrate bias and instead was "a reasonable reaction" to what individual learned about plaintiff's previous actions].)

5. *Derderian failed to make a prima facie showing of actual malice with respect to the seminary expulsion statements*

Derderian contends Jabarian acted with actual malice in publishing the seminary expulsion statements because he failed to check readily available sources to confirm he was expelled. Derderian relies on a letter he obtained in 2024 from the Lebanese seminary certifying he graduated from the seminary in 1975. Derderian has not met his burden to make a prima facie showing of actual malice.

"Although failure to investigate will not alone support a finding of actual malice, [citation], the purposeful avoidance of the truth is in a different category." (*Harte-Hanks Communications, Inc. v. Connaughton* (1989) 491 U.S. 657, 692; see *Khawar v. Globe Int'l, Inc.* (1998) 19 Cal.4th 1073A, 259, 276-

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277 [plaintiff made showing of actual malice to support damages award where the publisher accused a private figure of assassinating Robert Kennedy without "review[ing] the voluminous public records" to the contrary or "contact[ing] any of the eyewitnesses to the assassination, some of whom were prominent individuals who could easily have been located"].) In *Harte-Hanks*, the United States Supreme Court held a newspaper's failure to listen to exculpatory audiotapes that the plaintiff had made available to the newspaper supported a finding of actual malice. (*Harte-Hanks*, at pp. 683, 692.) Likewise, in *Collins v. Waters* (2023) 92 Cal.App.5th 70, 73-75, 85, the plaintiff made a prima facie showing of actual malice where the defendant continued to state a political opponent's military discharge was dishonorable after the plaintiff provided the defendant a copy of what appeared to be an official document showing the contrary.

Derderian's reliance on *Connaughton*, *Collins*, and *Khawar* is misplaced. Unlike the facts in those cases, Derderian provided no evidence that Jabarian was aware of a record of Derderian's 1975 graduation or that Jabarian could have obtained the record from the seminary without Derderian's consent. Jabarian's lack of any effort to confirm whether Derderian graduated from the seminary may have shown Jabarian's negligent investigation, but not his purposeful avoidance of the truth. (See *Beilenson v. Superior Court* (1996) 44 Cal.App.4th 944, 952 [plaintiff "charges that had [defendant] contacted the [Fair Political Practices Commission] he would have discovered that [plaintiff] was in compliance with the law. 'Failure to investigate does not in itself establish bad faith.'"])

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Derderian also argues Mekhitarian was an unreliable source because he was convicted of felony grand theft and immigration fraud. However, Jabarian testified at his deposition that he was unaware of Mekhitarian's felony convictions, and Derderian provided no evidence that Jabarian was aware of the convictions. Thus, Derderian has not shown Jabarian had a subjective belief Mekhitarian was not a reliable source. Moreover, Derderian does not question the reliability of Halladjian, who corroborated Mekhitarian's account that Derderian was expelled from the seminary for homosexual conduct.¹⁰

C. *The Trial Court Did Not Err in Concluding Jabarian's Statement Regarding Treason Was a Nonactionable Opinion*

1. *Governing law*

"The sine qua non of recovery for defamation . . . is the existence of falsehood.' [Citation.] Because the statement must contain a provable falsehood, courts distinguish between statements of fact and statements of opinion for purposes of defamation liability. Although statements of fact may be actionable as libel, statements of opinion are constitutionally

¹⁰ Derderian also argues Jabarian's failure to locate Father Ararat (the other seminarian allegedly involved in the sexual activity), who was living in Los Angeles, supported a finding of actual malice. At most this is further evidence of negligent failure to investigate, not actual malice. Derderian does not provide any argument regarding Jabarian's report that Derderian's mother sent him to the seminary because of complaints about his homosexual tendencies as a child.

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protected." (*ZL Technologies, Inc. v. Does 1-7* (2017) 13 Cal.App.5th 603, 624; accord, *Baker v. Los Angeles Herald Examiner* (1986) 42 Cal.3d 254, 259-260 ["In this context courts apply the Constitution by carefully distinguishing between statements of opinion and fact, treating the one as constitutionally protected and imposing on the other civil liability for its abuse"].)

