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NEWS IN BRIEF

Armenians Hold Aurora Dialogues in Berlin

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN – It was a refreshing change to see such an initiative in the German capital. As Aurora Humanitarian Initiative co-founder Ruben Vardanyan remarked, participants “were happy to see the representatives of a developing country thinking about universal humanitarian values and expressing concern about dangerous processes unfolding today around the world.” The developing country in question is the Republic of Armenia.

What most Germans know about Armenians has to do with the 1915 Genocide and the ongoing campaign to have Turkey recognize it. But this time, the focus was not Armenia or the past; it was a current and pressing issue facing the entire world: the challenges of global migration and how to meet them.

The Aurora Dialogues, which took place December 4-5 in Berlin, were titled, “Millions on the Move: Need for Development and Integration.” Experts and see AURORA, page 5



The Aurora Dialogues were attended by a high-ranking audience. Joining former President of the Bundestag Norbert Lammert as speakers and debaters were the former Chair of the Council of the German Protestant Church, Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Huber, former president of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, UNICEF’s regional director for Middle East and North Africa, Geert Cappelaere, the German Chancellor’s Personal Representative for Africa, Günter Nooke, the Head of the Robert Bosch Stiftung, Christof Bosh and Nobel Prize laureate Laymah Gbowee, alongside many more speakers and participants.

Paylan Says Erdogan Recognized Jerusalem As Israeli Capital

ISTANBUL (news.am) – Garo Paylan, a member of the Turkish Parliament representing Istanbul as a member of the opposition pro-Kurdish People’s Democratic Party (HDP), reflected on the Turkish response to President Donald Trump’s recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

“The AKP [the ruling Justice and Development Party of Turkey] has signed under the agreement that recognizes Jerusalem as the capital [city of Israel before Trump!]” he wrote on his Twitter account. “They are attempting to change the corruption agenda with cheap valor.”

Paylan pointed to the agreement between the AKP and the Israeli authorities regarding the Mavi Marmara operation, and where it is noted that this document is signed between Ankara and Jerusalem.

In June 2016, this agreement was signed in order to normalize Turkey-Israel relations that had been strained due to the military operation by Israel against six civilian ships, including the Turkish ship MV Mavi Marmara.

Trump last week stated he recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and said the US Department of State has been ordered to start transferring the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Armenian Christmas Services at St. Vartan Cathedral

NEW YORK – The Nativity and Baptism of Jesus Christ will be observed at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral on Friday and Saturday, January 5 and 6, 2018. On Armenian Christmas Eve, Friday, January 5, there will be an Evening Service at 6:30 p.m., featuring Scripture Readings by students of the St. Vartan Armenian School and St. Gregory Mission Parish of Brooklyn. The Divine Liturgy will immediately follow, beginning at 7 p.m., celebrated by the Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan.

The St. Vartan Cathedral Choir will sing the Divine Liturgy, under the direction of Khoren Mekanejian. A reception will take place following the services.

On Armenian Christmas, Saturday, January 6, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), will celebrate the Divine Liturgy. The Morning Service begins at 9:30 a.m., and the Divine Liturgy follows at 10:30 a.m.

In Armenian tradition, this feast day commemorates not only the birth of Christ, but also his baptism by John the Baptist. The latter is remembered through the “Blessing of Water” ceremony. Hratch Kaprielian will serve as “godfather.”

A home blessing service and reception will take place after the January 6 services.



Elie Berberian: A Singer Reignites Passion For Armenian Pop

By Taleen Babayan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK – Singer Elie Berberian, one of the freshest voices of the new generation, is taking the Armenian Diaspora by storm. A classically-trained opera singer, Berberian, 35, was born in Batroun, Lebanon and discovered his passion for music at a young age.

Following his classical training at Montreal’s McGill University, he began see BERBERIAN, page 16

Armenian Parliament Passes Bill Against Domestic Violence

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Following a heated debate, the Armenian parliament passed on Friday, December 8, a government bill which is meant to combat domestic violence in the country.

The government pushed the bill through the National Assembly despite continuing resistance from some deputies representing the ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK). But it won over other, more senior HHK figures who openly criticized the initial version of the legislation circulated in September.

The latter joined conservative fringe groups in claiming that some of the proposed legal provisions would undermine traditional “Armenian family values.” The Armenian Justice Ministry responded by amending the bill drafted by it. In particular, the ministry expanded the title of the bill to emphasize that it is aimed at not only preventing domestic violence and protecting its victims but also “restoring solidarity within families.”

Women’s groups have criticized this phrase, saying that “solidarity” is not a legal term and could be open to different interpretations by relevant authorities.

The final version of the bill retained other significant provisions. The Armenian police will now be required to stop violence within families threatening the lives or health of their members. What is more, the police could force a violent husband to leave his victim’s home and stay away from it for up to 20 days. Armenian courts will be allowed to extend such bans to between 6 and 18 months.

The law stipulates that domestic violence can be not only physical but also sexual, psychological and even economic. It makes clear that a “substantiated presumption” of such instances of violence will be sufficient grounds for police intervention. Deputy Justice Minister Vigen Kocharian stressed that this would be done by a special police unit trained to deal with such cases.

TCA Celebrates 70 Years With Evening of Music

TENAFLY, N.J. – The Tekeyan Cultural Association’s Mher Megerdichian Theater Group held its annual holiday gala, featuring

efits the theater group’s productions throughout the year.

“Elie Berberian proved himself to be one of the best singers in the Diaspora,” said Harout Chatmajian, director and chairman of the Mher Megerdichian Theater Group. “He has a big repertoire and created a very good atmosphere by putting his all into his performances.” (See related story above.)

The group’s accomplishments over the past year included a well-received performance of the Genocide-themed “All Rise” (Tadaran Vodkee) for the Detroit Armenian community. A nationalistic play that can be performed for all Diasporan communities, the theater group plans to continue staging “All Rise” around the world.



From left: Linda Tarzian, Arlene Jessourian, Hilda Hartounian, Nadya Boyadjian. Back (l-r) Nairi Hartounian and Nanor Hartounian

singer Elie Berberian, on Saturday, December 9, at St. Thomas Armenian Church.

The group welcomed more than 250 people to the concert and fundraiser that ben-

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Ramkavar Azatakan Party Decries Decision To Recognize Jerusalem

YEREVAN (ArmInfo) – The statement of the US president recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, as expected, caused a new escalation in the Middle East, which has been shaken the wars in recent decades.

The Ramkavar Azatakan party released a statement in which it says that President Donald Trump's statement threatens the region with new bloodshed.

"In our opinion, this decision also threatens Armenian Jerusalem, our already shattered community, and especially the Armenian Patriarchate. Trump's decision and the order of the Israeli government can break the fragile balance that exists in the interconfessional and interethnic coexistence of Ancient Jerusalem. We find it important to consider the position of the Armenian Jerusalem, it is necessary to consistently strengthen its protection. Considering the above circumstances, the Central Committee of the Ramkavar Azatakan proposes to create in Yerevan a state and religious central headquarters with the participation of representatives of the state and the church, which will coordinate all internal and external work of Armenian Jerusalem and the Armenian Patriarchate."

Armenia to Boost Religious Tourism

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenia aims to have a firm place in the religious tourism world market. The steps on this path have intensified in the recent period. Mekhak Apresyan, First Vice President of the State Tourism Committee, said in an interview. He noted that Pope Francis' 2016 visit to Armenia greatly contributed to this process.

"Of course, before the Pope's visit Armenia was taking steps on this path. Previously we also had discussions with the concerned sides, including with the participation of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Pope Francis' visit was already an additional impetus, and his message 'Pilgrimage to the first Christian country' was a guidance," Apresyan said.

Apresyan noted that here there is a great potential, as Armenia has a rich historical and cultural heritage. Thus, it is necessary to develop concrete tourism destinations, select the churches and monasteries to include in them. According to Apresyan, these tour packages should not include just visits to churches and monasteries but be accompanied by different events.

ECHR Judgement Asks Azerbaijan to Pay Compensation

STRASBOURG (news.am) – The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has released the judgment of the Sargsyan vs. Azerbaijan case on December 12.

The ECHR ruled that Azerbaijan must pay 5,000 euros in damages, as well as 30,000 for costs and expenses to Vladimir Sargsyan and Tsovinar Sargsyan within three months. They are also responsible for additional taxes.

Sargsyan filed a lawsuit at the ECHR in 2006 for getting forced out of his residence in the Shahumyan region in 1992 and the subsequent destruction of his home, the destruction of several Armenian cemeteries in Azerbaijan, the forced deportations of Armenians from their homes, discriminations based on national and religious backgrounds, and facts of violence against Armenians, and the inaction of the government.

Also, in the case of Chiragov and Others v. Armenia, the court ruled that the Armenian government has to pay 35,000 euros to each applicant. The case concerned the complaints by six Azerbaijani refugees that they were unable to return to their homes and property in the district of Lachin, in Azerbaijan, from where they had been forced to flee in 1992 during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

In conclusion, the court underlined the responsibility of Armenia and Azerbaijan concerned to find a resolution to the Karabakh conflict.

Armenian, Azeri FMs Hold 'Positive' Talks on Karabakh

VIENNA (RFE/RL) – The foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan held late on Wednesday, December 6, what they both described as "positive" negotiations on the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Edward Nalbandian and Elmar Mammadyarov met in Vienna in a bid to build on progress that was reportedly made at a recent Armenian-Azerbaijani summit. The meeting apparently lasted for several hours.

According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, the two men began the talks in the presence of the US, Russian and French mediators and then spoke in a smaller format. A ministry statement said they discussed ways of implementing agreements reached by the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents at their last three meetings.

"Yesterday's meeting with my Azerbaijani counterpart took place in a generally positive mood," Nalbandian said on Thursday at an annual session of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Ministerial Council, also held in the Austrian capital. "Let's see what developments will follow it."

An Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry spokesman said, for his part, that Mammadyarov and Nalbandian engaged in "intensive and concrete discussions on existing proposals" to resolve the Karabakh conflict. "Elmar Mammadyarov said that the meeting was positive and constructive," the official, Hikmet Hajiyev, was quoted by Azerbaijani news agencies as saying.

Hajiyev also said that Mammadyarov and Nalbandian agreed to meet again "in the second half of January 2018." The Armenian Foreign Ministry likewise reported that their next talks will take place early next year.

Presidents Serzh Sargsyan and Ilham Aliyev most recently met in Geneva on October 16. They pledged to intensify the Karabakh peace process and bolster the ceasefire regime in the conflict zone.

