

# TEAS

M A G A Z I N E



Culture | Public Affairs | Business



(Photo: Andrew Wiard)

## KHOJALY REMEMBERED AROUND EUROPE

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03 / 2016

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# Welcome to the TEAS Magazine

The European Azerbaijan Society (TEAS) is a UK-registered pan-European foundation dedicated to raising awareness of Azerbaijan and fostering closer economic, political and cultural links between that country and the nations of Europe.

As well as promoting the positive aspects of Azerbaijan, TEAS also highlights the plight of the 875,000 refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within the country. These people are unable to return to their homes and lands because of the illegal occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts by Armenia's armed forces – in defiance of four UN Security Council resolutions.

## TEAS has three main facets to its operations:

- Culture – TEAS raises awareness of Azerbaijan's rich and vibrant culture to a worldwide audience by organising cultural events and operating as a networking centre.
- Business – TEAS supports its membership of European and Azerbaijani businesses. It provides a platform for organisations to establish links and strengthen their existing business relationships via a programme of networking opportunities across the regions.
- Public Affairs – TEAS works to increase awareness about Azerbaijan amongst key opinion-formers, key decision-makers and other political, academic and civil society stakeholders.

## In pursuit of its objectives TEAS:

- Organises meetings with interested parties, opinion-formers and decision-makers
- Arranges roundtables, seminars, lectures and conferences
- Publishes pamphlets, reports, bulletins, books and produces films
- Facilitates fact-finding trips by politicians and business people.

## Facebook

The TEAS Facebook page is your chance to learn about the latest news, events, campaigns and other Azerbaijan-related items. Visit and 'like' our page at: <http://bit.ly/TEASFB>.

## Membership and Sponsorship

TEAS offers a range of corporate and individual membership packages, providing such benefits as advertising, trade missions, networking, business sector advice and hotel discounts.

TEAS also offers numerous sponsorship opportunities throughout the year for its events and conferences. To find out more, e-mail: [membership@teas.eu](mailto:membership@teas.eu).

## Enter the TEAS survey and win £100 of Amazon vouchers!

We are currently launching a new initiative to ensure we meet the needs of our friends and supporters and hold up-to-date contact information.

Many of you will have received a SurveyMonkey questionnaire during the past few weeks, and we urge you to complete this. Alternatively, you can complete the form at <http://bit.ly/teassurvey2016> – it is particularly important that you provide your email address so we can exclude you from unnecessary reminders. Please note that all data provided will be held confidentially and will never be passed to third parties.

A draw of respondents will be held on 4 April, and one will receive the prize of £100 of Amazon vouchers! Good luck!

## Upcoming Events For full details of all TEAS events, go to [www.teas.eu/upcoming events](http://www.teas.eu/upcoming%20events)

### 7 April – Azerbaijani Cinema Evening (Paris)

Cinéma l'Entrepôt, 7 rue Francis de Pressensé, 75014 Paris

19.30hrs. Free entry, but reservation necessary: [RSVP to paris@teas.eu](mailto:RSVP@teas.eu)

The *L'Europe autour de l'Europe* (Europe around Europe) film festival and TEAS France are collaborating to present a selection of three short films in the presence of an Azerbaijani director.

### 9 May – Premiere: Young Voices, Ancient Song (London)

Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS, University of London, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG

19.00hrs. Free entry. [RSVP to editor@teas.eu](mailto:RSVP@teas.eu)

This world premiere features Jeffrey Werbock, President, Mugham Society of America, in his quest to find a powerful young mugham singer he heard in an internally displaced persons (IDPs) camp in the aftermath of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. After the concert, Mr Werbock will perform a lecture–concert on kamancha, tar and oud.

### 26–27 May – Azerbaijani jazz concert: Elchin Shirinov Trio (Reims and Paris)

#### 26 May: Sunnyside Festival (Reims)

CCI Reims-Epernay, 5 Rue des Marmouzets, 51100 Reims

20.30hrs (information and tickets: [www.jazzus.fr](http://www.jazzus.fr))

#### 27 May: Festival Jazz à Saint-Germain-des-Prés (Paris)

Maison des Cultures du Monde, 101 boulevard Raspail, 75006 Paris

20.30hrs (information and tickets: [www.festivaljazzsaintgermainparis.com/accueil](http://www.festivaljazzsaintgermainparis.com/accueil))

The pianist and composer Elchin Shirinov belongs to a young, talented generation of Azerbaijani jazz musicians. Having studied under the tutelage of the pianist Kevin Hays, he has developed a very personal approach to the music, replete with tonal colours and sonorities. His compositions seamlessly combine improvised jazz with influences derived from Azerbaijani mugham.

Following its successful organisation of concerts by fellow pianists Isfar Sarabski in 2014 and Emil Afrasiyab last year, TEAS France is continuing to uncover Azerbaijani talents for the French jazz cognoscenti – a heritage that dates back to the development of jazz-mugham in the 1960s by Vagif Mustafazadeh and was subsequently developed by Aziza, his daughter.



## From the TEAS Director

At this time of year, the thoughts of all Azerbaijanis – and friends of Azerbaijan – turn to the tragic events that occurred on the night of 25–26 February 1992. On that terrible evening, 613 civilians were brutally killed by Armenian armed forces – with the active connivance of a renegade former Soviet infantry battalion.

Over the last few weeks we at TEAS – in conjunction with our friends from *Justice for Khojaly* – have organised 14 commemorative events in 11 countries. These have ranged from concerts to the inaugural Khojaly Peace Prize, and several screenings of the award-winning independent documentary *Endless Corridor*.

In this issue we interview the director of that film, Aleksandras Brokas. One year on from the premiere, he speaks of the reception accorded to the film, and why it remains a valuable resource in raising awareness of the human dimension of the massacre. The voiceover provided by Oscar-winning British actor Jeremy Irons adds considerable gravitas to the enterprise.

We also interview Caroline Rees, who was one of the translators that developed the French edition of the book *Khojaly Witness of a War Crime: Armenia in the Dock*. She explains the value of this well-constructed book, how the project opened her eyes to the realities of the conflict, and how she strived to achieve accuracy in translation.

In London, the UK Government hosted the first ever JETCO between Azerbaijan and the UK. This was attended by Francis Maude, UK Minister of State for Trade and Investment, and culminated in the signing of an expansive protocol. TEAS was fortunate to be invited to attend the proceedings.

Finally, we feature the unveiling of the statue to the 19<sup>th</sup> century poetess Natavan in Waterloo, Brussels, who was born in Armenian-occupied Shusha and epitomises Azerbaijan's progressive approach to women's rights.

**Lionel Zetter, Director, TEAS**

## Khojaly tragedy remembered around Europe

February is the saddest month for all Azerbaijanis, for 26 February marks the date in 1992 of the Khojaly Massacre, the worst single atrocity of the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. This saw 613 civilians killed by Armenian forces as they attempted to flee the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly. The death toll included 106 women, 63 children and 70 elderly people.

Commemorating the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the massacre, TEAS organised 14 events in 11 countries in collaboration with various

### Athens

On 22 February, the multi-award-winning independent documentary *Endless Corridor* – a US/Lithuanian co-production – was shown at the historic Cine Ideal in Central Athens. The screening was jointly organised by the Azerbaijani Embassy to Greece and TEAS.

Following its international premiere throughout 2015, *Endless Corridor* has received plaudits from critics across the world. It achieved the Best Documentary and Best Director for a Documentary Prizes at the Tenerife International Film Festival in Madrid; the Best Documentary Editing Prize at the Milano International Filmmakers Festival; and in the prestigious US-based Accolade Global Film Competition, it achieved two awards – Best of Show in May 2015 and in January 2016 the Outstanding Achievement Award in the Accolade Humanitarian Awards. It has also been screened on the pan-European Eurochannel, CNN Turk, TV 24 (Turkey) and Channel 1 (Israel). The evening concluded with the Greek launch of the book *Khojaly Witness of a War Crime: Armenia in the Dock*.