"Though mere opinions are generally not actionable, a 'statement . . . that implies a false assertion of fact is actionable.'" (*Billauer v. Escobar-Eck* (2023) 88 Cal.App.5th 953, 967 [statements suggesting lobbyist for church had improperly lobbied city officials in the past were statements of fact, not opinion]; see *Issa, supra*, 31 Cal.App.5th at pp. 702, 706 [statement that politician had "[g]amed the system to line his own pockets" was not provably false, and therefore was nonactionable opinion].) "Thus, the 'inquiry is not merely whether the statements are fact or opinion, but 'whether a reasonable fact finder could conclude the published statement declares or implies a provably false assertion of fact.'" (*Jackson v. Mayweather* (2017) 10 Cal.App.5th 1240, 1261; accord, *Billauer*, at p. 967.) Further, "it is not the literal truth or falsity of each word or detail used in a statement which determines whether or not it is defamatory; rather, the determinative question is whether the "gist or sting" of the statement is true or false, benign or defamatory, in substance." (*Issa*, at p. 702; accord, *Ringler Associates Inc. v. Maryland Casualty Co.* (2000) 80 Cal.App.4th 1165, 1181-1182.)

"To ascertain whether the statements in question are provably false factual assertions, courts consider the totality of the circumstances." (*GetFugu, Inc. v. Patton Boggs LLP* (2013)

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220 Cal.App.4th 141, 156; accord, *Nygaard, Inc. v. Uusi-Kerttula* (2008) 159 Cal.App.4th 1027, 1049.) “Under the totality of the circumstances test, “[f]irst, the language of the statement is examined. . . . [¶] Next, the context in which the statement was made must be considered.” (*Issa, supra*, 31 Cal.App.5th at p. 703; accord, *Franklin v. Dynamic Details, Inc.* (2004) 116 Cal.App.4th 375, 385.) “Whether challenged statements convey the requisite factual imputation is ordinarily a question of law for the court.” (*GetFugu*, at p. 156; accord, *Nygaard*, at p. 1049.)

2. The treason statement was a nonactionable opinion

The treason statement in the October 2022 publication was couched in “rhetorical hyperbole,’ ‘vigorous epithet[s],’ ‘lusty and imaginative expression[s] of . . . contempt,’ and language used ‘in a loose, figurative sense,’ which “have all been accorded constitutional protection.” (*Nygaard, Inc. v. Uusi-Kerttula, supra*, 159 Cal.App.4th at p. 1048.) The beginning of the article discussed how many Armenians felt about the “mindset among certain Armenian male-chauvinistic, ignorant, self-centered, egomaniacs, unpatriotic, un-Armenian elements.” The article then referred to three former Armenian presidents as “regime kleptomaniacs” and described Derderian and other religious leaders as “clansmen” who “perpetrated treason against the Armenian nation.” Jabarian exclaimed his “firm belief . . . that the Armenians have . . . lost the war . . . to treason!” These hyperbolic statements would indicate to the average reader that Jabarian was expressing his personal opinion about the quality of political and religious leadership in the Armenian community. Moreover, the statements are not provably false.

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of expression of opinion . . . typically generated in the heat of a political controversy.” (*Carr v. Warden* (1984) 159 Cal.App.3d 1166, 1168, 1170 [published statement by project opponent that “I think someone is being bought on the Planning Commission” was nonactionable opinion where made in connection with vote on zoning ordinance that was subject of “considerable [public] debate”]; see *Issa, supra*, 31 Cal.App.5th at p. 704 [“[T]hose engaged in political debate are entitled not only to speak responsibly but to ‘. . . speak foolishly and without moderation.’”].)