The US, Russian and French diplomats co-chairing the OSCE Minsk Group held separate follow-up talks with Mammadyarov and Nalbandian in

Moscow on November 16. In a joint statement, they said they discussed "concrete steps to implement the agreements reached" at the Geneva summit. They added that the chief Armenian

posed settlement is largely acceptable to Yerevan when he addressed the OSCE meeting in Vienna on Thursday. "We are convinced that there is no alternative to peace talks and that it is



Russia – Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian (L) and his counterpart from Azerbaijan Elmar Mammadyarov sit together at a session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in Moscow, April 8, 2016

and Azerbaijani diplomats will meet in early December to look into "substantive issues of the political settlement as well as specific measures to reduce tensions on the Line of Contact" around Karabakh.

In what appeared to be a related development, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Baku and Yerevan later in November. Speaking in the Armenian capital, Lavrov sounded encouraged by Aliyev's and Sargsyan's "positive mood." But he also cautioned against excessive optimism about a Karabakh settlement, saying that the long-running Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations "will not end quickly."

Lavrov said in March that the conflicting sides are still far apart on "two or three" elements of a framework peace accord that has been advanced by the mediating powers for the past decade. Still, he said they broadly agree on the peace formula envisaging Armenian withdrawal from "districts around Karabakh" and a decision on Karabakh's status which would "take into account the opinion of the people living there."

Aliyev and Sargsyan came close to cutting a peace deal along these lines at a 2011 summit in Kazan, Russia.

Nalbandian reiterated that the pro-

necessary to conduct intensive negotiations based on the proposals of the co-chair countries," he said.

Nalbandian claimed that Baku "rejects those proposals" in line with its "intransigent and maximalist position."

The mediators have specifically advocated a future referendum in which Karabakh's predominantly ethnic Armenian population would determine the disputed territory's internationally recognized status. Yerevan and Baku are thought to have disagreed, at least until now, on practical modalities of such a vote as well as a timetable for the liberation of formerly Azerbaijani-populated districts around Karabakh.

Sarkisian said in late October that a peaceful resolution of the Karabakh dispute could only be "painful" to both sides. The remark prompted concern from some of his hardline critics opposed to territorial concessions to Azerbaijan.

The Armenian leader, whose final presidential term ends in April 2018, has repeatedly ruled out any settlement that would restore Azerbaijani control over Karabakh itself. By contrast, Aliyev has stated that Baku will never recognize the territory's de facto secession from Azerbaijan.

Armenian Parliament Passes Bill Against Domestic Violence

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Hayk Babukhanian, a controversial lawmaker from the ruling HHK, attacked this provision during Thursday's parliament debate on the bill. "Can you imagine what it could lead to?" he said, warning of police mistakes.

Gevorg Petrosian of the Tsarukian Bloc, the second largest parliamentary force, echoed this concern. Petrosian claimed that the law would revive what he called a Soviet-era practice of police prosecuting men at the best of their "malicious, freedom-loving wives." "I regard it as a law on destroying peace and harmony in families," he said.

Babukhanian, who publishes a newspaper known for its anti-Western commentaries, also denounced another

clause that provides for non-governmental organizations' involvement in the protection of domestic violence victims.

Samvel Farmanian, a more mainstream HHK parliamentarian, also spoke out against the bill. "Unfortunately, this law will not help to reduce cases of violence in families. It may actually have opposite effects," he claimed.

Nevertheless, the HHK-controlled National Assembly backed the landmark law by 73 votes to 12, with 6 abstentions. All of those 12 deputies represent the Tsarukian Bloc, which claims to be in opposition to the government.

None of the HHK deputies voted against the bill. Babukhanian and several other Republicans chose to boycott the vote instead.

Gagik Melikian, the number two figure in the ruling party's parliamentary faction, defended the legislation, saying that it poses no threat to "traditional families."

Deputies from the opposition Yelk bloc also voted for the measure. One of them, Mane Tandilian insisted later on Thursday that domestic violence is a more serious problem in Armenia than it may seem.

"People don't talk about it because it happens in their families," Tandilian said. "And for us, the family is taboo, a sacred environment about which we don't like saying negative things in public."

The female lawmaker also said that the new powers given to the police will discourage violent conduct.

A senior representative of the Armenian police advocated the passage of the bill when she spoke at parliamentary hearings in October. The police recorded 3,571 cases of domestic violence from 2012-2016.

According to the Yerevan-based Women's Resource Center, more than 50 Armenian women have been beaten to death and murdered otherwise by their husbands or other relatives in the last five years.



ARMENIA

Luys Foundation Changes Rules To Reach More Scholars

By Lilit Petrosyan

YEREVAN – Luys Foundation started operating in 2009 when there were only a few organizations working towards knowledge and educational excellence in Armenia. It was also a period when the country was transitioning from an industrial economy into a knowledge-based economy, and Luys Foundation was among the first to start building the talent and the workforce that Armenia was going to need very soon.

“If nowadays the fuel of the economy is knowledge and not petrol, it does not matter how big or how small the country is. It is more important what kind of creative force it has and how apt it is to embrace the knowledge economy,” says Jacqueline Karaaslanian, the executive director of Luys Foundation.

“When Luys was created, one of the goals of the founders was to make our youth dream big peacefully, pushing them to believe that the world is theirs, and that they can dream as high as they want, with no hindrance,” said Karaaslanian. And the message is still there; throughout the eight years of its operation, the vision of Luys remains making Armenia competitive with developed countries in the field of knowledge economy.

When Luys started operating, Armenia was just coming out of a series of crises, and the youth in Armenia was in a reactive mode to external, overwhelming events. They didn’t have the luxury to be young, to be ambitious and to think about the future. Luys Foundation motivated the youth to aim high. Today there are 32 companies that Luys scholars have created, many of them through the Luys Start Armenia Fund.

Furthermore, a number of tax reforms by the government and simplification of regulations for new business owners has made Armenia as a very fertile environment for investments.

Luys Foundation, as one of the main producers of the smart pool of talents, continuously studies the advancement and changes in both the local and global markets to update and align its regulations accordingly in order to support the knowledge-based economy in Armenia. Today the Education Council of Luys Foundation responds to the growing demand for a skilled workforce in Armenia by recommending a new set of regulations for obtaining Luys Scholarships.

The new regulations for Luys Scholarships are driven from the statistical data of what talent Luys has been producing and what impact that talent has had on boosting the local economy.

According to the new regulations, scholarship applicants from the Republic of Armenia will get 50-percent coverage for all the expenses provided that they return and work in Armenia for three years after completion of their studies abroad.

Diasporan Armenians will receive a 25-percent support for all the expenses with the only condition of being in Armenia every summer during their education and working here within the annual “Develop Armenia Together” project. However, if diasporan Armenians choose to share the same obligations as Luys students from the Armenia, they will also get 50 percent of their tuitions covered.

“We understand that you cannot demand that diasporan students to come and settle in Armenia when the rest of their family lives in another part of the world. However, we give everyone the chance of benefiting from the same conditions provided that they take on the same amount of responsibilities,” Karaaslanian said.

Moreover, there is an extra 25-percent coverage of expenses if the Luys scholar chooses to become a civil servant in one of the ministries of the government. “In the past, Luys Foundation didn’t have any obligation for the students to come back and work in Armenia for 2-3 years upon completion of their studies because Armenia’s job market and the business environment were not ready to welcome their new knowledge. This is no longer the reality,” explained Karaaslanian.

Additionally, the number of spots allocated for the students from Armenia and the diasporan has undergone some changes, as well. Now, out of 10 scholarships that Luys Foundation gives for each of the 10 universities, seven spots will be covered by students from Armenia and three spots will be allocated to Diasporan Armenians.

Karaaslanian hopes that these new regulations would be perceived as strategic alignment among different groups of Armenians. “At Luys, we love and cherish the plurality of cultures. What is overwhelmingly present within Luys scholars is the sense of belonging to one Armenian group where all share the same values and dream for a better future. And the better future is thinking of Armenia not isolated but in total synchronicity with the world. I hope that by reading our new regulations, which were created to meet the needs of the country, the perspective students will see that everybody can have the same benefits if they take the same load of responsibility.”

Researched and Developed in Armenia

Luys Foundation has an alumnus working in every major organization in Armenia, such as Ayb, Tumo, IDEa Foundation, FAST Foundation and ONE Armenia.

The Luys alumni living abroad are also active and continually remains connected to the homeland with a lot of them creating their own companies in Armenia and still considering the world, and not just Armenia, to be their market.

“The reason I love Luys so much is that we look at the Armenian nation as a whole, and not just the Republic of Armenia. And, also, it is the first time there is a program that was created in Armenia that serves the diaspora as well. Traditionally it has been vice-versa,” said Karaaslanian.

“While we say made in China or serviced in India, we can start saying researched and developed in Armenia. Some of the small companies in biotech are already opening this path. We could have everything researched further and developed here in Armenia and then distributed to the world, fabricated elsewhere and serviced somewhere else. We have the resources to do the thinking and the development here where it needs a small group of people who are highly talented and educated,” she said.



Jacqueline Karaaslanian

Deal with EU To Strengthen Armenia, Says French Envoy

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenia’s policy of seeking a “privileged” relationship with the European Union (EU) while remaining part of a Russian-led bloc will strengthen its positions in the region and make it more attractive to investors, France’s ambassador in Yerevan said on Tuesday, December 12.

Jonathan Lacote referred to the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the EU and Armenia that was signed in Brussels on November 24.

“The key thing about this agreement is that while being a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) Armenia can also have privileged relations with the EU,” he told a news conference.

“I think that thanks to this agreement Armenia can become a very important actor in the region,” said Lacote. “This is what I realized especially after meeting with French businesspeople in Armenia. Things will get easier for them because Armenia will move closer to European norms with [CEPA-related] reforms initiated by it.”

French companies doing business in Armenia, the diplomat went on, are first and foremost interested in tariff-free access to markets in Russia and other ex-Soviet states making up the EEU. “And if Armenia can offer a secure business environment it will certainly take on the role of a bridge,” he said. “In our view, membership in the two systems strengthens Armenia.”

The French investors include the liquor giant Pernod Ricard, which bought Armenia’s largest brandy company about two decades ago. More than 80 percent of its Armenian subsidiary’s output is exported to Russia.

The CEPA does not provide for a free-trade regime between the EU and Armenia in view of the latter’s membership in the Russian-led trade bloc. Instead, it says, the two sides will seek to ease non-tariff barriers to mutual commerce such as technical regulations and licensing and labelling requirements.

