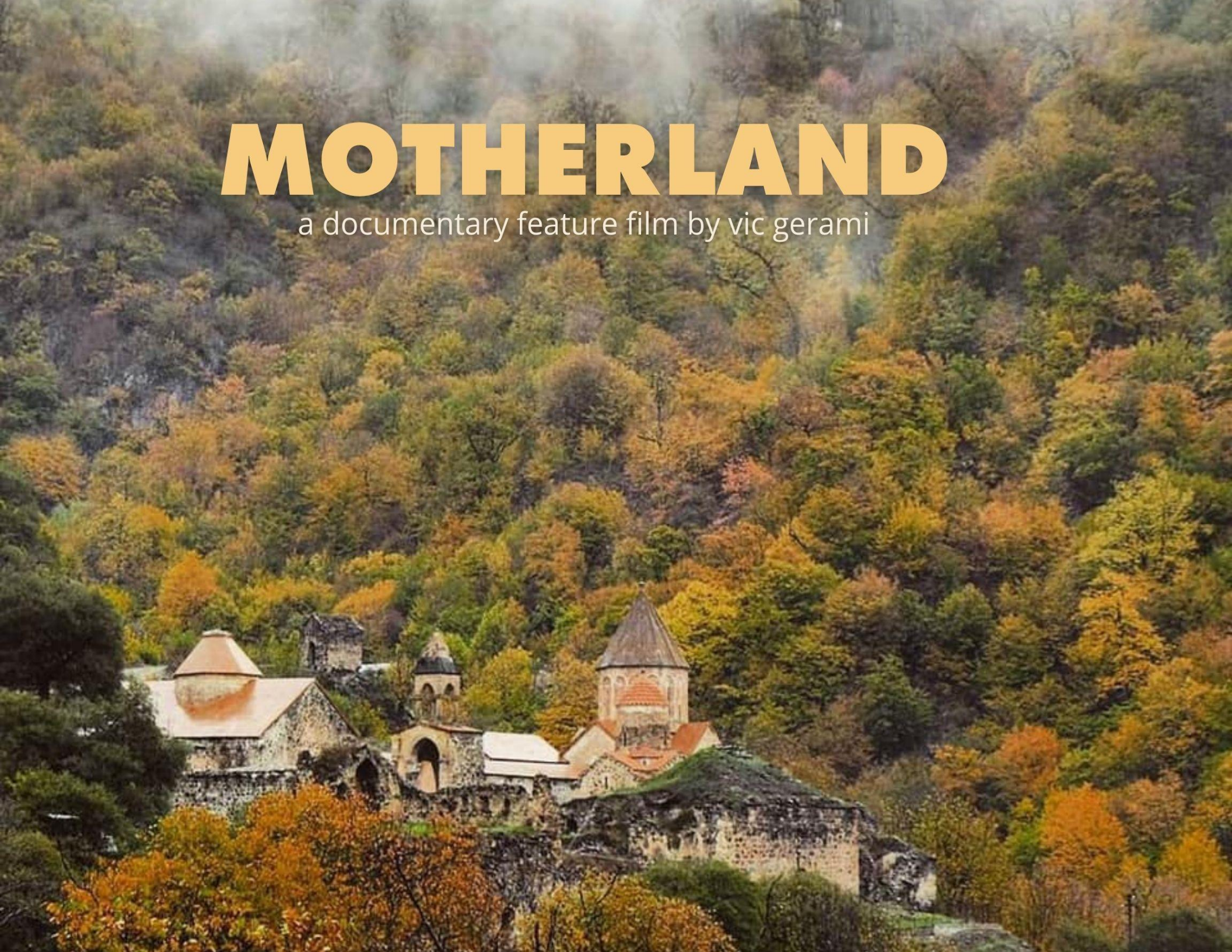


# MOTHERLAND

a documentary feature film by vic gerami

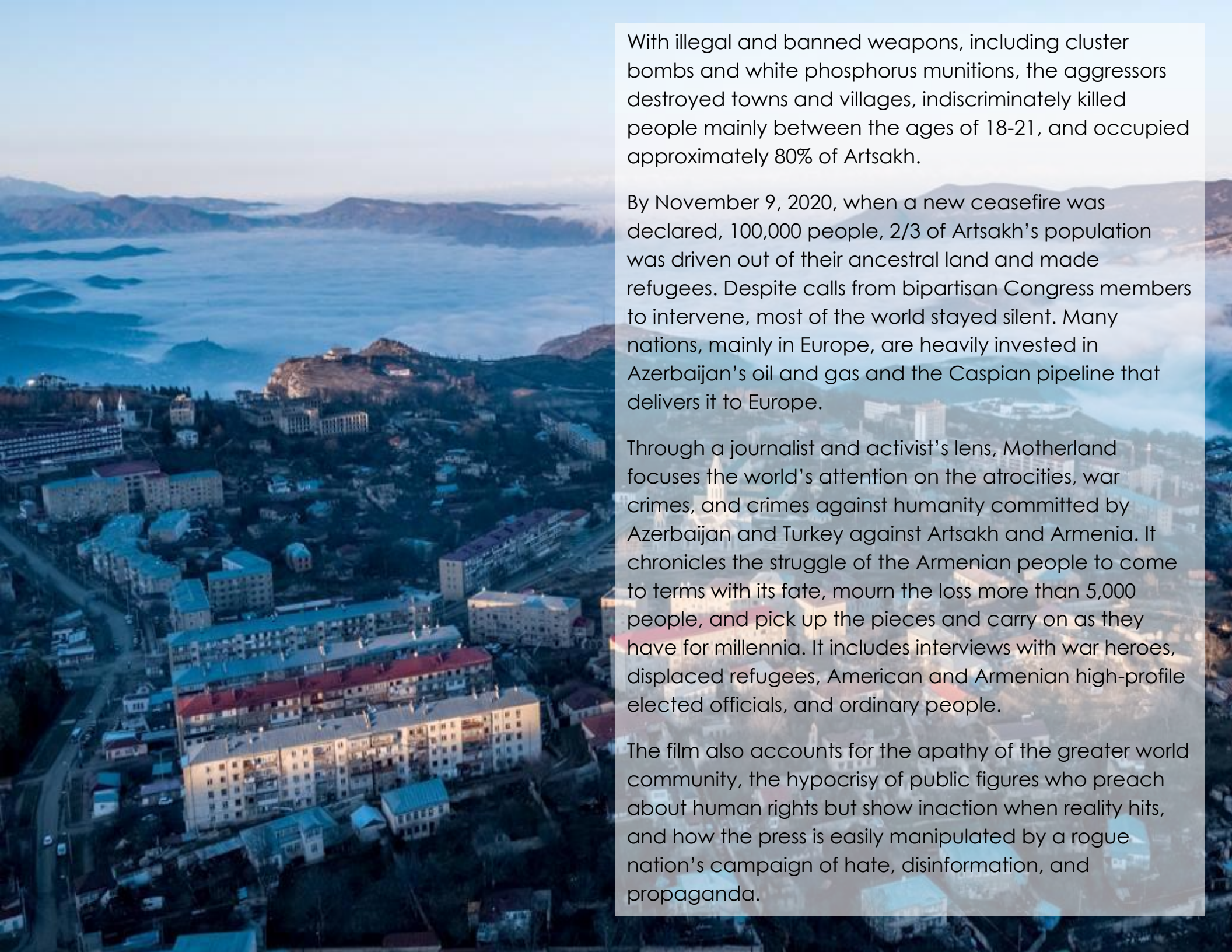


“We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented” **Elie Wiesel**

## SYNOPSIS

It took 106 years before the United States formally recognized the Armenian Genocide of 1915 at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. On April 24, 2021, President Joe Biden became the first US president to officially recognize the Armenian genocide and to recommit preventing such an atrocity from occurring again. Tragically, history is repeating itself with Turkey's ongoing genocidal attack and ethnic cleansing against Armenians as we've witnessed recently in Artsakh. "Motherland" tells the story of this ongoing tragic chapter through the lens of Armenian-American journalist and LGBTQ+ activist, Vic Gerami.