Derderian contends the treason statement was not an opinion because it included a series of factual claims, including that Derderian sabotaged Armenia’s war efforts and cut off military supplies. However, these claims lacked sufficient specificity to constitute provable factual assertions. For example, the article accused Derderian and the three other leaders of playing a role in the “corrupt army general officers’ unwarranted withdrawal of Armenian army,” the cutting off of military supplies by unidentified army officers who were bribed, and “false propaganda designed to demoralize Armenian frontline soldiers.” Whether an officer is corrupt, a withdrawal of soldiers is unwarranted, unidentified officers were bribed to cut off military supplies, or something is propaganda are not provable statements. Likewise, it is not provable whether Derderian and others engaged in unspecified acts of sabotage of the Armenian war efforts. The article failed to specify what acts were taken, when or where they occurred, or how Derderian was involved, preventing the statements from being proven true or false. (See *Chaker v. Mateo* (2012) 209 Cal.App.4th 1138, 1142, 1149-1150 [statements accusing former romantic partner “of fraud, deceit

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Further, terms of “apparency” qualified the article’s language. (See *Baker v. Los Angeles Herald Examiner* (1986) 42 Cal.3d 254, 260-261.)¹¹ As the court in *Baker* explained, “[w]here the language of [a] statement is ‘cautiously phrased in terms of apparency,’ the statement is less likely to be reasonably understood as a statement of fact rather than opinion.” (*Ibid.*, fn. omitted.) On that basis the court in *Baker* held the statement beginning with the phrase “[m]y impression is” was an opinion, reasoning that “[w]hen one states a view in terms of an ‘impression,’ the listener or reader is on notice that the maker is not vouching for its accuracy. A reasonable person would understand that a statement of opinion rather than of fact was to follow.” (*Id.* at pp. 261-262.)

Jabarian prefaced the treason article with language of apparency, including that “many Diaspora and Homeland Armenians *feel* that they’ve had it with the . . . mindset among Armenian . . . egomaniacs.” (Italics added.) The article continued by saying many in the Armenian community were now “convinced” and Jabarian was of the “firm belief” that the Armenians lost the war as a result of treason. These phrases signaled to the reader that the publication was expressing the opinions of the author and other members of the Armenian community.

Moreover, the 44-day war and its losses for Armenia, which was the focus of the article, were an issue of public concern in the Armenian community. Thus, the statement was “the same kind

¹¹ The court in *Baker* explained that “apparency” referred to something being “apparent,” as if the publisher was saying “[i]t appears to me.” (*Baker v. Los Angeles Herald Examiner, supra*, 42 Cal.3d at pp. 260-261, 263, fn. 4.)

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and picking up street walkers and homeless drug addicts,” “taking steroids,” and being involved in “illegal activities” were nonactionable opinions because “they lack[ed] any specificity as to the time or place of [plaintiff]’s supposed behavior”).

Sanders v. Walsh (2013) 219 Cal.App.4th 855, relied on by Derderian, is distinguishable. The disputed statements in *Sanders* were mostly preceded by the word “Fact,” recited “specific factual claims” of perjury and fraud, referred to the plaintiff in stating city contracts were being awarded to friends and family members, and stated plaintiff took “bribes.” (*Id.* at p. 864.) For example, one statement read: “Fact: [Plaintiff] who works for the City of [Anaheim], CA . . . wrote an unauthorized check out of her boyfriend[']s . . . account” to pay for a wig purchased by her mother, and wrote on the check that it was for a “Prosthetic Donation.” (*Id.* at p. 859.) By contrast, Jabarian’s statement in the article lacked the specificity of the statements in *Sanders*, was made in connection with a contentious political issue, and was preceded by language of apparency.

D. The Trial Court Did Not Abuse Its Discretion in Denying Derderian’s Request To Depose Jabarian’s Declarants

1. Governing law and standard of review

Section 425.16, subdivision (g), provides that upon the filing of a special motion to strike, “[a]ll discovery proceedings in the action shall be stayed . . . until notice of entry of the order ruling on the motion.” The discovery stay “reflect[s] the statutory purpose to prevent and deter SLAPP suits by ending them early and without great cost to the SLAPP target.” (*Britts v. Superior Court* (2006) 145 Cal.App.4th 1112, 1124.)