Citing “common values” shared by the two sides, the 350-page accord commits the Armenian government to implementing political reforms and “approximating” national economic laws and regulations to those of the EU. Yerevan will regularly report to Brussels on “the progress made with regard to approximation” specified by several annexes to the agreement. This “regulatory harmonization” will cover business regulation, agriculture, transport, environment, consumer protection and even energy.

Lacote stressed the significance of Yerevan’s reform commitments undertaken as part of the CEPA.

Composer Mansurian Named ‘Commonwealth Star’ Prize laureate

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenian composer Tigran Mansurian became the laureate of “The Commonwealth Star” among the cultural, scientific and educational figures of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), RIA Novosti reported.

The awards ceremony was held in Moscow on December 11 during the Forum of Creative and Scientific Intellectuals of the CIS participating states. “The Commonwealth Star” Prize has been awarded since 2009 for significant achievements in the arts, science and education. It was founded by the CIS Humanitarian Cooperation Council and the CIS Intergovernmental Foundation for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation (IFESCO).

IMF Still Sees Lack of Competition in Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenia’s economy is continuing to suffer from a lack of competition, a senior official from the International Monetary Fund said on Tuesday, December 12.

“Our assessment is that competition in the domestic market is indeed limited and there is a lot of room for improvement,” Yulia Ustyugova, the head of the IMF office in Yerevan, told RFE/RL’s Armenian service (Azatutyun.am) in an interview.

“We have been raising this question and having very candid discussions with the authorities,” she said. “According to our assessment, it does impede growth.”

Ustyugova said the government should ensure that companies dominating various types of business do not abuse their positions. It is also essential to improve the investment climate so that new firms can enter those sectors, she added.

“We are convinced that the business environment in Armenia is improving,” Prime Minister

Karen Karapetian declared a month ago. “But we also acknowledge that we have weak spots which we must definitely work on.”

Speaking in the parliament last week, Karapetian insisted that his government is liberalizing lucrative sectors of the Armenian economy that have long been dominated by a handful of wealthy entrepreneurs. But he said more time is needed to complete that process.

Ustyugova pointed out that the government’s five-year policy program approved by the Armenian parliament in June contains major anti-trust measures. “But the question is implementation,” she stressed.

A World Bank survey released in 2013 said that “oligopolies” control 68 percent of economic activity in Armenia, making it the most monopolized economy in the former Soviet Union. The lack of competition has been particularly acute in lucrative imports of fuel and basic foodstuffs such as wheat, sugar and cooking oil. Economists have long said that de facto

monopolies hamper the country’s sustainable economic development.

Echoing government forecasts, Ustyugova said the Armenian economy may grow by more than 4 percent this year after practically stagnating in 2016. But she cautioned that that will not be enough to significantly reduce very high unemployment which official statistics put at about 20 percent. The government should focus on more job creation, including by “retraining those who need jobs,” added the IMF official.

Visiting Yerevan in April, the head of an IMF mission, Hossein Samiei, said the current Armenian government is committed to implementing major reforms needed for speeding up economic growth and reducing poverty. “I’m not saying everything is perfect,” he told reporters. “But hopefully things are moving in the right direction.”

Karapetian has repeatedly pledged to create “equal conditions” for all business since he was named prime minister in September 2016.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Five Dink Plot Suspects Released

ISTANBUL (Anadolu) – An Istanbul court on December 8 ordered the release on probation of five suspects implicated in the murder of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink in 2007, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported.

During the 15th hearing of the case, in which a total of 85 defendants are being tried, the Istanbul 14th High Criminal Court ordered the release of Bekir Yokus, Ecevit Emir, Emre Cingöz, Hacı Serif Simsek and Seref Ates, all of whom were serving as intelligence officers in the Istanbul Gendarmerie at the time of Dink's murder.

The court ordered their release predominantly on the strength of an October 10 report released by the Forensic Institute, which stated that their DNA was not present at the Sisli murder scene, though time already served in prison was another factor.

The ruling imposed a travel ban on the five and ordered the continued arrest of 11 other defendants in line with the current status of the evidence.

Separately, the court also accepted a request by the Dink family lawyer to investigate whether the journalist's phone had been previously tapped.

The court adjourned the next hearing to January 29, with the case set to continue on January 30, February 1 and February 2, 2018.

Dink, 52, was shot dead with two bullets to the head in broad daylight outside the offices of Agos in central Istanbul.

Samast, then a 17-year-old unemployed high-school dropout, confessed to the murder and was sentenced to almost 23 years in jail in 2011.

Italian Firm to Build New Road in Yerevan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – An Italian company has won a \$33-million contract to build a section of a new highway that will bypass central Yerevan and connect two major highways leading to the Armenian capital.

The highway is constructed as part of a loan agreement signed by the Armenian government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The first 5-kilometer stretch of the road was inaugurated a year ago.

The government went on to call an international tender for its second section that will be about 10 kilometers long. The Italian construction firm, Tirrena Scavi, was declared the winner of the contest last week at a meeting of Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan and officials responsible for the project.

A government statement cited one of those officials as saying that Tirrena Scavi was one of five bidders in the tender which she said was said held "in conformity with Asian Development Bank procedures." The Italians offered to build the road for almost \$33 million, said the statement.

Yerevan Mayor Taron Markarian and a senior Tirrena executive, Giacomo Lombardi, signed a construction contract on Monday. Lombardi was reported to say at the signing ceremony that the quality of the highway section "will satisfy everyone."

Under the contract, work on the four-lane road will start early next year and take two years.

Putin Orders Withdrawal Of Russian Troops from Syria

MOSCOW (Public Radio of Armenia) – President Vladimir Putin has ordered the partial withdrawal of Russian troops from Syria, during an unannounced visit there on Monday, December 11.

He had already declared in March 2016 that he was planning to pull out the majority of Russian troops.

"I order the defense minister and the chief of general staff to start withdrawing the Russian group of troops to their permanent bases," Putin said, according to Sputnik news agency.

"I have taken a decision: a significant part of the Russian troop contingent located in Syria is returning home to Russia," he added.

Putin made this statement while speaking before Russian servicemen at the Hmeymim airbase in Syria.

Putin was met by Syrian President Bashar Assad as he arrived at the airbase.



French President Emmanuel Macron speaks.

Dink Foundation Receives Chirac Prize

PARIS – Emmanuel Macron Addresses Raket Dink in his speech on Chirac Prize Ceremony

The Hrant Dink Foundation has been awarded the Chirac Prize For Conflict Prevention by the Chirac Foundation. On behalf of the Hrant Dink Foundation, the president of the foundation, Raket Dink, received the prize from the President of French Republic

of the French Republic, Jacques Chirac, with the mission to support efforts for prevention of conflicts, dialogue between cultures and increasing quality of access to health services."

During the prize ceremony, which was attended by the jury members and selection committee as well as the international media and leading opinion makers that pursue rights-

human rights. The racist mentality that made him a target, an enemy and that killed him, is not only trying to get its share of power in Turkey today, but this mentality is rising in the world too, creating new "others" and enemies," putting up new walls. This world has seen so much pain, isn't it enough now? So much blood and tears have been shed, isn't it enough? Instead of propagating pain and suffering, shouldn't we try to find ways to heal the existing pain? The goal of the states should not be to kill, but to keep alive! For God "has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and self-control" [Bible, 2. Timothy 1:7]

"As an Armenian who knows what it means to be displaced, it gives me great pain to see millions of refugees being uprooted and dispersed in the world today. And watching the response of the states to this situation is particularly striking... Unfortunately hate speech is rising all around the world and pushing people into further withdrawing into their own religious or ethnic communities.

"But hate speech is not the only thing on the rise. The voices of human rights defenders are also rising. The goal of our Foundation is to fight against discrimination, starting from our own home Turkey, create a language of dialogue and peace, bring different identities closer, protect cultural heritage, improve Turkey-EU relations, open borders in an era when walls are being erected, contribute to the development of Turkey-Armenia relations and most important of all, to overcome the borders in people's minds. To achieve all these, in Turkey we are working together as Armenians, Turks, Kurds, Muslims and Christians. It makes us proud to be part of the huge family striving for the same ideals and fighting for human rights in the world."



Raket Dink at the awards ceremony

Emmanuel Macron last month.

In his speech, Macron said, "On the ninth year of the prize, the awardees were announced following the meeting of the Chirac Foundation's Jury on September 27. The Chirac Foundation also presented its Culture for Peace Prize to Zoukak theater company, which has been contributing, through theater, to the rehabilitation efforts of refugees living in Lebanon camps.

"The Chirac Foundation was established in 2008 by the former President

based advocacy, President of Hrant Dink Foundation, Raket Dink, received the prize from the President of French Republic Emmanuel Macron.

In her speech, Raket Dink thanked Macron and the Chirac family. She also noted, "When we decided to establish this foundation with our friends after the tragedy that our family suffered in 2007, we had just one intention: to continue Hrant's efforts with this institution, and try to fill the huge emptiness created in our lives with his struggle for

Turkey MP Paylan Speaks about Patriarchal Election in Parliament

ISTANBUL (Armenpress) – The Armenian community of Turkey is awaiting a response from the interior ministry for a long time regarding the organizational issue of the election of the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul. The ministry hasn't yet responded to the request of the patriarchate, which was presented through the Istanbul Governor's Office.

Paylan, the ethnic Armenian MP, has raised the issue in the parliament, by addressing a written appeal to the interior minister, Agos reports.

Paylan stressed that according to media reports, the

Istanbul Governor has said that Turkey does not recognize Bishop Karekin Bekchian as locum tenens and wants a new election between the other two bishops.

"Interference of this kind by the state into the patriarchal election and protracting the process for this long has become a reason of concern in the community," Paylan said. He demanded a response from the minister on the basis for interference, and whether or not there really is interference, as stated by the governor. In addition, he seeks to clarify the reason for delaying the process for so long.



INTERNATIONAL

Armenians Hold Aurora Dialogues in Berlin

AURORA, from page 1

humanitarian aid organizations shared their experiences and knowledge about global migration with representatives from the political world, business community and civil society. The aim was to develop ideas on how Germany and the European Union might find solutions to deal with the migration and refugee crises.

The choice of Berlin as a venue for this meeting, organized by the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative together with the Global Perspectives Initiative and Robert Bosch Stiftung, with the help of Stiftung Mercator, was not by chance. Considering that Germany has welcomed the lion's share of refugees over the past several years – one million came in 2015 – and that Europe is the main destination sought by the current generation of refugees, Berlin was the right place.