**MOTHERLAND** is a 120-minute documentary feature film about Azerbaijan's, Turkey's unprovoked genocidal attack and ethnic cleansing against Armenians of Artsakh, also known as Nagorno-Karabakh, starting on September 27, 2020. Azerbaijan with the declared assistance from Turkey reawakened the conflict from dormancy by launching a large-scale offensive against Artsakh. In its war effort, Azerbaijan relied on thousands of Turkish-paid jihadist mercenaries airlifted from terrorist camps in Syria, Libya, and Pakistan, and brought to fight alongside the Azerbaijani Army. The 2020 invasion opened a new chapter in the history of regional warfare and involved unmatched suffering of the civilian population. For 44 days, the world largely watched in deafening silence as over 5,000 Armenians were massacred.



With illegal and banned weapons, including cluster bombs and white phosphorus munitions, the aggressors destroyed towns and villages, indiscriminately killed people mainly between the ages of 18-21, and occupied approximately 80% of Artsakh.

By November 9, 2020, when a new ceasefire was declared, 100,000 people, 2/3 of Artsakh's population was driven out of their ancestral land and made refugees. Despite calls from bipartisan Congress members to intervene, most of the world stayed silent. Many nations, mainly in Europe, are heavily invested in Azerbaijan's oil and gas and the Caspian pipeline that delivers it to Europe.

Through a journalist and activist's lens, Motherland focuses the world's attention on the atrocities, war crimes, and crimes against humanity committed by Azerbaijan and Turkey against Artsakh and Armenia. It chronicles the struggle of the Armenian people to come to terms with its fate, mourn the loss more than 5,000 people, and pick up the pieces and carry on as they have for millennia. It includes interviews with war heroes, displaced refugees, American and Armenian high-profile elected officials, and ordinary people.

The film also accounts for the apathy of the greater world community, the hypocrisy of public figures who preach about human rights but show inaction when reality hits, and how the press is easily manipulated by a rogue nation's campaign of hate, disinformation, and propaganda.

## ABOUT ARTSAKH (NAGORNO-KARABAKH)

Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), is one of three ancient provinces of Armenia located in the eastern end of the Armenian Plateau and has been an integral part of historic Armenia, as far back as 9th century BCE.

In 1921, responding to economic blackmail from oil-producing Azerbaijan and threats from Turkey, Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin forcibly placed Artsakh under the Azerbaijani rule, as the world's only Christian territorial autonomy inside a largely Muslim nation.

For the next 70 years, Azerbaijan bombarded Artsakh with various forms of ethno-religious discrimination, economic mistreatment, and intentional demographic abuse, in an attempt to eliminate its Armenian Christian majority and replace it with Azerbaijani Muslim settlers.

After decades of intermittent protests, the dissolution of the Soviet Union finally allowed Artsakh to break away from Baku's rule, in 1988, and, in 1991, re-establish itself as a free and sovereign nation.



## IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT ARTSAKH

15 centuries of self-governance and factual sovereignty of Artsakh

### **Republic of Artsakh**

Republic of Artsakh, a de-facto independent state proclaimed originally under the name of Nagorno Karabakh Republic (NKR), three months before the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.

NKR's declaration of independence was underwritten by a referendum that adhered to the letter and spirit of the USSR's legislation on the secession of autonomous territories from union republics.

In the beginning of the 1920s, Russian Bolsheviks initially declared Artsakh as part of Armenia due to its overwhelmingly Armenian character. Later, however, the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin arbitrarily placed it under the tutelage of a newly-created and Muslim-controlled Soviet Socialist Republic that became known as “Azerbaijan” – a term unceremoniously borrowed from the neighboring province of Iran despite complaints from Tehran. The Armenian majority of the region (95% of the population) protested about this decision since it preferred to be part of Armenia instead. From 1923 to 1991, the region chugged along as one of the USSR’s autonomous territories – Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region (NKAR), giving birth to the journalistic cliché “Nagorno-Karabakh.”

### **Artsakh: struggle for freedom**

In 1988, a popular movement, initiated in NKAR and supported in Yerevan, renewed a campaign to petition Moscow to transfer NKAR from Azerbaijan to Armenia. Azerbaijan's responded to the peaceful rallies by resurrecting its tradition of anti-Armenian violence that goes back to the 1905 pogroms in Baku.