Speaking before an audience of over 120 people, including politicians, VIPs and press representatives, H.E. Rahman Mustafayev, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Greece, explained: “Over the years, Azerbaijan has been campaigning hard to inform the international community of the truth regarding the events that led to the massacre of civilians in Khojaly, calling upon governments and national parliaments to undertake a proper political and legal evaluation of this tragic event.

“I would like to seize the opportunity to urge you and, through you, the entire Greek people not to overlook the *Justice for Khojaly* international campaign. It is important that we all stay united against the evil ideology of nationalism... Political condemnation of this horrific event is important, not only to remember those who were killed and

Azerbaijani diplomatic missions and national and international entities, under the auspices of the *Justice for Khojaly* campaign, founded by Mrs Leyla Aliyeva in 2008. All had a very different character, but had common objectives – the need to remember the victims, gain recognition for this injustice on an international level, punish the perpetrators and to achieve peaceful reconciliation between Azerbaijan and Armenia, enabling the estimated 875,000 Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their rightful homeland.

brutally injured, but to ensure that such tragedies are not repeated.”

Aleksandras Brokas, the Lithuanian director of *Endless Corridor*, introduced the film, describing its premise, where fellow Lithuanian journalist Ricardas Lapaitis and Russian journalist Victoria Ivleva meet massacre survivors more than 20 years on. He spoke of the fellowship between his country and Azerbaijan, both of which undertook early uprisings against the Soviet Union. He was gratified by the reception given to the film, saying: “The Greek capital Athens has greeted us with a screening in an historic cinema before an informed and engaged audience. This was my first time in the City of Gods, and it has left an unforgettable impression, not only as a magnificent European cultural centre, but also for its well-educated and unique people. I was pleasantly surprised by how the Greek people could sympathise with the pain of another nation.”

Following the screening, Ian Peart, Project Co-ordinator, TEAS and Co-Editor of *Khojaly Witness of a War Crime: Armenia in the Dock* described the purpose of the book: “This is the first independent publication about the Khojaly Massacre to be published in English. It is intended to both humanise the people involved and to present objective information about the occurrences of that February night in 1992. It includes interviews with survivors; first-hand reports by the foreign journalists who saw the bodies and survivors reach Agdam; the views of foreign researchers; reports from international human rights organisations; and previously unpublished pictures taken by international photojournalists.

“There are also the full texts of the four UN Security Council resolutions of 1993 that still lie on the table unimplemented, as the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani land continues to this day. You have seen the film and heard the testimonies of the people who suffered – what can you do to help them?”

## Berlin

On 26 February, a fascinating academic debate took place at Humboldt University in Berlin, focusing on the expertise of renowned Professor Johannes Rau. Speaking before the audience of 200 attendees, including politicians, VIPs and press representatives, Shahin Namati-Nasab, Director, TEAS Germany, commented: "It is an immense pleasure to welcome the audience, including H.E. Parviz Shahbazov, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Germany; Bundestag members, especially Florian Hahn MP and, of course, the main speaker tonight – Professor Johannes Rau – who is an expert on the complex situation in the post-Soviet South Caucasus region, and particularly the Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh region and the seven surrounding districts, which remain under Armenian occupation. Having held important research and teaching posts in Moscow, he will enlighten us today with his profound insights.

"Today, we commemorate the 24th anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre and,

## Brussels

On 24 February, *Endless Corridor* was shown at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. After an introduction to the audience of 150 politicians, EU stakeholders, VIPs and press representatives, Marc Verwilghen, Director, TEAS Benelux passed the floor to H.E. Fuad Isgandarov, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg and the EU. He recalled that the Khojaly Massacre was a terrible atrocity, saying: "We believe in peaceful resolution of this conflict, and hope that the European and international community will help achieve this. Tonight, we remember Nagorno-Karabakh in the hearts and minds of the Azerbaijani people, and particularly recall the souls of those who died in Khojaly."

Ambassador Isgandarov also underlined that: "Azerbaijani refugees and IDPs are still unable to return to their homes and

## Florence

On 4 March, *Endless Corridor* was screened amidst the rococo carvings and mirrored walls of the 16th century Palazzo Borghese in Florence. The event was organised by the Azerbaijani Embassy to Italy, TEAS and the EURASIA European Association for Cultural Exchange Italy-Azerbaijan. Jack Pegoraro, Manager, TEAS UK, commented: "Notwithstanding the four UN Security Council resolutions passed over 20 years ago that require Armenia to withdraw from the occupied territories, nothing has been done, to date. Without doubt, this constitutes one of the greatest injustices of our times and is a flagrant violation of Azerbaijani territorial integrity and international law."

although many actions have been taken, the international community continues to ignore the ongoing Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani territories and the plight of the Azerbaijani refugees and IDPs."

Following this, Ambassador Shahbazov explained the significance of the massacre and the ongoing occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts. He stressed that the situation is almost unbearable yet, despite this, Azerbaijan has still been transformed into a stable and economically successful partner for Germany and elsewhere in Europe. He commented that Azerbaijan aims to play a peaceful role in resolution of this conflict, although Armenia must take responsibility for its actions and withdraw from Azerbaijani territory.

Mr Hahn MP highlighted the relevance of Azerbaijan to Germany in his greeting and stated that Germany must play a constructive part in the settlement – especially within the context of its OSCE Presidency.

lands due to the illegal occupation of the Azerbaijani territory of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding regions by Armenian armed forces. Despite four UN Security Council Resolutions and 22 years of OSCE Minsk Group negotiations, there is still no progress."

Ricardas Lapaitis, the Lithuanian journalist and eyewitness to the Khojaly Massacre, whose story is pivotal to *Endless Corridor*, said: "Today, we are remembering the 24th anniversary of the Khojaly tragedy. The name of the film *Endless Corridor* does not only describe the terrible Armenian military plan, and the whole situation of the massacre, but it also means that, until now, *Justice for Khojaly* has not been achieved. I am honoured to witness tonight's event in Brussels about Khojaly. I have been a war correspondent for 25 years and I continue

H.E. Mammad Ahmadzada, the recently-appointed Azerbaijani Ambassador to Italy, explained: "One of the saddest things about the Khojaly tragedy is that it is so little-known in Europe. The Armenians are happy



Jack Pegoraro, Manager, TEAS UK, spoke of the terrible injustice of the occupation



Professor Johannes Rau – a renowned expert on the Caucasus – described the atrocity and its aftermath in great detail at Humboldt University

Finally, Professor Rau hauntingly described the horror of the massacre and highlighted that not only human lives were erased, but also unimaginable cruelties were committed. He pointed out that, in addition to the high death toll, many human rights violations occurred. The academic also described the perspectives of both the Armenian offenders and foreign eyewitnesses. Professor Rau emphasised the need for swift conflict resolution and stressed that responsibility for the crimes must be taken, thereby enabling the victims' relatives to finally mourn.



Azerbaijani violinist Nazrin Rashidova performed a mix of contemplative Azerbaijani and European classical music

to work with Azerbaijani IDPs and refugees from the Nagorno-Karabakh region."

The programme of the event also included an outstanding classical music performance by Nazrin Rashidova, the London-based Azerbaijani violinist, soloist, recitalist, chamber musician and orchestral director.

with the status quo and don't want the world to know how they have massacred innocent Azerbaijani civilians as part of their illegal occupation. It is time that everyone knows what happened."



H.E. Mammad Ahmadzada, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Italy, remonstrated about the lack of understanding and knowledge of the massacre across Europe

## Istanbul

On 25 February, the victims of the Khojaly Massacre were commemorated at the multifunctional state-of-the-art exhibition facility The Seed at the Sakip Sabanci Museum in Istanbul.