Staggering Statistics, Lamentable Misconceptions

The sheer dimensions of the problem are mind-boggling. As the conference documented, there are an estimated 65 million people who have left their homes and 700 million worldwide who would do so if they could. In addition, there are groups of people who do not even appear in such statistics, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), who have been uprooted from their homes by war or other disasters but are still in their native lands. Then there are about 200 million people who could be displaced by the effects of climate change by 2050.

Before addressing the needs of these desperate populations, one needs to have a clear picture of the phenomenon. “To talk about migration often means to talk about misconceptions,” said Norbert Lammert, former president of the German Bundestag, in his speech. That misconceptions prevail in the public perception of migration is demonstrated by the results of the Aurora Humanitarian Index 2017, a survey of attitudes and trends related to humanitarian matters. The results of the survey, which was conducted worldwide with 6,500 participants from 12 countries, indicated that most people think their own countries have done more for refugees than they actually have. In addition, persons surveyed displayed widespread skepti-

cism regarding the ability of individuals or collective agencies to make a significant difference. Only nine percent of those asked said they thought that their actions could make a difference when it comes to finding a solution to the global refugee crisis. More optimism was displayed by those belonging to the younger generation, particularly regarding the contribution migrants can make to society.

The existence of such misconceptions means that a new approach must be adopted to present a realistic and balanced view of migration, flight, integration and religion. As Mary Robinson, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and former president of Ireland said, “Stories are important, but unfortunately we hear too little about the people involved. What actually happens to the people whilst on the move as refugees, is important.”

In her view, the media often portray a one-sided, negative image. “Such distortions, often politically shaped, had an impact on the success of integration, the participants concluded. “We must succeed in bridging the gap between perceived emotions and actual facts,” said Rita Süßmuth, former president of the German Bundestag.

Challenges for Europe

For Dr. Ingrid Hamm, founder of the Global Perspectives Initiative, those addressing the problem “have to begin thinking in much more global terms. When it comes to topics of migration and reasons for flight, there remains a huge lack of information, as well as an increasing need for a stronger dialogue between Africa and Europe.” The conference participants agreed that Europe should define a collective approach, and this involves drafting clear immigration legislation as well. Süßmuth noted that better regulation of migration is the key to fighting xenophobia. She noted the fact that Germany currently “lacks a formal immigration law” which would be needed, to “increase clarity, ensuring an easier, more coordinated process.”

One problem discussed was the lamentable lack of cooperation and coordination on a European level in addressing the refugee crisis.

But not only: participants criticized the attitude of several European states that are engaged in denial – not willing to accept reality. Lammert rejected the notion that there is a problem of “absorption capacity,” as some suggest. What is lacking, he said, is a shared responsibility and commitment to solve the problem. “If there is one country in which there is broad awareness that migration cannot be hindered by walls, then it is Germany. Migration is not a sudden state of emergency but, with respect to historical context, a normal aspect of our history – presenting both problems and opportunities,” said Lammert. In fact, a significant proportion of older Germans remember the post-war refugee crisis and were among those fleeing to the West.

If governments are called upon to face the challenges presented, there is a meaningful role to be played as well by private initiatives. The conference discussed how the private sector could promote and accelerate growth, while public initiatives could better conduct projects on a larger scale. Anja Langenbacher, director of the European office at the Gates Foundation, underlined the importance of private initiatives in the development sector: “Private initiatives act as catalysts. At the same time we decrease risks for investors and have clear, quantitative goals. This is an advantage in contrast to public investments.” John Prendergast, US human rights activist, pointed to the need for monitoring flows of public funds, saying, “Public funds are not tracked strictly enough on the way to the recipient countries. Many public investments are affected by money laundering or get lost along their way.”

The Armenian Role

Embodying the spirit of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, the Aurora Dialogues offer a platform to experts and dedicated personalities who are engaged in seeking solutions to the global challenges of our time. Now in its third year, the Dialogues provide the stage for an intellectual and interdisciplinary exchange, based on the notion that we should learn from the past in order to make the right choices in the present, to pave the way for a better future together.

Ruben Vardanyan put it this way, “They (the participants) saw our willingness to share our experience and use it for changing the world around us. I think that we were able to look to the future without forgetting our past.” And if in the past Armenians have experienced the horrors of expulsion, war and genocide, they have also recently had the experience of welcoming refugees into their country.

“Holding the Aurora Dialogues in Berlin,” Vardanyan said, “we wanted to show the world what we are doing. We also wished to inform people that Armenia has made a significant contribution in welcoming refugees, as very few people know that Armenia has already accepted about 20,000 refugees from Syria.”

Aurora Humanitarian Initiative

Founded on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative seeks to empower modern-day saviors to offer life and hope to those in urgent need of basic humanitarian aid and thus continue the cycle of giving

internationally. The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative is Gratitude in Action. It is an eight-year commitment (2015 to 2023, in remembrance of the eight years of the Armenian Genocide 1915-1923) to support people and promote projects that tackle the needs of the most helpless and destitute, and do so at great risk. This is achieved through the Initiative's various programs: The Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, the Aurora Dialogues, the Aurora Humanitarian Index, the Gratitude Projects and the 100 LIVES Initiative. The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative

is the vision of philanthropists Vartan Gregorian, Noubar Afeyan and Ruben Vardanyan who have, already in the second year, been joined by several dozen new donors and partners. The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative is represented by three organizations – Aurora Humanitarian Initiative Foundation, Inc. (New York, USA), the 100 Lives Foundation (Geneva, Switzerland) and the IDEa Foundation (Yerevan, Armenia).

Further information is available at www.auro-rapize.com

Small Town Politics in Germany Raise Diplomatic Fuss

POHLHEIM, Germany – Pohlheim is a small town in Germany, near Giessen in the state of Hesse, with just under 20,000 inhabitants. But a local initiative has attracted the attention and protest of a high-ranking

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Turkish diplomat. The city council had agreed to a proposal presented by the Christian Democrats (CDU) and Socialdemocrats (SPD) for a “Monument Commemorating the Victims of the Genocide against Christians in the Ottoman Empire 1915 – Remembrance and Admonition.” The final decision was announced in early November, the same day that Nohman Nohman, a city councilor and member of the Aramean community, passed away. Over 200 Aramaens attended the session, to pay their respects and to thank the city for its gesture.

A central location for the monument has been identified in the area near the Old Church. This would be the first time that such a monument commemorating the Armenian, Aramean and Pontos Greek genocide victims would be erected on public land. And that was evidently the spark that lit the fire of protest.

The Turkish reaction was swift and energetic. Turkish General Consul Burak Kurarti in Frankfurt dispatched a letter to Pohlheim Mayor Udo Schöffmann, protesting the decision of the city parliament, as an insult to the Turkish population “in your city and in all of Germany,” which would not contribute to reconciliation. On the contrary, he suggested it would provoke hefty reactions. He called for the mayor and the city to rethink the move and decide against it.

The chances are less than slim that his demand may be met. Not only does the German Constitution guarantee the rights of city administrations to make such decisions, but the German Bundestag, the parliament of the Federal Republic, passed a landmark resolution on June 2, 2016 officially recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

Matthias Jung, CDU faction leader, said, “I don't jump on orders from Erdogan or anyone else.” Deputy leader of the SPD faction, Prof. Ernst Ulrich, asked rhetorically, “If a German consul in Istanbul or Ankara had written that, how would the government in Ankara have reacted?”

Cehver Tan, an Aramean who is chairman of the local body representing foreigners and immigrants, commented calmly: “We have not told any lies, these are facts. The Turkish government should not be upset by that and should rather look into the archives. It is only a monument, it is not aimed against Turkey, it is planned to commemorate the victims. We have no intention thereby to provoke anyone. The city of Pohlheim has not insulted any nationality.”

Saakashvili Plans New Protests in Ukraine Following His Release

KIEV, Ukraine (*Irish Times*) – Former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili is planning new protest rallies in Ukraine following his release from custody, and wants the West to put more pressure on Kiev's leaders to accelerate reforms and fight corruption in the country.

On Monday, December 11, a Kiev court rejected a request from prosecutors to place Saakashvili under house arrest, but he still faces allegations of plotting with a pro-Russian oligarch to seize power in Ukraine through street demonstrations.

Saakashvili woke up on Tuesday in the same Kiev flat from which he tried to flee security service agents a week earlier, only to be caught on the rooftop. Protesters subsequently pulled him from a police van, however, and he remained at liberty until he was seized in a supporter's apartment last Friday night.

The leader of Georgia's 2003 Rose Revolution was then placed in a detention center, where he went on a hunger strike. Several thousand people marched through Kiev last Sunday to demand his release and denounce Ukraine's rulers for failing to fight rampant graft.

“There will be another rally this Sunday,” Saakashvili told *The Irish Times*.

“The plan is that people go out every Sunday . . . to show their discontent with the absence of change and to demand change. We don't want destabilization or clashes or provocations, so it's happening in daylight on the main streets of Kiev.”

Ukrainian prosecutor general Yuriy Lutsenko vowed to appeal against the decision not to place Saakashvili under house arrest over the allegations, and complained of coming under “colossal pressure to close my eyes” to the alleged actions

of the former Georgian leader.

“I think the case is collapsing now solely because of politicization,” Lutsenko said, while insisting that he had evidence to prove that Saakashvili was part of a conspiracy involving Moscow's FSB security services and allies of former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich, who fled to Russia during a 2014 revolution.

“A state that cannot defend itself from the plans of the FSB and Yanukovich's gang is doomed to collapse,” Lutsenko added.

Critics of Lutsenko and his close ally, Ukrainian president and billionaire businessman Petro Poroshenko, accuse them of betraying the “Maidan” revolution by turning a blind eye to rampant corruption and protecting wealthy “oligarchs” who wield huge political power.

Last week, the European Union, United States and International Monetary Fund – which are helping Ukraine survive economic turmoil and conflict with Russia – criticized Kiev's leaders for their halfhearted fight against graft and interference in the work of the new national anti-corruption bureau (Nabu).

“Lutsenko should resign not only because of my case but his attack on Nabu,” said Saakashvili, who also faces possible extradition to his native Georgia to answer charges there.

“Poroshenko should just change everything. I'm not calling expressly for his resignation now . . . but he should leave Nabu alone and stop political repressions,” he added.