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“A trial court may lift the statutory stay for ‘good cause’ [citations], which requires a showing that the specific discovery sought is both ‘needed . . . to establish a prima facie case’ and ‘tailored to that end.’” (*Abir Cohen Treyzon Salo, LLP v. Lahiji* (2019) 40 Cal.App.5th 882, 891; accord, *Britts v. Superior Court, supra*, 145 Cal.App.4th at p. 1125.) “To satisfy this ‘good cause’ standard, a party must “explain what additional facts [it] expects to uncover.” (*Six4Three, LLC v. Facebook, Inc.* (2025) 109 Cal.App.5th 635, 659; accord, *Sipple v. Foundation For Nat. Progress* (1999) 71 Cal.App.4th 226, 247). Further, “[d]iscovery may not be obtained merely to “test” the opponent’s declarations.” (*Abir*, at p. 891.) “We review a trial court’s denial of a motion to lift the stay for abuse of discretion.” (*Abir*, at p. 891; accord, *1-800 Contacts, Inc. v. Steinberg* (2003) 107 Cal.App.4th 568, 593.) A ruling constitutes an abuse of discretion if it is “so irrational or arbitrary that no reasonable person could agree with it.” (*Sargon Enterprises, Inc. v. University of Southern California* (2012) 55 Cal.4th 747, 773.)

2. *The trial court did not abuse its discretion*

Derderian contends the trial court abused its discretion in denying his request to depose the three individuals who submitted declarations in support of Jabarian’s special motion to strike and then relying on the declarations to grant the motion. The court did not abuse its discretion.

In his motion, Derderian argued the depositions would “show that the information upon which Jabarian claims to have relied was entirely unreliable (because it was self-contradictory, contained unbelievable details, or came from obviously unreliable sources).” ~(5 AA 461)~ And on appeal, Derderian highlights that

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there were inconsistencies between the facts as described by the declarants and the facts presented by Jabarian. ~(AOB 58)~ But testing the reliability of the declarants was not a proper basis for conducting discovery under section 425.16. (*Abir Cohen Treyzon Salo, LLP v. Lahiji, supra*, 40 Cal.App.5th at p. 891.) Further, Derderian was allowed to take Jabarian’s deposition, during which he could have elicited facts to challenge the reliability of Jabarian’s sources.

Whether Derderian is correct that the trial court should have allowed him to take the depositions of the declarants to determine what they told Jabarian is a closer call. The court agreed that what the declarants told Jabarian was relevant, but it observed this information could “be obtained directly from Defendant Jabarian.” ~(5 AA 499)~ Further, as Jabarian points out, Derderian could have sought to interview the declarants (all of whom were or had been clergy in Armenian churches), and nothing prevented Derderian from performing his own investigation—which he did, discovering that Mekhitarian had prior convictions and Yeghiayan was disciplined by the State Bar. (See *Paterno v. Superior Court* (2008) 163 Cal.App.4th 1342, 1351, fn. 4 [plaintiff should address in seeking discovery to oppose anti-SLAPP motion “whether the information the plaintiff seeks to obtain through formal discovery proceedings is readily available from other sources or can be obtained through informal discovery”]; *The Garment Workers Center v. Superior Court* (2004) 117 Cal.App.4th 1156, 1162 [same].)¹² Although the court

¹² Derderian argues on appeal that Jabarian forfeited the argument that Derderian could take informal discovery from other sources by failing to raise it in the trial court. ~(ARB 40)~ We decline to find forfeiture because Jabarian argued in the trial

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reasonably could have allowed Derderian to depose the three declarants (with appropriate time or subject matter limitations), we cannot say the court’s decision in denying discovery of the declarants but allowing Derderian to obtain the information from Jabarian (or other sources) was irrational or arbitrary. (See *Sargon Enterprises, Inc. v. University of Southern California, supra*, 55 Cal.4th at p. 773.)

Likewise, the trial court did not abuse its discretion in relying on the declarants’ statements in granting Jabarian’s special motion to strike. Section 425.16, subdivision (b)(2), provides that “the court shall consider . . . supporting and opposing affidavits stating the facts upon which the liability or defense is based” in ruling on a special motion to strike. Derderian argues it was unfair to rely on the three declarations because he could not present rebuttal evidence without taking the declarants’ depositions. But the court granted Derderian’s request to depose and seek documents from Jabarian, and the central question was whether Jabarian believed the statements from the declarants were true, not whether the declarants provided false statements. (See *Balla v. Hall, supra*, 59 Cal.App.5th at p. 693 [“libel defendant ‘will generally be the principal . . . source of evidence’” of actual malice].)