The Baku authorities tried to recapture Artsakh in a war that lasted from 1991 to 1994, but Artsakh, with the help of Armenia, suppressed Azerbaijan's campaign of ethnic cleansing, and the three parties to the conflict agreed to a ceasefire that lasted without peacekeepers for 26 years. During this time, Azerbaijan developed as a hereditary oil dictatorship ruled by the Aliyev family since the mid-1960s, whereas Artsakh evolved into a quasi-democracy that held competitive elections.

Although there is currently a fragile ceasefire in place, Azerbaijan continues its provocative attacks on Artsakh and Armenia. Despite condemnation from various nations and international organizations, Azerbaijan continues to hold 200+ Armenian prisoners of war (POW) captive, torturing, mutilating, and executing a few of them.

## ALLIES & PARTNERS INTERVIEWED WHO SUPPORT 'MOTHERLAND'

### Congressman Adam Schiff (D-CA)

Congressman Schiff introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives that would make it the policy of the United States to recognize the Armenian genocide, reject its denial, and educate the public on the genocide. The resolution passed in the House of Representatives on November 29, 2019, by a vote of 405 to 11.



### Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ)

December 2020 marked the one-year anniversary since the Senate passed Senator Menendez's Armenian Genocide Resolution Bill, which formally recognizes the Armenian Genocide on behalf of the U.S. government. the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Turks and honoring the memories of its 1,500,000 victims.

### Congressman Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ)

For more than 25 years, Congressman Frank Pallone Jr. has been an advocate for Armenians in the USA, other diaspora, Armenia, and Artsakh. U.S. House passed the Pallone Amendment in July 2021, cutting U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan.



### Baroness Caroline Anne Cox, British House of Lords

**Baroness Cox** is a cross-bench member of the British House of Lords. She is also the founder of Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART). Cox was created a Life Peer in 1982 and was a deputy speaker of the House of Lords from 1985 to 2005, as well as being a minister in the government. In 2013, Baroness Cox was awarded the first *Charles Aznavour Prize* for Outstanding Achievements in Fostering Europe-Armenian Friendship. She has been one of the most vocal supporters of the Armenians of Artsakh's right to self-determination.

### Mark Geragos

Mark Geragos is a high-profile attorney who was one of the lead lawyers in two groundbreaking federal class action lawsuits against New York Life Insurance and AXA, for insurance policies issued in the early 20th century during the time of the Armenian Genocide of more than 1.5 million Armenians. The two cases settled for over \$37.5 million, in 2004 and 2005.



### LA Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell

Councilmember O'Farrell secured a grant for *Motherland* from the City of Los Angeles. His district includes the cities of Hollywood, Los Feliz, Silver Lake, and surrounding neighborhoods. O'Farrell recently spearheaded the Little Armenia Gateway Project. Currently under construction, the Gateway will establish a meaningful and substantive Armenian American cultural place marker that will be unmistakable to anyone entering Hollywood's historically Armenian quarter.

**Senator Bob Menendez**

United States Senate (D-NJ)

**Rep. Adam Schiff**

United States Congressman (D-CA)

**Rep. Frank Pallone**

United States Congressman (D-NJ)

**Baroness Caroline Cox**

Crossbench Life Peer, British House of Lords

**Rep. Brad Sherman**

United States Congressman (D-CA)

**Dr. Irina Ghaplanyan**

Political Scientist

**Rep. Jackie Speier**

United States Congresswoman (D-CA)

**Alexander Lapshin**

Israeli-Russian Travel Blogger

**Mahammad Mirzali**

Azerbaijani Blogger + Activist

**Rep. Barbara Lee**

United States Congresswoman (D-CA)

**Rep. Katie Porter**

United States Congresswoman (D-CA)

**Edmon Marukyan**

Chairman, Bright Armenia Party

**Councilmember Paul Koretz**

City of Los Angeles

**Dr. Khatchig Mouradian**

Professor Columbia University

**Professor Barlow Der Mugerdechian**

Berberian Coordinator of Armenian Studies CSUF

**Nicholas Aznavour**

Co-Founder Aznavour Foundation

**Kristina Aznavour**

CE Aznavour Foundation

**Zareh Sinanyan**

High Commissioner of Diaspora Affairs, Republic of Armenia

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Vic Gerami is an award-winning journalist, columnist, media commentator, and the host of his prime-time program THE BLUNT POST with VIC (TBPV) on Independent + Progressive Radio KPFK 90.7 FM (Pacifica Network). Vic is also the editor + publisher of The Blunt Post.