“The West should ask Ukraine to stop this absolute illegality towards me and my supporters . . . and help expose [the Ukrainian elite's] corruption . . . go after their bank accounts and offshore and force them to be transparent.”

Community News

Warren R. Paboojian Award Established at Fresno State

By Michael Rettig

FRESNO – The lasting impact that the Armenian Studies Program has had on its alumni is often reflected in the support these former students give to the Program. In the Fall 2017 semester, local attorney Warren Paboojian established the “Warren R. Paboojian Award” to annually recognize the editor of *Hye Sharzhoom*. This award, funded by the Warren and Lesa Paboojian Foundation, is the first designated to support *Hye Sharzhoom*.

Paboojian studied journalism at Fresno State and graduated with his bachelor’s degree in 1980. While a student, Paboojian wrote for *Insight*, the then Journalism Department’s newspaper, as well as the student-run *Daily Collegian*. When a group of his classmates, including Mark Malkasian, Bill Eryasian, and Barlow Der Mugrdchian, started the *Hye Sharzhoom* under the supervision of Dr. Dickran Kouymjian in 1979, Paboojian eagerly joined the staff.

“It was a way to write about Armenian events for both our campus and the community. We had not seen anything like that, especially on a college campus,” said Paboojian. “My grandfather was the editor of an Armenian newspaper locally, and as time went on, I realized that journalism was something that I wanted to do.”

Paboojian’s first article, on the Armenian Community School of Fresno, appeared in *Hye Sharzhoom*’s second issue in fall 1979.



Warren Paboojian

Writing in student-run papers helped equip Paboojian with the skills he needed to earn his Juris Doctorate degree at the San Joaquin College of Law, where he was inducted into the College’s Hall of Fame for his trial advocacy.

“In a courtroom, I have to communicate the story of my client to the jury. It’s no different than writing a journalism piece,” Paboojian explained. “My experience at Fresno State gave me the tools to communicate and to be successful.”

Paboojian is now a partner in the Baradat & Paboojian law-firm, where he specializes in cases of catastrophic personal injury, wrongful death, medical malpractice and wrongful termination.

In 2008, Paboojian was the first attorney in the Central Valley to become the Consumer Attorneys of California’s (CAOC) “Trial Lawyer of the Year.” He was similarly selected the Cal-ABOTA (American Board of Trial Advocates) “Trial Lawyer of the Year” in 2017.

The award Paboojian is especially proud of is his selection as the College of Arts and Humanities’ “2017 Top Dog Outstanding Alumnus.” Each year, an alumnus from each of Fresno State’s academic schools and colleges is chosen as “Top Dog” to honor outstanding accomplishments in their field and commitment to service in the community.

Paboojian’s appreciation for his roots at Fresno State are apparent in his nickname, the “Bulldog in the courtroom,” and in his support for *Hye Sharzhoom*. He learned from his experience as a staff writer that finances are always an issue for student-run papers.

“I wanted to help ease their financial burden and acknowledge the work the Editor puts in to the paper,” explained Paboojian. “The *Hye Sharzhoom* has a special place in my heart, and every time I receive it I am so glad to see that it is still around after 39 years. I think the world of Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian and his ability to keep the paper going for all these years.”



Yektan Türkyilmaz

Yektan Türkyilmaz Named Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies At Fresno State

FRESNO – Armenian Studies Program Coordinator Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian announced that Dr. Yektan Türkyilmaz has been appointed the 14th Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at Fresno State for the Spring 2018 semester. The Kazan Visiting Professorship was established through a generous endowment established by Henry S. Kazan. Dr. Richard Hovannisian was appointed as the first incumbent to the position in Fall 2000.

Türkyilmaz’s area of interest is in the interplay between the political and historical processes in producing cultural meaning and collective identities. His research addresses collective violence, social movements, trauma, and the politics of historical memory in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire.

Türkyilmaz will be teaching a three-unit course in the Spring Semester, “A Social, Cultural, and Political History of Armenian Urbanism.” This course will survey the social, political, and cultural dynamics throughout the Armenian Renaissance—1863-1918, exploring urban life in the three Armenian centers of modernization: Van, Tiflis, and Constantinople. The seminar will elaborate on various intellectual trends and influences in these three centers involving two empires. This course gives a comparative and multi-disciplinary perspective on the trajectory of Armenian modernization and its intellectual and cultural consequences.

The course aims to offer students an assessment of the Ottoman Armenian communities on the eve of the catastrophe, providing them with a solid and critical understanding of the antecedents of the Genocide.

Türkyilmaz completed his doctoral dissertation on “Rethinking Genocide: Violence and Victimhood in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1915” at Duke University in 2011. The dissertation is a study of the essential role of discourses of victimhood in fueling ethnic conflict, and even, genocide. At the intersection of anthropology, political science and history, the project sheds new light on the always contentious and sometimes violent ethno-territorial struggles among Turks, Kurds and Armenians over the region of Eastern Anatolia dating back to the mid-19th century.

Drawing on three years of multi-sited archival, library and ethnographic research, he traced the historical trajectory of the conflict, and how competing conceptions of victimhood have emerged and circulated in the decades before the Armenian Genocide.

As part of his duties, Dr. Türkyilmaz will give three public lectures: 1) “Armenian Political Organizations/Community Institutions and the Ottoman State During the Second Constitutional Period (1908-1915)”; 2) Armenians on Records: Music Production from Homeland to Diasporas (1900-1938); and 3) see FRESNO, page 7

Armenian Assembly Names Meganoosh Avakian Virginia State Chair

WASHINGTON – The Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) welcomed Meganoosh Avakian as the new Virginia state chair. In her capacity as state chair, Avakian will lead Virginia-based Assembly members and activists to educate the community on issues of priority concern relative to the security and prosperity of Armenia and Artsakh, in addition to working with local government to further strengthen U.S.-Armenia relations.

Avakian continues her involvement in the Armenian community following her time with the Armenian Network of America, Inc. (ArmNet). She is currently ArmNet National Board Chairman (2010-present) and ArmNet Washington, D.C. Chapter President (1998-present). Avakian has also worked as Program Support specialist for the Armenian American Cultural Association, Inc. from 2013 to 2015.

“I look forward to utilizing my experience to help the Armenian Assembly further its important work in strengthening U.S.-Armenia relations,” Avakian said.

The Commonwealth of Virginia has an active history of affirming the Armenian Genocide and honoring the victims. The Virginia Commonwealth recognized April 24 as “Armenian Martyrs Day” in 1990, 1996, and 2001. On March 9, 2000, the General Assembly of Virginia also adopted a resolution designating April 24 as “Virginia Day of Remembrance of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923.”

In addition, the city of Alexandria is a sister city to Gyumri in Armenia, which was named Alexandropol in the early 20th century. A “Sister City Exchange Program” between these two cities was spearheaded by long-time Assembly member Rita Balian, working with former Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA) who was mayor of Alexandria at the time. This sister city partnership began on May 16, 1990, as a demonstration of solidarity after the devastating 1988 earthquake in Armenia. Balian also established



Armenian Assembly Board Member Aram Gavor, Grassroots & Development Associate Mariam Khaloyan, Virginia State Chair Meganoosh Avakian, and Executive Director Bryan Ardouny

the city’s annual Armenian Day Festival, which, in recent years, Avakian has participated in organizing. Since then, it has developed into the Alexandria International Festival, featuring Armenia among other nations and cultures.

“The Inaugural Alexandria International Festival was a great beginning to a new tradition for the City of Alexandria. I think this new multi-cultural festival will be a worthy continuation from the Alexandria Armenian Festival which was held for 21 years,” Avakian told the Assembly. “Sharing Armenian culture and history with our neighbors and community is what it’s always been about. Our efforts resulted in a longstanding friendship with the City of Alexandria calling us every year to come back and showcase our rich heritage,” she added.

Avakian graduated from George Mason University with a Bachelor of Science in Business Management and Marketing. She is a Software Test Engineer with KT Consulting Inc., and is currently working on a joint project with Booz Allen Hamilton on Centers for Medicare and Medicaid.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Sparkling Shopping for Good in Wellesley

WELLESLEY, Mass. – Customers gathered for a reception on November 9, to shop at Impulse, a chic jewelry store on Linden Street featuring original, fierce and elegant designs, could take solace in splurging on beautiful pieces as a portion of the sales benefitted the Greater Boston Food Bank (GBFB).

Over drinks and appetizers at the store, owner Veronica Aboyan Sagherian teamed up with the GBFB, with 10 percent of sales going to the organization.

In addition, the names of those who donated a minimum of \$25 to the GBFB were entered into a raffle to win a print by Boston artist Seth B. Minkin.

The event featured a trunk show of extra-large scarves with imprints of various paintings by Minkin. In fact, the scarves proved to be so popular that they will be on sale through the holidays.

Impulse is a sister store to Adamas Fine Jewelry in Newton. The two stores are owned and operated by siblings Sagherian and Anto Aboyan.

Said Sagherian, “Adamas Fine Jewelry and Impulse have a long history of supporting causes that are dear to our hearts and to those of the communities we serve...from supporting local schools to Boston Children’s hospital, we want to leave a positive impact on our communities. We started supporting the Greater Boston Food Bank a couple of years ago when we learned how widespread their efforts are in providing food to local pantries around the area. To date, along with the generosity of our clients and friends and other local businesses, have raised several thousand dollars for the GBFB and look forward to increasing our fundraising dollars year after year.”

According to the GBFB, November 2017 was the biggest distribution month in the organization’s history: 5,021,443 meals. (Providing five healthy holiday meals costs \$20).

To see more about Impulse visit www.trustyourimpulse.com

To donate to the Greater Boston Food Bank, visit <https://www.gbfb.org/>



From left, Veronica Aboyan Sagherian, artist Seth B. Minkin and Carlen Singmaster of the Greater Boston Food Bank

Yektan Türkyilmaz Named Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies At Fresno State

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“Collective Anxiety and Competition from Justice: The Mysterious Murder Case of Melkon Mir-Sakoyan in Van, September 1913.”

The first lecture will address the radical shift of political hierarchy within the Armenian community of Van, and will demonstrate how a new matrix of power relations emerged vis-à-vis Armenian organizations’ respective connections with the Committee of Union and Progress, undermining the status of the Armenian Patriarchate.

Lecture two will explore the production of Armenian 78 RPM recordings in the Ottoman Empire (1900-1922), as compared with those produced in the United States.

His talk will address how the Genocide in the homeland and other political upheavals resonated in the records released in the diaspora.