_____ court that there was no need to take the depositions of the third-party declarants to learn what they told Jabarian (among other topics),~(5 AA 482)~ and his contention on appeal that Derderian could have inquired about those communications from both Jabarian and informal discovery of the declarants is consistent with that argument.


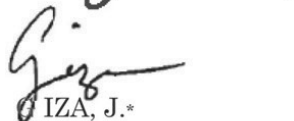
COURT VERDICT 35

DISPOSITION

The judgment in favor of Jabarian and the order granting Jabarian’s special motion to strike are reversed. The cause is remanded with directions to the trial court to enter a new order denying Jabarian’s special motion to strike the allegations that Jabarian made false statements that Derderian misappropriated funds from the Armenian genocide settlement fund (statements 2 and 3) and granting the special motion to strike all other alleged defamatory statements. The parties are to bear their own costs on appeal.


FEUER,

We concur:


SEGAL, SEGAL Acting

IZA, J.*

_____ Judge of the Los Angeles Superior Court, assigned by the Chief Justice pursuant to article VI, section 6 of the California Constitution.

COURT VERDICT 36

SPORTS

Arman Tsarukyan Vs. Charles Oliveira rematch



UFC lightweight contender Arman Tsarukyan has spoken about his plans for his next fight and confirmed that he expects to compete for the title in the coming months.

Speaking on his YouTube channel, Tsarukyan said that his next bout should be a championship fight and will

most likely take place in September in Los Angeles.

“My next fight is the title fight, which is probably in September in L.A. But I’m also the backup for the White House, too, if someone pulls out or gets hurt... I may fight him again,” Tsarukyan said, referring to a possible rematch with Charles Oliveira.

Tsarukyan is currently ranked No. 2 in the UFC lightweight division. The only fighter ahead of him is interim champion Justin Gaethje, who is scheduled to unify the belt with reigning champion Ilia Topuria on June 14 in the main event of UFC Freedom 250. Tsarukyan will serve as the official backup fighter in case the main event falls through.

Tsarukyan has already faced Oliveira at UFC 300, where he defeated the former UFC champion by split decision. Since then, the Brazilian has returned to winning ways and claimed the BMF title after a dominant grappling performance against Max Holloway at UFC 326.

Arman, meanwhile, remains one of the leading contenders for a UFC lightweight title shot. His winning streak in MMA has reached five fights, with his latest victories coming against Charles Oliveira and Dan Hooker.

Tsarukyan has also stayed active outside the Octagon. Recently, he competed at the RAF 9 freestyle wrestling event, where he earned an early win over Keelon Jimison.

As a result, several scenarios remain possible for the Armenian fighter in the near future: stepping in as a replacement on June 14, fighting for the title in September, or facing Charles Oliveira again in a rematch that could once again become a key bout on the road to the UFC belt.

European Women’s Chess Championship: Team Armenia results in 1st round



The 2026 European Women’s Chess Championship has kicked off in Batumi, Georgia.

Sixteen chess players from Armenia are participating.

Mariam Mkrtychyan, Lilit Mkrtychyan, Polina Kobak, and Nvard Hayrapetyan won the first round.

Elina Danielian, Sona Krkyasharyan, Ani Avetisyan, and Anna Khachatryan earned half a point.

Anahit Mkrtychyan, Anahit Muradyan, Ani Nahapetyan, Kiti Nadanyan,

Mane Gharibyan, Lilia Danielyan, Tamara Manukyan, and Lida Xing lost. The championship will be played over 11 rounds in a Swiss system format.

Armenia launches record-breaking military sports relay across the country

The Armenian Ministry of Defense has kicked off the largest military-sports relay in the history of the nation’s armed forces. Covering 1,450 km across the entire country, the event—dedicated to Military Sports Day—was launched with a ceremonial start at the Defense Ministry’s headquarters in Yerevan, the Defense Ministry said in a statement. Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Edward Asryan, delivered greetings to the participants on behalf of Defense Minister Suren Papikyan. The relay race will conclude on May 27.



The relay race will conclude on May 27.

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