The commemoration also included the world premiere of the documentary *Khojaly Witnesses: Tears of Truth*, which contains landmark interviews with eyewitnesses to the tragedy and those who still bear the scars of Armenian aggression. It was screened in the presence of Zahid Jabbarov, one of the featured survivors who gave his testimony on camera.

Rena Rzaeva, Director, TEAS Turkey, reflected: "Injustice is felt when people are not heard, not recognised and simply forgotten. It is an injustice to those that lost their lives in the most brutal way. It is

an injustice to the children left orphaned without a family. It is an injustice to those expelled from their land and unable to even return to a place they once called home.

"Could you imagine losing your family members, friends, home and everything you knew in one night, knowing that those responsible for this brutality walk away guilt-free, without any responsibility, and without any repercussions. Where is the justice?" She then passed the floor to Kenan Murtazov, who represented the Azerbaijani Consulate in Turkey.

The screening was followed by a concert by the Azerbaijani pianistic maestro Islam Manafov, who has been a resident of Istanbul for 13 years. Manafov's son and daughter share his musical ability,

and the evening included a classical performance by his son Abuzar. His daughter Turan played some of her own contemplative compositions, together with an emotionally-charged interpretation of the folksong *Lachin* – a district of Azerbaijan that remains under Armenian occupation – reducing many audience members to tears. The evening concluded with a six-hand performance by all three members of the Manafov family of *Azerbaijan*, composed by the legendary Muslim Magomayev.

The following day, on 26 February – the 24th anniversary of the massacre – *Khojaly Witnesses: Tears of Truth* was screened publicly, free-of-charge, alongside *Endless Corridor*, at one of the largest Istanbul multiplex cinemas – Cinemaximum (Kanyon).



Islam Manafov, his son Abuzar and his daughter Turan concluded the evening with an emotional six-hand performance of Muslim Magomayev's *Azerbaijan*



Survivor Zahid Jabbarov – featured in *Khojaly Witnesses: Tears of Truth* – movingly gave his testimony



Rena Rzaeva, Director, TEAS Turkey signs the book of condolence

## Oslo

The evocative and nightmarish tone poem *Khojaly 613* brought down the curtain at a concert by the Paris-based Nomad Symphony Orchestra at the neo-Gothic Uranienborg Church in Oslo on 5 March. The work was performed as part of the Frankofonifestivalen 2016 festival – aimed at bringing Norway and Francophone nations together through cultural exchange and business connections. The concert was sponsored

by TEAS France; the Oslo-based Centre for African Culture (CAK); and the Institut Français de Norvège.

The performance was of *Khojaly 613* featuring violinist Sabina Rakcheyeva, Cultural Advisor, TEAS. Pierre Thilloy commented: "*Khojaly 613* is now a piece of my repertoire – it is important to not only play it at the time of mourning on 25–26 February – the work can be played

at any time. I regard it in the same way as Picasso's *Guernica*, which is emblematic of the Spanish Civil War and the horrors of Fascism. The destruction of the town of Guernica would be forgotten if it were not for Picasso's work. I want everyone to similarly become aware of Khojaly." The audience received this devastating work in rapt, stunned silence, and they then demonstrated their appreciation with a standing ovation.

## London



Three events were organised in London, all of which harnessed the power of the arts to raise awareness of the massacre, two taking place in parts of the UK Parliament. The first of these was on 23 February, when *Endless Corridor* was screened in the Boothroyd Room of Portcullis House. This was organised by Bob Blackman MP, Chair, Azerbaijan All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), and attended by Baroness O’Cathain and Lord Howarth, APPG members.

Speaking before the audience of 110 parliamentarians, journalists, humanitarians, friends of Azerbaijan and cinephiles, Lionel Zetter, Director, TEAS, said: “Khojaly has come to symbolise the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh because it was an organised massacre of women and children. The events of Khojaly were in living memory, and there were some survivors. During previous screenings of the film, I was honoured to meet Valeh Huseynov, whose painfully moving testimony of the way in which his wife was shot dead is heard in the film. He was brutally tortured, but he is still alive today.

“Currently, Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven surrounding regions are still occupied by Armenia, in direct defiance of four UN Security Council resolutions. This situation is not acceptable to Azerbaijan or any country around the world. If the rule of international law is flouted, it results in conflicts and civil war. It is always the women and children who suffer. I hope tonight’s screening will act as a memorial to those who died on that night, and that you will understand the pain that the surviving Azerbaijanis suffered.”

Mr Blackman explained: “*Endless Corridor* is harrowing viewing, that is undeniable, and there is no question that the massacre

took place. During my visits to Azerbaijan, I have seen the work undertaken to accommodate the IDPs and refugees who are the ongoing victims of the conflict. The biggest tragedy is that no-one has been brought to justice for the war crimes and crimes against humanity, committed towards those who wanted to live peacefully in their homeland. I will be submitting an Early Day Motion (EDM) to Parliament this week to remember the victims.

“Every time I go to Azerbaijan, one question is raised as four UN Security Council resolutions have been passed against the Armenian occupation, yet nothing happens. I wonder why this part of this world remains ignored and forgotten. In my view, as many people need to see this film as possible – particularly politicians. I will do all I can to ensure parliamentarians hear about the tragedy and continue to demand answers and action.”

Aleksandras Brokas, Director, *Endless Corridor*, explained: “Whenever I rewatch this film in different cities, I am aware that nearly 50 per cent of the people featured in the film have now passed away. Young Günay’s experience of trauma caused her to become speechless and led to her death two weeks after the end of shooting. The most important aspect is that those featured in the film now know they are not alone in their pain and grief. We aimed to show how the innocent people were affected.” He went on to field a series of questions from the audience regarding the geopolitical background to the conflict.

H.E. Tahir Taghizadeh, Azerbaijani Ambassador to the UK, said: “Thank you to TEAS and the *Justice for Khojaly* campaign for organising this wonderful and frank evening. The audience tonight brought the most precious gift – that of

their time, hearts and minds. We are currently discussing the development of confidence-building measures, but there is no confidence or trust between Azerbaijan and Armenia. There will be no trust until those responsible for Khojaly are brought to justice.”

The following day, the massacre was remembered in the UK Parliament through art with the presentation of the inaugural Khojaly Peace Prize. The evening showcased a range of artworks submitted by UK-based students and young artists, inspired by the challenge of harnessing the power of the image to promote peaceful resolution of the ongoing Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and other wars, together with stimulating international empathy with the plight of refugees and IDPs.

Taking place in the Strangers’ Dining Room in the UK Parliament, the event was attended by around 150 people, including Lady Fiona Hodgson; Sir David Amess MP; Bob Blackman MP, Chair, Azerbaijan APPG; Mark Menzies MP, Vice-Chair of the APPG; members of the Azerbaijani and Turkish diaspora; friends of Azerbaijan and art aficionados. The judging panel included Sabina Rakcheyeva and Bob Blackman MP.

Bob Blackman MP said: “Today’s exhibition is taking place very close to the commemoration of the Khojaly Massacre that took place back in 1992. This was ignored by the world and sadly none of the perpetrators have been brought to justice.”

Also sitting on the judging panel was Lionel Zetter, Director, TEAS, who commented: “Bob Blackman has now visited Azerbaijan three times and has met many of the survivors of the Khojaly Massacre. We

were hugely impressed by the volume and quality of the entries for the Khojaly Peace Prize. Khojaly remains an event that is little-known worldwide. It took place during the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when there were many conflicts and border disputes, and Nagorno-Karabakh did not command the attention of the world's media. This competition was thrown open to anyone who was living or studying in the UK and felt inspired by the tragic events of that night. Its purpose was to sympathise with those who survived but suffered terribly, and also with those who lost loved ones. The other objective is to try and ensure that such horrific events are not repeated."