Hnchak activist dentist Melkon Mir-Sakoyan was murdered under mysterious circumstances in 1913. Lecture three will focus on the background of that murder, with information drawn from official Ottoman documents, Armenian newspapers and memoirs.

Dr. Türkyilmaz has completed post-doctoral research fellowships at Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin, Germany, and at Duke University’s Department of Cultural Anthropology.

Türkyilmaz has conducted his dissertation fieldwork in Turkey, Armenia, the United States and Austria and has taught courses at Bilgi University, Sabancı University, and Duke University among others.

He is fluent in Turkish, English, Armenian, Kurdish, and Ottoman Turkish.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Bar Association's Judges' Night Draws Encore Ovation

GLENDALÉ – On November 16, members and friends of the Armenian Bar Association gathered at the landmark Glen Arden Club in Glendale, California to celebrate and honor the best of California's judiciary during the Annual Judges' Night Dinner. Nearly 50 judges of the state and federal court systems turned out to rejoice as three prominent jurists of the Los Angeles Superior Court were honored – Judges Victor Chavez, Holly Fujie and Huey Cotton.

Board Member Armen K. Hovannisian distilled the essence of the evening, "The Annual Judges' Night has fast become the Association's signature celebration, drawing hundreds of attendees from all walks of the legal profession in the most convivial and interactive of atmospheres. The Association honors those jurists who have distinguished themselves beyond the laudable lines of high intellect, efficiency and consistency. The Armenian Bar singles out for distinction those who have opened broadly the public's access to justice, advanced the precepts of the rule of law, incorporated compassion into the fabric of their characters, and guided others in profession and in life."

"We are fortunate to have so many distinguished members of the California judiciary join us this evening. We thank them for their devoted public service," said mistress of ceremonies, Vanna Kitsinian, member of the Executive Board of Governors of the Armenian Bar Association.

The evening began with a high-octane reception where guests networked and socialized before advancing into the grand ballroom for dinner and presentation of the awards. There, solo artist Toukhaman Khachatourian began the program with a stirring rendition of the national anthems of the United States of America and Armenia. Next, Archbishop Moushegh Mardirossian, Prelate of the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, delivered an inspiring invocation and asked for the Lord's blessings to confer on the judges the strength and wisdom to carry on their good



Judge Huey Cotton (center left) and Judge Holly Fujie (center right) flanked by Armenian Bar Board Member.

work. The Archbishop's invocation was followed by a dinner of delicious Armenian cuisine.

Chairman of the Board, Saro Kerkonian, assumed the podium amidst great fanfare and thanked the honorary guests and their fellow judges for their outstanding contributions in furtherance of the independence of the judicial branch of government. Kerkonian paid eloquent homage to the judges' professional examples of instilling in the public the trust that California's courts are bastions where the rule of law reigns supreme. With flags of country, state and organization adorning the stage in the background, he offered reflections into the work of the Association as it relates to the United States, Armenia, the Artsakh Republic and the State of California.

Board member and Association Treasurer Gerard Kassabian introduced the first honoree, Judge Victor Chavez. Kassabian greeted the guests with a "hello and welcome" in ten different languages and spoke of the 30-year career of Judge Chavez on the bench. In a mov-

ing tribute, Kassabian endearingly Armenianized Judge Chavez's name by adding an "ian" to the end and presented him with a beautiful photograph of the honoree, daughter California Appellate Justice Victoria Chavez and Governor George Deukmejian, on the occasion of Judge Chavez's swearing-in to the bench by his daughter. Judge Chavez fondly recalled as a child how his mother read to him the famed book by Franz Werfel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, recalling the heroic self-defense of the Armenians during the Armenian Genocide. He explained how the book left a lasting impression on his life.

The next honoree was former California State Bar President, Judge Holly Fujie. Fujie was introduced by Los Angeles Deputy District Attorney Amy Ashvianian. Ashvianian shared with the audience the tremendous career Judge Fujie has had and the countless bar activities she has initiated and led. Judge Fujie congratulated the Armenian Bar Association on its work in the field of mentorship and judicial evaluations. She urged collaboration between the Armenian Bar and the California State Bar with respect to their respective mentorship programs.

The third honoree of the evening was Supervising Judge of the Los Angeles Superior Court, Northwest District, Judge Huey Cotton. He was introduced by noted criminal defense attorney and member of the Armenian Bar's

Judicial Evaluations Committee, Alexandra Kazarian. Kazarian praised the evening's final honoree for his leadership on the bench, his activism and his compassion for litigants and young and learning lawyers. Cotton passionately told inspiring stories of Armenians in his life and courtroom.

Chavez, Fujie and Cotton were each presented with a beautiful work of classical art prepared by renowned artist Seroon Yeretsian, each with an original inscription of praise and honor. The program concluded with a moving benediction by Reverend Father Vazken Movsesian of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

Following the official program, many stayed on and maintained the high-energy levels that lasted throughout the night. Valerie Dean, co-chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee of the San Fernando Valley Bar Association, called the evening "One of the best, diverse, Judges' Nights I have ever been to."

"We are thrilled we could once again showcase the great talent, intellect and diversity that is the strength of the California Judicial System at our annual Judges' Night," said the Association's Judicial Evaluations Committee Co-Chair Lucy Varpetian. "We look forward to continuing this tradition for years to come," said Garo Ghazarian, organizing committee chair and former two-term chairman of the Armenian Bar Association.

Demirjians Gift \$7 Million to Fund University of Illinois Athletic Facility

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. (*Herald and Review*) – The Demirjian family of Decatur is delivering one of the largest gifts in University of Illinois athletics history in order to provide a new facility for women's soccer and men's and women's track and field.

News of the \$7-million gift was communicated to student-athletes Wednesday, December 6, some of whom were moved to tears.

"I'm so excited," said freshman distance runner Rebecca Craddock of Brunswick, Ohio, who was with a group of track and field athletes who met with the Demirjian family Wednesday. "When it's completed I'll be a senior so I'll get to use it. It's so cool."

The project, called Demirjian Park, which will be executed in phases and is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2021.

Kara Demirjian-Huss and Richard Demirjian spoke on behalf of the family, which in 2004 also provided the lead gift for construction of the J. Gerald Demirjian Indoor Golf Practice Facility that benefits men's and women's golf teams. Family members making the donation are Richard and Anne Demirjian, Kara Demirjian-Huss and Mark Huss, Simone Demirjian and J. Gerald Demirjian.

The two facilities that bear the Demirjian name will be located directly across the street from each other on St. Mary's Road.

Richard Demirjian, who is serving on the committee driving the athletic department's quest to raise \$300 million for facilities, scholarships and other "enhancements," said the chance to directly impact sports that include 25 percent of the university's student-athletes was a major factor.

"We believe in (Athletics Director) Josh Whitman's vision, recognize the opportunity and realize that the time is now to make a difference," Richard Demirjian said.

Kara Demirjian-Huss said she was also drawn by the chance to impact economic development in the area by providing a facility that can draw major events to the university. Whitman said the creation of the facility will allow Illinois to host the

Big Ten Conference outdoor track and field championships in 2021.

Kara Demirjian-Huss said they've already talked about bringing events beyond the typical college track and soccer competitions, including the potential for luring exhibition pro soccer events or major high school events.

Until the announcement of Demirjian Park, track and field and soccer have not had a single home. Instead, they have shared facilities and lacked a central area. That will change with this facility.

Fans can face west to watch track and field. Or east to watch soccer. Will also include locker rooms, video and meeting rooms, lounge and study spaces, sports medicine and nutrition facilities and coaches' offices.

Whitman described state-of-the-art amenities that will include locker rooms, video and meeting rooms, lounge and study spaces, sports medicine and nutrition facilities and coaches' offices.

Demirjian Park will reshape the fan experience. An innovative design will feature dual grandstands – one block of seats facing east for soccer, the other facing west for track and field. Included will be permanent restrooms, concessions, LED lighting, a new video board and sound system, new parking, concourses and entry plazas.

Total cost of the project will be \$14 million, Whitman said.

Janet Rayfield, head women's soccer coach, said the facility will have an instant impact.

"Demirjian Park is a game-changer," Rayfield said. "It will undoubtedly affect recruiting. It will enable us to host nationally prominent events. It creates a home that sells our story."

Dave Kendziera, a six-time All-American and the 2017 Big Ten Conference Athlete of the Year, is a hurdler from Mount Prospect. He shared in the excitement but said he has just one regret.

"I'm a senior," he said. "I'll be gone when it's finished. But I'm going to ask coach if I can come back and sneak out onto the track one more time. It's going to be incredible."

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Raffi Krikorian: The Man with a Plan to Upgrade the Democrats

SAN FRANCISCO (*MIT Technology Review*) – Politics has become a technological arms race. In the 2008 and 2012 US presidential elections, the Democrats outgunned their rivals. In 2016, the Republicans fought back, using big-data analytics and microtargeting of online ads to help propel Donald Trump into the White House. Raffi Krikorian wants to get the Democrats out ahead again. As the chief technology officer of the Democratic National Committee, the MIT graduate is reshaping his party's tech strategy. Krikorian, an expert in software engineering, previously led Uber's Advanced Technologies Center and got its first fleet of driverless cars on the road. Before that, he headed the team that managed Twitter's tech infrastructure. He spoke with *MIT Technology Review's* San Francisco bureau chief, Martin Giles.

TR: Why did you leave a high-profile job in Silicon Valley to take a post at the DNC?

RK: After the presidential election, I just felt that the world was broken and I needed to find a place where I could apply what I'd learned in my previous roles to see if I could make a difference.

TR: During the election, the DNC suffered a damaging e-mail hack. What steps have you taken to improve security?

RK: Security's an arms race. We have a target on us in the same way that most multinational corporations do, but we don't have the budget of a big company. All our services such as e-mail have now been moved to cloud infrastructure run by companies like Microsoft and Google. We're also focusing on culture change. We actively phish our own people and publicize internally which teams have the worst compliance. We're also in the final stages of hiring a chief security officer.

TR: What keeps you awake at night beyond security?

RK: In electoral politics, unlike other jobs I've had, you can't move the ship dates. I'm always worried whether we'll have enough time to make the kinds of technological and cultural changes we need to make across the party. We're not just trying to catch up to where we think the Republicans are; we're attempting to do a massive leapfrog.

TR: What progress have you made?