TBPV covers national breaking and headline news, politics, and current events, and Gerami offers analysis and commentary. He also interviews a high-profile member of Congress on every show. A few of his recent guests include Congressman Adam Schiff, Senator Bob Menendez, Congresswoman Jackie Speier, Governor Howard Dean, Congresswoman Katie Porter, Congressman Brad Sherman, Congressman Mike Levin, Congresswomen Maxine Waters and Congresswoman Judy Chu, LA District Attorney George Gascon, among many others. You can listen to all the interviews here.

Today reaching national international audiences, Gerami first built a foundation of knowledge and skills by learning the media industry during his years at **Frontiers Magazine**, followed by positions at LA Weekly and **Voice Media Group**. Gerami is also a contributor for some of the most prominent publications in the nation, including Windy City Times, California Courier, IN Magazine, OUT Traveler, The Fight, and The Advocate Magazine, among others.



**The Wall Street Journal** featured Gerami as a "leading gay activist" in its landmark 2008 coverage of opposition to **Proposition 8**, the ballot measure that for years denied same-sex couples in California the freedom to marry. In addition to his years of volunteer work as a leading advocate for marriage equality, later Gerami went on to serve as a Planning Committee member for the historic Resist March in 2017.

In 2015, Gerami was referenced in the landmark Supreme Court civil rights case, Obergefell v. Hodges, in which the Court held in a 5–4 decision that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples by both the Due Process and the Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

## TEAM



**Mark Geragos**  
**Executive Producer**

Mark Geragos is famous around the world for prevailing in “un-winnable” cases. He represents countless clients whose household names and “A-list” celebrity status carry as much potential to convict as to exonerate. Geragos’s decades of experience standing up for the underdog make his role executive producing ‘Motherland’ familiar territory. Geragos was one of the lead lawyers in two groundbreaking federal class action lawsuits against New York Life Insurance Co. and AXA, for insurance policies issued in the early 20th century during the time of the Armenian Genocide, which saw the inhuman slaughter of more than 1.5 million Armenians. The two cases his firm argued settled for over \$37.5 million, in 2004 and 2005.



**Chris Damadyan**  
**Editor**

Born in Burbank, California, Chris Damadyan was raised in the heart of the film industry. Growing up in a studio where his father was an executive producer, Chris would often sit next to the editors for hours watching and learning how movies, music videos, and commercials came together. His passion for filmmaking was born at this young age, so going to film school after high school was easy. Today, Chris has edited numerous feature films starring Malin Akerman, Luke Goss, & Bokeem Woodbine, to name a few. In addition, he has also been involved in the post-production of over a hundred music videos and commercials.



**Henrick Vartanian**  
**Producer**

Henrick Vartanian is a prolific producer with a comprehensive film, TV, and journalism background. He has produced numerous projects and multimedia assets for top international clients and interviewed countless Hollywood A-listers. Henrick’s work has aired on Reuters News Television (USA), Canal+ (France), Channel 4, ITV, and BBC (United Kingdom), ORF (Austria), and TNTV (Tahiti). He is the founder of Brave New Hollywood, an entertainment website and YouTube channel that focuses on indie films, rising stars, and emerging filmmakers.

## CONTACT

Vic Gerami

310.880.8563

[vic@thebluntpost.com](mailto:vic@thebluntpost.com)

[TheBluntPost.com](http://TheBluntPost.com)

[facebook.com/vic.gerami](https://facebook.com/vic.gerami)

Instagram: [@vicgerami](https://instagram.com/@vicgerami)

Twitter: [@vicgerami](https://twitter.com/@vicgerami)

[Official Trailer](#)

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[MotherlandDoc.com](http://MotherlandDoc.com)

“In the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends”

**Martin Luther King**