Mark Menzies MP remarked: "As someone who is a friend of Azerbaijan and a visitor to the country, I understand some of the problems and issues that it has to face, including the Khojaly Massacre. Today's event focuses on some of these issues via the medium of art. I am delighted that so many art students from across the UK have participated."

First place was given to Gordon Berger, whose artwork features a traditional Paisley-Buta design, Azerbaijani hats, flags and dances. This design acts as a reminder of the importance of growing together, and the need to recognise our commonalities and shared humanity.

The commemorative events in London concluded on 26 February – 24 years to the day after the tragic events in Khojaly – when a moving classical concert took place amidst the stunning neoclassical surroundings of the 17th century St. Paul's Church in Covent Garden. Around 250 people attended the evening, including Mrs Leyla Aliyeva, Vice-President, Heydar Aliyev Foundation and Founder, *Justice for Khojaly* international campaign. The concert, held in what is frequently referred to as the Actors' Church, was recorded for broadcast on London Live television, which has an estimated viewership of 190,000 people.

After a swift greeting, Lionel Zetter, Director, TEAS, turned the floor over to Tale Heydarov, Chairman and Founder, TEAS, who said: "We commemorate this



Bob Blackman MP, Chair, Azerbaijan APPG, pledged to raise awareness of the Khojaly Massacre in the UK Parliament



Soprano Seljan Nasibli evoked the Virgin Mary's anguish at the crucifixion of Jesus with her performance of an aria from Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*

massacre every year, and today marks the 24th anniversary of the deaths. So many innocent children, women and elderly persons were killed in a very brutal way. This massacre has been acknowledged by many international organisations. However, unlike with many other mass killings, the perpetrators have never been brought to justice in international courts. The aim of the *Justice for Khojaly* campaign is to achieve justice for those people who were killed and for those who committed the crimes to be forced to answer for their actions."

The evening began with the plaintive sound of the Azerbaijani tar, played by the septuagenarian Rafiq Rustamov, one of the foremost living exponents on the instrument, himself born near Khojaly. He performed *Zaminkara*, based on the *Dogah Mugham*, the sound of his intricate and quiet instrument resounding around the hushed hall. This was followed by Azerbaijani pianist Gunel Mirzayeva's performance of Bach's *Sarabande* (from *English Suite No.3 in G Minor*), a slow, stately and emotional piece. She then played contemporary Azerbaijani composer Adil Babirov's *Prélude-Scherzo*, replete with dissonances, yet interpolated with the microtones of Azerbaijani mugham.

Jamal Aliyev, a 22-year-old cellist currently studying at the Royal College of Music, went on to play the contemplative *Méditation* (from *Thaïs*) by Jules Massenet. This was followed by *Poem-Monologue*



The concert began with the plaintive sound of the Azerbaijani tar – played by acclaimed master Rafiq Rustamov

by Azerbaijani composer Fikret Amirov, one of his earliest works from 1948. Amirov's familial roots were in Shusha, also in Nagorno-Karabakh, known as the Conservatoire of the Caucasus and the home of Azerbaijani culture. Next on the programme was Azerbaijani violinist Nazrin Rashidova, who has just released her third album on the Naxos label. She selected the Belgian composer Eugène Ysaÿe's *L'Aurore* (from *Solo Sonata No.5*), a transcendental work that evokes daybreak, as the sun ascends into the sky. This was followed by Mirhashim Hashimov and Azad Aliyev's special arrangement of the *Rast* mugham for solo violin.

Pianist Ayyan Salahova – a graduate from the Royal Academy of Music – performed the longest single work on the programme, an arrangement by Azerbaijani composer Gara Garayev of his rousing score for the Azerbaijani film *Don Quixote*.

The stage was then given to soprano Seljan Nasibli, another graduate from the Royal College of Music, who performed Pergolesi's song evoking the Virgin Mary's sorrow – *Vidit suum dulcem natum* from the *Stabat Mater*. Her second piece was Vasif Adigezalov's *Shusham Laylay* (*My Shusha*), dedicated to the Armenian-occupied town.

The final two pieces were performed by the largest group to take the stage – the multinational Sabina Rakcheyeva Ensemble – in a configuration featuring oud player Attab Haddad. They played Sabina's special arrangement of the best-known Azerbaijani folksong – the poignant *Sari Gelin* (*Blonde Bride*) – followed by her own composition *Towards the East*, a dramatic, exhilarating piece, redolent of her homeland. This was a stark, intimate and emotionally-charged evening and paid adequate homage to the victims of this terrible crime.

## Paris

The French capital played host to three events commemorating the Khojaly victims. On 25 February, a moving classical concert took place before an audience of over 600 amidst the stunning 17th century classical surroundings of the Cathédrale Saint-Louis des Invalides in Paris – the cathedral for the French armies. The audience included Senator André Reichardt, President, France–Caucasus Group, French Senate; composer Pierre Thilloy; André Sadry, Secretary, National Association of the Families of the Martyrs of Oradour-sur-Glane, and many Ambassadors, including H.E. Anar Karimov, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Azerbaijan to UNESCO and H.E. Ali Ahani, Iranian Ambassador to France. The concert was organised by the Azerbaijani Embassy to France, TEAS France, the Ulduz Association and the Association des Amis de l'Azerbaïdjan.

H.E. Elchin Amirbayov, Azerbaijani Ambassador to France, said: “To this day, this massacre sadly remains unknown by French society and constitutes the most terrible episode in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The extent of this massacre is comparable with that in Oradour-sur-Glane during World War II, which has left indelible traces in the memories of our French friends. This massacre, which was intended to provoke panic amongst a fleeing population, was followed by a policy of ethnic cleansing, which saw almost a million Azerbaijanis forced to leave their historic territories, whilst Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven surrounding regions were occupied, accounting for around 20 per cent of their country.

“We must never let these innocent victims be forgotten! The Khojaly Massacre is engraved on the spirit of all Azerbaijanis. But, Khojaly is also a voice that must be heard across the world. This is due to the international *Justice for Khojaly* campaign that was launched on 8 May 2008 by Mrs Leyla Aliyeva, Vice-President, Heydar Aliyev Foundation. Thanks to this campaign, several countries around the world have recognised this act of barbarity. The event today fits perfectly within the structure of this campaign, with the principal objective of achieving the restoration of justice in the region.”

Marie-Laetitia Gourdin, Director, TEAS France, said: “History is always the subject of debate and interpretation, and this evening’s commemoration is not intended to stir tensions, but to ensure that such atrocities are not repeated. The tragedies



Violinist Sabina Rakcheyeva and clarinetist Hélios Azoulay led members of L'Orchestre Lamoureux in a performance of the evocative tone poem *Khojaly 613*

of today should not cause us to forget those of yesterday. The millions of refugees today must not make us forget the approximately one million Azerbaijanis who have been waiting for more than 20 years to regain their lands that are still occupied by Armenian troops. Justice and peace is the only path Azerbaijan and Armenia should take to eventually live in harmony as neighbours, as they did in the past.”

After comments from Mirvari Fataliyeva, General Secretary, Association des Amis de l'Azerbaïdjan, L'Orchestre Lamoureux, under the baton of Azerbaijani conductor Ayyub Guliyev, performed the concert. It aptly began with the *Funeral Ode* by Gara Garayev in the arrangement by Mustafa Mehmandarov, and also included Azerbaijani works by Vasif Adigezalov and Fikret Amirov. The commemoration concluded with a performance of the tone poem *Khojaly 613* featuring violinist Sabina Rakcheyeva and clarinetist Hélios Azoulay.