RK: Campaigns are incredibly intense from the outset, and campaign managers tend to stick with what they've done before or to make a few incremental changes. We're encouraging them to experiment with more revolutionary technologies. We're creating the infrastructure to do real-time analytics and to make data science tools widely available and easy to use. And we're working on a platform strategy that allows us to easily plug in and vet new technologies for things such as canvassing and voter mobilization.



Some politicians want to make it legal for individuals and companies in America to pursue digital assailants.

TR: Do you see AI being used more extensively in future campaigns?

RK: We need to be starting long-term, authentic conversations today with every American in order to get to the next presidential election in 2020. That means developing a deeper appreciation of the different issues that interest people. I think that artificial intelligence and machine learning will help us to better understand and segment audiences on a scale that's not been done before, even by some of the biggest companies in the world.

TR: Are companies like Twitter and Facebook doing enough to tackle fake news and its influence on political campaigns?

RK: No, I don't think my former employer or Facebook are doing enough here. It's certainly a very difficult problem. At the heart of it are things like fake accounts, hijacked accounts and trolling accounts. We're now seeing outside researchers doing some really interesting work to try and identify the bots spreading fake news.

TR: How can we get more transparency in online political advertising?

RK: Part of the answer is greater clarity from social platforms. They need to make it obvious who is paying for political ads online and how much they're spending. This would fix a lot of the problem, but there needs to be some formal regulation of online political advertising too.

TR: Digital voting systems are vulnerable to hacking. What can be done to make them more secure?

RK: From a technology standpoint, I think it's going to be a combination of open-source software with verifiable code and paper trails. If we had a lot of academics willing to help us with verifiable code, and paper trails to show what the electronic machines actually recorded, we'd be in a much better place. I would love to see national standards that every state would need to follow when purchasing voting machines.

TR: Given your experience at Uber, when do you think we'll all be heading to the polls in driverless cars?

RK: Hopefully, a whole bunch of people will be using them to vote in the 2024 presidential election.

Oscar Tatosian Appointed Honorary Consul in Chicago

WASHINGTON – The Armenian Assembly of America announced recently that Oscar Tatosian, a Board Member, was appointed the newest honorary consul of the Republic of Armenia based in Chicago. The Chicago Consular Office is Armenia's third Honorary Consulate in the United States, following the establishment of offices in Fresno (2014) and Las Vegas (2015). In this position, Tatosian will run the representative office of the Republic of Armenia in the Midwest region of the United States, help foster friendships and partnerships between the two nations, facilitate trade and cooperation in various fields, and host cultural events.



Oscar Tatosian



Armenian Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian, Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI), Board Member Joyce Stein, Public Affairs Associate Danielle Saroyan, Co-Chair Van Krikorian, Board Member Oscar Tatosian, and Joe Stein at Armenia's 26th Independence Day Celebration on Capitol Hill

"Oscar Tatosian's passion for Armenia and the Armenian community is amply demonstrated by his philanthropy and active involvement within the community. We know that he will serve as Honorary Consul of the Republic of Armenia in the state of Illinois with great distinction," Assembly Co-Chairs Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian said. "Over the decades, Oscar has proven to be a strong, dedicated, and reliable leader who, through his hard work and tenacity, has contributed greatly to

the Armenian cause. He knows the challenges that Armenia and Artsakh face, as well as understands American politics and how to work with community members and our elected officials to bring about positive results for our homeland," they added.

Tatosian has been a noted leader in the Armenian American community for decades. He is a longtime member of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church and has served as a past Diocesan Council chair. Tatosian is also on the

Board of the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR). Chicago-born Tatosian is President of Oscar Isberian Rugs, Inc., an importer and retailer of oriental carpets, with manufacturing relationships in the Near and Middle East.

"Congratulations to Mr. Oscar Tatosian, who comes from a business background and brings to the job his numerous talents, years of experience and community service," the Embassy to the Republic of Armenia noted in a written statement.



COMMUNITY NEWS

TCA Celebrates 70 Years with Evening of Music

GALA, from page 1

New productions that will hit the stage include Agatha Christie's murder mystery "The Unexpected Guest," (Angoch Hyruh) that will be presented in April 2018 in New Jersey. The theater group's popular "Comedy Club" will also take place next spring.

The upcoming year will be a special one for the Mher Megerdichian Theater Group because they will be celebrating the troupe's 20-year milestone in 2018.

"Over the course of two decades, we have performed 30 different plays," said Chatmajian, whose group comprises 80 actors. "We have never skipped a year and each year we present a new play."

The mission of the theater group over the past two decades has been to promote the Armenian culture in the Diaspora and reflect on its rich historic past.

"Armenian theater started over 2,000 years ago," said Chatmajian. "We have to keep the Armenian theatrical tradition here in the Diaspora, which brings people together and in turn creates its own community."

Chatmajian likens the theater group to a school, where actors learn about the Armenian culture, history and language while studying



Ani Chatmajian, Talar Sesetyan Sarafian and Marie Zokian

plays by revered playwrights such as Hagop Baronian and William Saroyan. Citing actor, writer and director Krikor Satamian as his mentor, Chatmajian said he hopes to do the same for the actors in his theater troupe and pass on his knowledge and experience so the Armenian theatrical tradition can continue well into the future.

"The success and longevity of the Mher Megerdichian Theater Group is because we play different authors and we work with various directors, from Tamar Megerdichian to Krikor Satamian to Berj Fazlian to Gerard Papazian," said Chatmajian.

The Mher Megerdichian Theater Group was founded 19 years ago and its board is now comprised of Marie Zokian as vice-chair, Ani Chatmajian as treasurer and Talar Sesetyan Sarafian as secretary, who all work together with their members to present plays in the Armenian language for the diaspora.

"Our theater troupe has always been close to our people's hearts," said Hagop Vartivarian, honorary chair of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York. "The theater itself is a school, and, in our case, it is a school

far from the homeland that keeps the Armenian language and literature alive."

Vartivarian noted the well-known directors who have worked with the theater group and who injected a new spirit and enthusiasm into their productions. "I have the utmost respect to our directors, actors and technical crew who believe in our theater group's mission."

Supported by the Tekeyan Cultural Association, the two groups work hand in hand to uplift the Armenian diaspora through the arts.

"The holiday gala benefiting Tekeyan's theater group was another wonderful opportunity to bring our community together and celebrate our culture," said Hilda Hartounian, chair of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of



Elie Berberian

Greater New York. "We are proud of the TCA's cultural contributions, in our symbolic 70th year, and look forward to continuing to preserve our heritage."

— Taleen Babayan



Harout Chatmajian



Guests at the TCA Mher Megerdichian holiday gala enjoying the music of Elie Berberian



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Armenian EyeCare Project Gala Marking Quarter Century Honors Founder Dr. Roger Ohanesian

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. – The Armenian EyeCare Project (AECPP) celebrated 25 years of accomplishments at its annual Gala on Saturday, November 18, and honored its founder, Dr. Roger Ohanesian. As the nearly 300 guests arrived at the Balboa Bay Resort in Newport Beach, they were greeted with background music by Robert Duqueneil on the piano along with passed hors d'oeuvres and wine.

As guests entered the Grand Ballroom and prepared for dinner they were transported to Armenia with 16-foot images of Armenia projected onto the walls of the Ballroom and large trees surrounding the perimeter with beautiful green and white floral arrangements throughout. And as an extra touch of Armenia, each place at the dinner tables had a small favor for guests brought from Armenia – traditional Armenian dolls for the women and wine sleeves for the men – as a “thank you” for the long-time support of EyeCare Project donors.

As dinner began, Master of Ceremonies Dr. John Hovanesian, welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending and supporting the EyeCare Project.

First on the program was a fun “Roast” of Roger Ohanesian by his friends and colleagues. Dr. Diana Kersten, who works alongside Ohanesian at Harvard Eye Associates in Laguna Hills, told some humorous antidotes. Nune Yeghiazaryan, AECPP's In-Country Director in Armenia, traveled from Armenia to attend the Gala and delivered a heartwarming message from the project's staff in Yerevan.

Yeghiazaryan recalled the circumstances of Ohanesian's first



AECPP Board Member Michael Sahakian and AECPP In-Country Director Nune Yeghiazaryan share a laugh

trip to Armenia, which the ophthalmologist took in 1992, after receiving a fax from the country's Minister of Health explaining the dire situation in the country – an ongoing war with Azerbaijan, repercussions from a devastating earthquake and the collapse of the Soviet Union – and asking for medical help.

“What was initially meant to be a one-time visit as a response to the emergency in Armenia became the beginning of something much bigger and long-lasting with Dr. Ohanesian returning to America and founding the Armenian EyeCare Project,” said Yeghiazaryan.

Speaking directly to Ohanesian, Yeghiazaryan continued – “Today, on behalf of the EyeCare Project's Armenia office, I would like to say that it's our privilege to have met you, to have worked with you and to continue to be inspired by the dedication you have for Armenia. We are happy and Armenia is happy to have you.”

Yeghiazaryan also read aloud a message sent directly to Ohanesian from the President of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, “I congratulate you and all members, benefactors and supporters of the Armenian EyeCare Project on your 25th Anniversary. Both concretely and metaphorically, your initiative has become the light of people's eyes. I wish the Armenian EyeCare Project continued activity with even more vivacity and productivity.”

In accepting his award for 25 years of service to Armenia Ohanesian focused on the people who made his vision possible – the physicians who have dedicated their time and the donors who have shared their funds. He said, “To see all of you here and to know you have the same interest and passion in the EyeCare Project as I do, it means the world to me. I recognize in all of you the same gratification I feel and the passion I have for this organization and I appreciate it tremendously. Without you, we would not be able to do all that we have done.”



Master of Ceremonies Dr. John Hovanesian presenting the “25 Years of Dedicated Service” Award to AECPP Founder Dr. Roger Ohanesian

Ohanesian expressed the humility he and the other physicians feel as they work in Armenia to eliminate preventable blindness and provide quality eye care. “It's not only what we have done for the Armenian EyeCare Project, but what the Armenian EyeCare Project has done for us,” said Ohanesian. “It's given us this indescribable feeling that is the very reason most doctors go into medicine – to help.”

The AECPP Founder concluded with how grateful he is for the dedication and faith donors have placed in the organization. “We are the lucky ones,” Ohanesian said. “We are the ones who go over and see the way this country has evolved. You are the ones who have helped us do that. Thank you for all you have done for Armenia through the years.”

Following Dr. Ohanesian was a spirited Live Auction conducted by Zack Krone with guests winning a beautiful diamond and sapphire ring and a first-class trip to Armenia among other items; an Armenian dance performance by Artur Aleksanyan

open in Armenia as part of its “Five-for-Five” Campaign.