This was followed on 9 March by a screening of the independent documentary *Endless Corridor* at the long-established multi-disciplinary Parisian literary arts hub known as L'Entrepôt. Attended by 70 Parisians from civil society and think-tanks, together with diplomats from the UNESCO Permanent Delegations, including H.E. Anar Karimov, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Azerbaijan to UNESCO, the screening was organised by TEAS France in collaboration with Europa Film Akt (EFA). EFA is the organiser of the annual *L'Europe autour de l'Europe* festival, which regularly features the latest in Azerbaijani art cinema.

Irina Bilic, Director, EFA said: “Tonight’s film

contains some very emotional testimonies. This conflict is often covered in the films screened during the *L'Europe autour de l'Europe* festival, and needs the sincerity of artists to be adequately understood.”

H.E. Jean Perrin, first French Ambassador to Azerbaijan from 1992–96, recalled the aftermath of the Khojaly Massacre saying: “The Armenians used the Khojaly Massacre to terrorise and subdue Azerbaijan. I recall going to see some of the massacre survivors in the central hospital in Baku. Their injuries were not just those of war, and I will never forget what I viewed.

“On the ‘contact line’, this is still a ‘hot’ war that has continued for over 20 years. The Armenians are continuing to occupy Azerbaijani territory and words are insufficient to describe the sufferings of the refugees and IDPs. Soldiers are killed constantly, and despite four UN Security Council resolutions being passed against Armenia, nothing has been achieved. The negotiations continue through the OSCE Minsk Group, but Azerbaijan continues to suffer.”

Lithuanian journalist Ricardas Lapaitis vividly recalled: “I was in Agdam in February 1992, immediately following the massacre and the collapse of the Soviet Union. There was an absence of medical expertise in Agdam, and I will never forget the injuries that I saw, many of which resulted in amputations.

“These experiences changed my life and made me realise the value of becoming a journalist. Khojaly has been overlooked, yet it was an act of terrorism. Armenia and



Azerbaijan must now work together through civil society to find a solution. Khojaly was left to burn, but we must understand that conflicts disturb peaceful lives and remember our common humanity."

On the actual commemoration date of 26 February, these events were

complemented by a commemoration ceremony under the famed Arc de Triomphe on the Champs-Élysées at the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, where an eternal flame burns. This was attended by TEAS alongside representatives of the Azerbaijani armed forces, Association des Amis de l'Azerbaïdjan, the National

Association of the Families of the Martyrs of Oradour-sur-Glane, the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to UNESCO and many more. The event saw speeches delivered about the massacre and a wreath-laying ceremony where the French and Azerbaijani national anthems were performed.



Following the screening of *Endless Corridor*, H.E. Jean Perrin, first French Ambassador to Azerbaijan from 1992–96 and Lithuanian journalist Ricardas Lapaitis recalled their traumatic experiences of the Khojaly Massacre



French and Azerbaijani mourners come together in solemn remembrance of the dead

## Stockholm

On 18 February, prominent politicians, journalists and dignitaries gathered at the renowned Zita Theatre in Stockholm for a screening of *Endless Corridor*, in the presence of the director Aleksandras Brokas. He explained: "The way to freedom and independence is very similar in all post-Soviet countries – it costs a lot. The tragedy of Khojaly tells the story of how cynical and inhumane people decided over the destiny of others."

This lunchtime event also saw the Swedish launch of the book *Khojaly Witness of a War Crime: Armenia in the Dock*. Ian Peart, Project Co-ordinator, TEAS and Co-Editor of the book, explained that the book had dual objectives – to present the humanity of the victims and to provide objective facts from an international perspective. He said: "After reading this book, hopefully readers will ask themselves: 'what can I do to help?' We must never again see a repetition of such crimes."



Aleksandras Brokas spoke passionately about the motivation behind the making of *Endless Corridor*

## Vilnius

On 15 February, the annual *Blood for Life* event took place in Vilnius to commemorate the Khojaly victims. This was organised by the Azerbaijani Embassy to Lithuania, Nacionalinis Kraujo Centras (Lithuanian National Blood Transfusion Centre), Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament) and TEAS. Vytautas Landsbergis, the first President of Lithuania; the academic Viktoro Danisenko and Eliza Pieter, Director, TEAS Strasbourg, delivered the speeches. Around 100 people



H.E. Hasan Mammadzada, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Lithuania, urged all those present to remember the Khojaly victims by donating something without monetary value – their blood

were in attendance, including Azerbaijani Youth of Lithuania (AYOL) members, Azerbaijani students living in Lithuania and Lithuanian Members of Parliament.

Opening the event, H.E. Hasan Mammadzada, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Lithuania, thanked all those present for demonstrating their solidarity with

the Khojaly victims. For the second successive year, he then called upon all those present to roll up their sleeves and donate blood in commemoration of the massacre.

Mr Landsbergis explained that both Azerbaijan and Lithuania have and continue to face constant threats. He

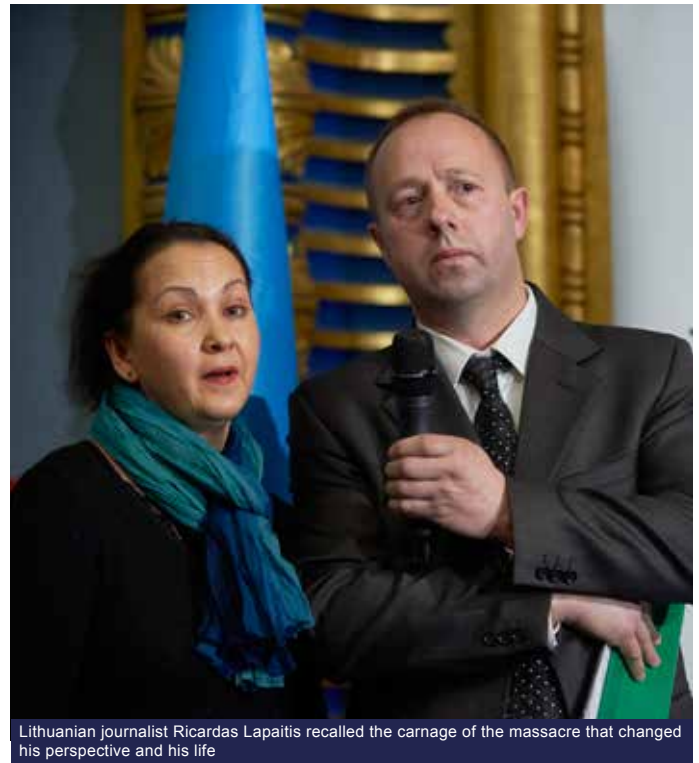
stressed the importance of increasing efforts to prevent the recurrence of such massacres, both in Azerbaijan and elsewhere. The event concluded with the tone poem *Khojaly 613*, performed by Sabina Rakcheyeva and the Pandora String Quartet. Highlights from the event were subsequently broadcast on Lithuanian television.

## Strasbourg

On 16 February, *Endless Corridor* was shown at the Cinéma Odyssée, Strasbourg. The city is home to such institutions as the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. Speaking before the audience of 150 diplomats, VIPs, press representatives and friends of Azerbaijan, Eliza Pieter, Director, TEAS Strasbourg, gave the background to the film before passing the floor to H.E. Ambassador Emin Eyyubov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe, who said: “The town of Khojaly no longer exists today, but the remembrance of the massacred victims survives. They are present in all our memories. We ask for an end to the impunity and injustice regarding the massacre, and ask that this type of tragedy will never be repeated. I hope that this screening of the film *Endless Corridor* will help all those here achieve a better understanding of the realities of the massacre.”

Lithuanian journalist Ricardas Lapaitis vividly remembered his experiences, saying: “When I appeared in *Endless Corridor*, it charted my first return visit to Agdam in 23 years. That which I experienced there, as an eyewitness to the Khojaly Massacre, had completely changed my life. I saw a building filled with victims’ bodies; the body of a six-year-old girl; decapitated men. I cannot forget what I saw.

“At the time, when I filed my report, my editor expressed incredulity – saying that such a massacre was impossible. But I said that such a tragedy should never be allowed to happen again. When I returned to Agdam – which is partially occupied by Armenia – after so many years, I realised that this devastated place is the saddest town in the world. The most incredible aspect is that the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is still ongoing. Armenia continues to occupy Azerbaijani territory. Snipers from the sides sit five metres apart. I remember all those who continue to suffer, due to this conflict. I was pleased with the result of this film, and it is an adequate memorial to the 613 people who are unable to see it for themselves.” The commemoration concluded with a performance of the tone poem *Khojaly 613* by



Lithuanian journalist Ricardas Lapaitis recalled the carnage of the massacre that changed his perspective and his life

Pierre Thilloz, featuring violinist Sabina Rakcheyeva alongside the Pandora String Quartet.

Next year will mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre, yet still no-one has paid for the crimes committed on 26 February 1992. As awareness of the massacre spreads across the world, increasing numbers of people are realising that this status quo is unsustainable in the long run. All of these events were dedicated to the memory of the Khojaly victims and those Azerbaijanis who have only one wish – to return home to live in peace with their neighbours.



The commemoration concluded with a performance of the emotional tone poem *Khojaly 613* by Pierre Thilloz, featuring Sabina Rakcheyeva alongside the Pandora String Quartet



Eliza Pieter, Director, TEAS Strasbourg, gave the background to *Endless Corridor* before passing the floor to H.E. Ambassador Emin Eyyubov, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe



*Endless Corridor* director Aleksandras Brokas prepares to present his film to an Athens audience

## Aleksandras Brokas – beyond the *Endless Corridor*

Aleksandras Brokas – CEO and Producer of Culture Bridge – is a renowned Lithuanian cinematographer, editor, director and producer. He initially worked for Finnish television, but became fascinated with the story of Azerbaijan, seeing the parallels with the post-Soviet experience in his own country. This led him to explore the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, including the Khojaly Massacre, which claimed the lives of 613 civilians in 1992. The resultant documentary film, entitled *Endless Corridor*, was screened across Europe in February 2015 to commemorate the massacre. Since then, it has been shown on numerous television stations around the world and garnered several awards. Neil Watson caught up with Aleksandras just prior to a screening of *Endless Corridor* at Portcullis House – part of the UK Parliament – during a meeting organised by Bob Blackman MP, Chair, Azerbaijan All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), under the auspices of the *Justice for Khojaly* campaign:

### How and where has *Endless Corridor* been screened since we met a year ago?

Since its screenings across Europe a year ago, many contracts have been signed with various television channels to show the film. *Endless Corridor* has now been shown on Channel 1 (Israel), Eurochannel, CNN Türk and TV 24 (Turkey). We then signed a contract with Al Jazeera and expect they will broadcast it during March. The film achieved the Best Documentary and Best Director for a Documentary Prizes at the Tenerife International Film Festival in Madrid; the Best Documentary Editing Prize at the Milano International Filmmakers Festival; and in the US-based Accolade Global Film Competition, it achieved three

awards – Best of Show in May 2015 and in January 2016 the Outstanding Achievement Award and the Accolade Humanitarian Award.

### How has the film been received by audiences and critics?

The film has received a very warm critical reception, but the audience reaction is more important – they are very sensitive to the subject and the testimonies in the film. Viewers are deeply immersed and often finish the film with tears in their eyes. Many are shocked and surprised that this kind of story continues to exist – that people in the world continue to live in this way. The smarter people in the audience possibly start considering how they may help people in that kind of situation. People become heavily involved with the film and sympathise with the story.

The awards achieved by *Endless Corridor* also show that critics recognise the film as a piece of art. It is excellent that it is being evaluated in purely cinematic terms for its narrative, editing and standing as a functional piece of art. It is apparent that the narrative approach and structure is engaging audiences and being regarded for its artistic merit.

We are working to achieve peace and not war. We believe that, one day, both Armenia and Azerbaijan will be true neighbours, as was previously the case. There are many situations around the world where the official political stance differs completely to that of the human level in real life.

### What projects are you currently working on in Azerbaijan?

There are several projects, the first of

which is *Azerbaijan Through Foreign Eyes*, which is a documentary series featuring the American journalist Thomas Goltz. He tells the story of independent Azerbaijan through the testimonies of some of the non-Azerbaijanis who played pivotal roles in creating the country. We are working on re-editing and developing the narrative structure to this film so it is easily comprehensible and can be sold to television channels around the world.

We are also working on a couple of artistic projects – one is a feature film with Russian and American producers, and the other is a documentary about Astrino Evdokiya Luchezarnova, who wrote more than 400 books, and devoted much of her life to researching the background to conflicts, the objective being to achieve peace.

She wrote many books on how to teach a person to live inside time, to use time, to investigate the properties of time and developed her own system of thought, known as Cosmic Philosophy. Production is expected to take couple of years, because she worked for 30 years and her story is naturally very deep and involved. It enables us to see how people's lives have changed over this period. However, much preliminary research is required before filming can begin. As with *Endless Corridor*, it is an international film, and locations include Cyprus, the UK and Russia.

The best aspect of the film is that it focuses on spiritual evolution and contemplation about what can be done to avoid conflict situations, beginning with the personal dimension. If enough people think the same way, they can bring about change for the best.

## Working in translation – bringing *Khojaly Witness* to the Francophone world

Caroline Rees is an experienced London-based Russian translator. She has recently been working on the French translation of *Khojaly Witness of a War Crime: Armenia in the Dock* (TEAS Press). This comprises a unique range of material from Western and Russian sources, demonstrating a consensus of opinion regarding the tragic events of 26 February 1992. Caroline spoke to Neil Watson just a couple of days after the launch:

### What prompted your involvement in producing the French translation of the *Khojaly Witness* book?

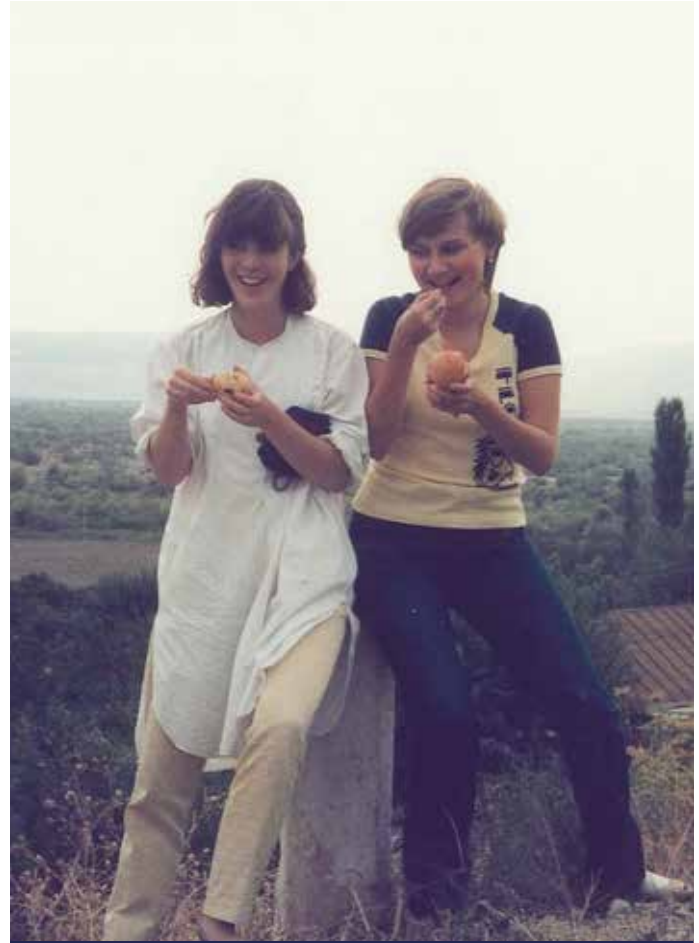
In fact, the project was passed to me by another translator, who has been working on the biography of the great Yvonne Botto – an octogenarian Frenchwoman who left her homeland in 1947 and was unable to return for over 60 years, due to a combination of politics and economics. I realised that the project was too great to undertake myself, so I worked alongside my friend Ariane Mansouri – a native French speaker – to realise the French translation. I speak Russian, unlike Ariane, so I was going back to the original Russian texts in many instances and Ariane was ensuring that the French translation was accurate and maintained the nuances of the original.

### How did Ariane and yourself work on the translation?

A rough French translation had already been undertaken, but the quality was insufficient for publication purposes. It was particularly important to be faithful to the interviews and to return to the Russian sources, and I worked from both the English and Russian versions of *Khojaly Witness*. In many instances, I would explain the Russian text in English, and Ariane would express it in French. Accuracy was extremely important, because any falsified statements could be picked up by Franco-Armenians and used as a weapon to disparage the entire book.

### What particularly interested you in the project?

I was ill-informed about the Khojaly Massacre and the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh prior to the project, and now know a great deal on the issue. In my view, this is a very well-constructed book as it has so many strands – live interviews with survivors, newspaper articles from journalists, reports from human rights groups, book chapters, and comments and images from western photojournalists. This was particularly the case for the renowned South Azerbaijani photojournalist and *National*



Caroline Rees (left) and Marina, her Russian tour guide, enjoy pomegranates and clean air high above Baku

*Geographic* Fellow Reza Deghati who was in Agdam as the bodies from the massacre were brought to a temporary morgue. He explains how he came to take the photo *The Crying Woman* – where an elderly woman raises her arms in anguish, having found the bodies of her son and husband, both of which have had their eyes gouged out. That is the iconic image of the Khojaly Massacre and of the conflict.

The other outstanding person is the US journalist Thomas Goltz, whose newspaper articles from the *Washington Post* and extracts from his book *Azerbaijan Diary* demonstrate that he is a very passionate and brave person.

### As a Russian speaker, you are obviously immersed in the Russian-language media. Had you previously read anything about the conflict?

I hadn't heard about the Khojaly Massacre, but I knew that there was conflict in the area – however, I was slightly confused between the Armenian–Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh and the situation in the North Caucasus.

### What is the actual importance and value of the *Khojaly Witness* book to French readers?

I am hopeful that the French translation will raise awareness of the problem in the Francophone world – particularly as the Armenian perspective is the only voice that is often heard. It is yet another example of how terrible human beings can be to one another. I think it is always very valuable to see how cruel and brutal people can be – for example, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia perpetrated terrible atrocities in our lifetimes.



Caroline recalls her 1985 visit to Azerbaijan with great fondness

When working on the book, I became aware that such atrocities could only be perpetrated amidst a great deal of hatred. The mutilation of the bodies was unthinkable and totally barbaric – I fail to see how anyone can do that to the body of a child. For example, one poor man in a helicopter, who was involved in picking up the bodies from the massacre, found the corpse of his four-year-old son with a fractured skull.

Another affecting story is that of the Russian journalist Victoria Ivleva, who rescued a two-day-old child that had been born in the aftermath of the massacre. The story of her meeting with Günay (the child) and Mehriban (her mother) is included in the documentary film *Endless Corridor*. Many terrible atrocities took place during the massacre, and these personal stories bring the human tragedy very much alive. The photographs from western photojournalists are also excellent, and I sincerely hope our translation has done the material justice.

**You visited Azerbaijan as part of a Soviet-run Caucasus tour in 1985, and have been a Russian speaker for over 30 years. What, in your view, stopped information about the Khojaly Massacre from being disseminated more widely?**

I think that other events possibly eclipsed it – the whole of the Eastern Bloc was crumbling and the conflict was pushed into the margins – of course, that should not have been the case.

**How did you come to visit Azerbaijan in 1985, and what are your memories?**

My friend had visited the Central Asian Soviet Republics and it changed her life. So my sister and I – who were sharing a flat – thought we would do the same. We put some money away every month, but we didn't save enough for a trip to Central Asia, so we went to the Caucasian Republics, which were very much unknown to westerners.

At the time, Azerbaijan did not feel at all western. I remember visiting the Caravanserai and seeing some theatrical productions. Elements of Azerbaijani culture had clearly been left alive alongside the pervading Soviet culture. I remember the wonderful sheepskin hats that were for sale. The Azerbaijani children were fascinated by western culture – particularly the souvenir pens we brought which showed a boat slowly going under Tower Bridge. Despite being aware of pollution from the oil industry, I remember Azerbaijan with warm affection, and hope I can return one day.



A Soviet-era postcard of a Shirvan carpet – Azerbaijani and Soviet culture were permitted to co-exist



The Baku skyline was very different in 1985



A view of the Old City – before restoration

## Legendary Azerbaijani poetess Natavan remembered in Waterloo

The legacy of Khurchidbanu Natavan (1832–97) – Azerbaijan’s most famous poetess – has been remembered with the unveiling of a sculpture in the famous town of Waterloo, located 29km from Brussels city centre and the site of Napoleon Bonaparte’s final and most ignominious defeat in 1815. The commissioning of the sculpture and the unveiling ceremony on 18 February were organised by the Embassy of Azerbaijan to Belgium and the City of Waterloo, with the support of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and TEAS Benelux. Around 100 diplomats, politicians, friends of Azerbaijan and press representatives attended the inauguration near the public library, which was followed by a reception accompanied by live music in Waterloo City Hall. Natavan was the most famous daughter of Shusha – a now devastated town in Nagorno-Karabakh that has remained under illegal Armenian occupation for over 20 years.



Following the unveiling, H.E. Fuad Isgandarov, Azerbaijani Ambassador to the EU, Belgium and Luxembourg is flanked by Florence Reuter, Mayor of Waterloo and Marc Verwilghen, Director, TEAS Benelux, alongside members of the TEAS Benelux team and representatives of the City of Waterloo

H.E. Fuad Isgandarov, Azerbaijani Ambassador to the EU, Belgium and Luxembourg described this day as one of the happiest in his life, and expressed his gratitude towards the City of Waterloo, especially Mrs Florence Reuter, Mayor of Waterloo, and Sir Yves Vander Cruysen, its First Alderman in charge of Culture and Tourism. He commented that such events would contribute towards strengthening the solid Azerbaijani–Belgian political and cultural relationship.

The event took place in the presence of young Azerbaijani sculptor Imran Mehdiyev – who realised the Natavan sculpture commission – who was described by the Ambassador as reflecting the new westward-facing Azerbaijani generation. Ambassador Isgandarov went on to explain the significance of Natavan, and how she embodies the positive role of women in Azerbaijani society, where all women over the age of 18 received the voting franchise in 1918 as a precursor of many European countries.

He concluded with a strong message addressed to the population of Belgium and across Europe, saying: “Azerbaijan comes to Europe with message of peace, kindness and love.”

Speaking after the screening of a short documentary on Azerbaijan, Mayor Reuter emphasised the multiculturalism of Waterloo, which is home to over 100 nationalities, and explained that this event was made possible in the framework of the city’s annual cultural partnership with overseas nations. She recalled that Waterloo demonstrated its interest in Azerbaijan last year, when young Azerbaijani painters were offered the opportunity to showcase

their work in a famous art gallery. She also praised Natavan for the quality of her poetry and the causes for which she fought, especially regarding the improvement of women’s conditions and opportunities in the 19th century.

Marc Verwilghen, Director, TEAS Benelux, described Azerbaijan as a pearl in the Caucasus, despite being relatively little-known in Europe. He commented that writers had discussed the country since antiquity, and that Alexandre Dumas (author of *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*) had famously visited and written on Azerbaijan, and had met Natavan in Shusha.

Strategically and geopolitically located between Europe and Asia and along the famous Caravanserai and Silk Road, he explained: “Azerbaijan is historically the cradle of our own civilisation.”

He then commented on the extraordinary modernity of Azerbaijan, where the first opera of the Muslim East – Uzeyir Hajibeyli’s *Leyli and Majnun* – was performed in 1908, and stressed that it remains a secular Republic with an incredibly high degree of religious tolerance. He predicted: “There is a lot to discover, and I foresee that, in a few years from now, the country will become an exotic new tourist destination – the place to be.”

Speaking of Natavan, Mr Verwilghen continued: “The fact that a great artist, a progressive 19th century woman thinker, characterised by her love for humanity, friendship and compassion will remain amongst us in Waterloo, is not only an invitation to discover Azerbaijan, but also signifies the need for intense, close and successful cultural, economic and political collaboration.”

## Alim Qasimov at Wigmore Hall – 10 per cent discount

The khanande Alim Qasimov – now always sharing a stage with his daughter Ferghana – is, quite simply, the most famous and internationally renowned



The Wigmore Hall audience are destined for an unforgettable evening of impassioned, transcendental mugham

exponent of mugham, the national music of Azerbaijan. Carving his own niche in his approach to this powerful, passionate and poetic music, his voice is synonymous with his country and he has performed across the world.

Recipient of many awards, Mr Qasimov holds the coveted International IMC–UNESCO Music Prize. *The New York Times* said: “Alim Qasimov is simply one of the greatest singers alive, with a searing spontaneity that conjures passion and devotion, contemplation and incantation.” *Le Monde* described him as: “One of the greatest voices in the world.”

On 14 July, he will perform a landmark

concert at Wigmore Hall – one of London’s premiere venues, renowned for its acoustics – for an unforgettable evening. The Aga Khan Music Initiative is supporting the concert. Sharing billing with Sirojiddin Juraev from Tajikistan, he will perform alongside Ferghana, Rafael Asgarov (balaban), Rauf Islamov (kamancha), Zaki Valiyev (tar) and Javidan Nabiye (naghara). Go to <http://bit.ly/qasimovwigmore> for details.

Tickets range in price from £15–36, and TEAS has managed to arrange a reduction of 10 per cent for its friends when booking either in person or by phone on +44 (0)20 7935 2141. Simply quote ‘The European Azerbaijan Society’.

## UK eyes expanded co-operation with Azerbaijan

The UK – the largest foreign direct investor in Azerbaijan – has revealed plans to expand its long-term business engagement with Azerbaijan. The comments were made on 12 February during the culmination of a series of meetings in London, organised under the umbrella of the UK–Azerbaijan Joint Economic and Trade Commission (JETCO).

The comments were made by Sue Whitbread, Business Specialist: Oil and Gas Strategy, UK Trade and Investment (UKTI). She said: “Representatives of UK companies operating in the field of oil and gas engineering will visit Azerbaijan in April to further enhance co-operation between the two countries in the sector.”

Shahin Mustafayev, Azerbaijani Minister of Economic Development, revealed that 473 UK companies are currently active in Baku, the majority of which are contractors for projects being implemented in Azerbaijan. He reiterated that economic co-operation between the two countries, focused on the energy sector, remains central to Azerbaijani–UK relations, particularly through the operations of BP, which has remained as one of the main partners to Azerbaijan for over 20 years. To date, the UK has invested over \$23bn (£16.3bn) in the Azerbaijani economy.

Francis Maude, UK Minister for Trade and Investment stated: “The successful and long-term activity of BP in Azerbaijan once again proves that the country is open to foreign investment and has



Francis Maude, UK Minister for Trade and Investment (left) signs the far-reaching protocol with Shahin Mustafayev, Azerbaijani Minister of Economic Development

created favourable conditions to foster the activities of foreign companies in various fields.”

In addition to the hydrocarbons sector, the UK and Azerbaijan are undertaking bilateral co-operation in the educational, trade, tourism and ICT sectors, and other infrastructure and transit projects. Trade turnover between Azerbaijan and the UK stood at \$564m (£400m) in 2015, according to the Azerbaijani State Customs Committee, of which \$553.3m (£392.5m) comprised UK imports.

The meeting culminated with the signing of a protocol regarding the expansion of co-operation in the economic, investment, trade, industrial, tourism, energy, educational and cultural spheres.

## Caspian Oil and Gas Show to kick off in June

*Caspian Oil and Gas 2016*, the 23rd international exhibition and conference, and the largest energy sector event in the Caspian region, will take place from 1–4 June at the Baku Expo Centre. This brings together senior-level directors to discuss key oil and gas projects in the Caspian region. The Azerbaijani Ministry of Energy supports the event.

It is expected that more 300 companies will participate in the exhibition, which will be divided into various zones, including innovative technologies in oil production and energy resource transportation; developments in oil and gas storage systems, and current and future regional oil and gas projects. The sponsors of the exhibition and conference include SOCAR, SOCAR Polymer,

AZFEN J.V., Azeri M-I Drilling, Bos Shelf MMC, Caspian Drilling Company, Caspian Geophysical, Caspian Marine Services, Global Energy Azerbaijan (GEA), Dentons, Inpex, Nobel Upstream, RussNeft, Schlumberger, Tekfen Construction and Total.

The exhibition will be complemented by the Caspian Oil and Gas conference, which will take place from 2–3 June at the JW Marriott Absheron Hotel. This will attract over 500 delegates from more than 30 countries. This year, speakers will include representatives from over 50 government bodies, leading industry experts, and the directors of major hydrocarbons companies. The organisers of the exhibition and conference are ITE Group and its partner Iteca Caspian. See [www.caspianoilgas.az](http://www.caspianoilgas.az) for more information.

## Caspian Agro – a decade of excellence

*Caspian Agro 2016* – the Azerbaijan International Agriculture Exhibition and the largest regional forum for producers of agricultural products – will take place from 19–21 May at the Baku Expo Centre. Over the past decade, Caspian Agro has established itself as a reliable platform for meeting experts, experiencing the latest machinery and equipment, and showcasing goods and services for the agricultural industry.

Development of the agricultural sector is now a major focus for the Azerbaijani government. For several successful years, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has attended the exhibition. In his speech at a conference on the results of the second year of implementing the *State Programme on Socio-economic Development of the Azerbaijani Regions 2014–18*, he acknowledged: “To us, agriculture is a

sector that will ensure non-oil exports and food security, and provide employment. Therefore, 2015 was declared as the *Year of Agriculture*. But I consider this year to be the *Year of Agriculture* as well. In fact, every year should be the *Year of Agriculture*.”

Over the years, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Agriculture has supported the exhibition, in conjunction with the Azerbaijani National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (ASK) and the Azerbaijan Export and Investments Promotion Foundation (AZPROMO). The exhibition is organised by Caspian Event Organisers.

This year, *Caspian Agro 2016* will bring together manufacturers and distributors of agricultural products and equipment from Germany, Georgia, Indonesia, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, and Turkey, amongst others. Particular areas

of specialisation include poultry farms, greenhouse equipment, irrigation systems, equipment for the livestock industry, pet food production and developments in fish, seeds, and fertilisers, all of which are aimed at enhancing yield and productivity.

This year, the *Caspian Agro* exhibition includes two entirely new sectors - e-Agriculture and Laboratory Equipment. In the framework of the e-Agriculture sector, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Agriculture will demonstrate an electronic system that facilitates full monitoring and analysis of performance efficiency. The Laboratory Equipment sector will showcase microscopes, laboratory instruments and equipment. The inaugural *Azerbaijan International Conference on Innovative Technologies in the Poultry Industry* will complement the event. Go to [www.caspianagro.az/2016](http://www.caspianagro.az/2016) for comprehensive information.

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