In 2017, the EyeCare Project also launched a new Diabetes Program in partnership with the World Diabetes Foundation. The country-wide program will screen and take photographs of the retinas of all those in Armenia with diabetes and intervene with treatment when necessary to keep the disease from progressing and avoid the loss of sight.

Funds raised at the Gala will support the AECPP's sight-saving programs in Armenia including the Regional Eye Clinics, the Mobile Eye Hospital, the Center of Excellence for the Prevention of Childhood Blindness and the new Diabetes Program to realize its vision for Armenia – a country where no individual is without access to quality eye care; where Armenian ophthalmologists are trained to diagnose and treat eye disease at the highest level; and where preventable causes of blindness are eliminated through an emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

As the evening came to a close John Hovanesian thanked everyone for their support. To learn more about the organization visit eyecareproject.com.



AECPP In-Country Director Nune Yeghiazaryan giving her speech



Traditional Armenian dance performances by Artur Aleksanyan's Dance Troupe

and his Dance Troupe and live Armenian music by Tom Bozigian and his Armenian Band.

Throughout their 25th year the EyeCare Project celebrated with a number of activities including a 25th anniversary trip to Armenia in July. More than 25 donors experienced the country's wonderful culture, spectacular landscapes and historical architecture. At the same time, they were able to visit the EyeCare Project's patient care facilities in Yerevan and throughout the country and learn how the organization provides eye care to those in need. Donors had the opportunity to participate in the Grand Opening of the AECPP Kapan Regional Eye Clinic located in Kapan, Syunik. The Kapan Clinic is the organization's third Regional Eye Clinic to





COMMUNITY NEWS

UN Observes International Day of Commemoration And Dignity of Victims of the Crime of Genocide

NEW YORK – For the third time since 2015 a special event in observance of the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime was held at the United Nations on December 8.

The observance of the International Day commenced with a minute of silence in honor of the memory of the victims of Genocide. Miguel de Serpa Soares, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel, representing the secretary-general, delivered opening remarks. Adama Dieng, UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide delivered a keynote speech and launched a one year appeal for the universal ratification of the Genocide Convention.

The panel featured Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, ambassador and permanent representative of Armenia to the UN, Jean-Claude Félix do Rego, ambassador and permanent representative of Benin to the UN, and Martin Fode Seck, ambassador and permanent representative of Senegal to the UN. Silvia Fernández de Gurmendi, president of the International Criminal Court, made remarks on the drafting of the Genocide Convention and its present challenges.

In his remarks Mnatsakanyan noted that “there is a strong symbolism” in determining December 9 as the International Day. Reaffirming the significance of the Convention as an effective international instrument for the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide, UN General Assembly Resolution 69/323 linked the International Day to the date of the adoption of the Convention.

Mnatsakanyan further noted that “intolerance, xenophobia, racial and ethnic profiling, glorification of hate crimes, especially led and encouraged by the political leaders within a state should be a concern to the entire international community and serve a clear early warning sign of potential conflict and atrocity crimes”. Stressing the importance



Zohrab Mnatsakanyan

of achieving universalization of the Genocide Convention, Ambassador Zohrab Mnatsakanyan recalled that Armenia had proposed to launch a global campaign for raising the awareness of the Convention and calling upon those states that have not acceded to the Convention to do so by its 70th anniversary. He added that Armenia endorses, fully supports and commits to work together with the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide in launching a one year appeal for the universal ratification of the Convention by the end of 2018.

Representatives of UN member states, academic institutions, civil society organizations and media, as well as representatives of the Armenian-American community and school children attended the observance of the International Day. The event was widely publicized in the UN.

At the initiative of Armenia, in September 2015, the UN General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 69/323 proclaiming December 9 as an International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime. This land-

mark resolution followed up on resolution 28/34 of the UN Human Rights Council initiated by Armenia. The resolutions, which have led to the establishment of the Day, as well as the events held in its observance add to the continued efforts of Armenia to promote consolidated international action against the crime of genocide.

“As the United Nations commemorates the victims of the crime of genocide, we pause to remember those whose lives were taken and recommit ourselves to genocide education and prevention,” stated Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny. “By remembering and learning the lessons of the past, we can help prevent future genocides,” he added.

Raphael Lemkin, a lawyer and Holocaust survivor who coined the term genocide, repeatedly cited the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust as prototypes for the crime of genocide. Lemkin worked tirelessly toward the adoption of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which the United States ratified in 1988.

The Assembly offers resources to help educate about the Armenian Genocide through various online websites. On February 27, the Armenian National Institute (ANI) launched a Turkish-language version of its popular website documenting the facts and acknowledgments of the Armenian Genocide. The ANI Turkish site is designed to give access to broader Turkish-language audiences, both in Republic of Turkey and outside. ANI was also credited in the Hollywood film “The Promise,” which depicts the extraordinary events of the Armenian Genocide. Like “The Promise,” *The Washington Post*, BBC, CNN, *Los Angeles Times*, *Smithsonian Magazine* and *The Federalist*, among other publications, have relied on the widely popular ANI site for accurate information on the Armenian Genocide. In addition, the Armenian Genocide Museum of America (AGMA) and the Armenian Assembly of America’s fact sheets are other commonly used resources.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

AGBU and News Deeply Present Provocative Discussion On Human Rights and Civilian Protection

NEW YORK – To broaden the discourse on genocide and crimes against humanity and to help spark action to prevent future atrocities, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and News Deeply marked the United Nations International Day of Commemoration of Victims of Genocide with a panel discussion featuring experienced human rights practitioners and well-known journalists and filmmakers.

Advancing Civilian Protection: Human Rights in Times of Upheaval, which took place on December 6 before a capacity crowd at the Harvard Club, shed light on past and ongoing atrocities with the goal of engaging stakeholders and the public to take action. Panelists discussed how genocides and crimes against humanity continue to occur all around us today, including in Burundi, Myanmar and Central African Republic. The key takeaways included the importance of documenting these crimes as they happen, ensuring a timely response and, most importantly, preventing the atrocities before they even happen.

In her opening remarks, Lara Setrakian, the co-founder of News Deeply and an award-winning journalist, talked about the responsibility of global Armenians to engage in human rights awareness.

“This panel is about hearing from people who truly have the best knowledge, the best reason to share to help us all figure out a way forward,” said Setrakian in an interview.

Both sessions were moderated by Anna Therese Day, an award-winning independent reporter and social media researcher. The first session featured Evan Cinq-Mars, the United Nations advisor at Center for Civilians in Conflict; Omer Ismail, senior advisor at Enough Project; Akshaya Kumar, deputy United Nations director at Human Rights Watch and Dr. Bridget Moix, US senior representative at Peace Direct. The speakers explored ongoing crimes against humanity, early warning signs and the role of local experts and civil society activists in the prevention of mass crimes.

Cinq-Mars noted that the scale and number of atrocities create difficulties for the international community to respond in a timely and appropriate manner, adding that it is a continuing challenge to translate “early warnings of eminent atrocity crimes or conflicts into early actions to prevent them.” Picking up on this topic, Moix, focused on grassroots activism on the ground and the need for prevention. “People at local community level are the first respondents,” said Moix, whose organization supports local grassroots peacebuilding movements. “They see what



AGBU and News Deeply mark the United Nations International Day of Commemoration of Victims of Genocide with a panel discussion featuring human rights practitioners, journalists and filmmakers. (from left to right) Moderator Anna These Day, Omer Ismail, Dr. Bridget Moix, Akshaya Kumar and Evan Cinq-Mars.

in Central Africa and South Sudan, knowing is not enough, because there isn't action.”

In the second session, the conversation focused on the power of storytelling and the role of films and the media in documenting atrocities and educating the public, as well as encouraging

to tell a story about ordinary people who managed to overcome the great evil and prove the strength of the human spirit, they can entice ordinary people around the world to pay more attention to what they see on the news or become more involved,” he said.

Intrigued by the discussion, the audience sought recommendations on actions individuals can take to help enforce change.

Kumar highlighted the impact of communicating public concerns to policymakers who would feel the need to act under public pressure. “And it's particularly salient, of course, to speak to the Armenian community about that because you and your families know how long those wounds last and for how many generations people feel the impact for that,” she added.

For some guests, the event was an opportunity to reflect on the past and present human rights issues.

“The event made history come to life,” said Bob Morgenthau, the great-grandson of Henry Morgenthau, the United States Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide. “It was incredible to have the twin perspectives of two different panels; to have activists talk about their various personal stories and have storytellers tell how they are communicating these stories.”

In September 2015, the United Nations passed a resolution – introduced by Armenia – declaring December 9 as the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime, to raise awareness of the International Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and honor genocide victims.



From left, former journalist Sherine Tadros and award-winning directors Evgeny Afineevsky and Terry George engaged in a thought-provoking discussion on the power of storytelling. George's “Hotel Rwanda” changed the discourse on the Rwandan Genocide.

people to take action. Award-winning directors Evgeny Afineevsky (“Winter on Fire” and “Cries from Syria”) and Terry George (“The Promise” and “Hotel Rwanda”), as well as Sherine Tadros, representative and head of the New York (United Nations) Office, Amnesty International, engaged in a thought-provoking discussion, sharing their experiences of shaping narratives around human suffering. For Tadros, who was one of two journalists reporting from Gaza Strip during the war in 2008-2009 – captured in the documentary “The War Around Us” (2014) – having access to people on the ground and humanizing victims are critical to making their stories more meaningful for the rest of the world. Afineevsky, whose documentary, “Cries from Syria,” depicts war through the eyes of children, introduced the critical context that is missing in the mainstream media narrative about the humanitarian and refugee crisis. “I realized that the world doesn't know anything about Syria,” said Afineevsky, adding that with this film he aims to help everybody understand the Syrian crisis.

George, whose film “Hotel Rwanda” changed the discourse on the Rwandan Genocide, emphasized the power of cinematography. “If you can



Dr. Bridget Moix is the United States senior representative at Peace Direct, a London-based non-profit, which focuses on grassroots activism in conflict zones.



Omer Ismail, a native of Darfur and senior advisor at Enough Project, shares his experience as an activist working on relief efforts with moderator, independent journalist Anna Therese Day.

is happening before the international community does. They can act before the international community acts.” Ismail, a native of Darfur and a former refugee, also emphasized the importance of attentiveness of locals who should identify the emergence of violence on the ground. “In Darfur, we never thought it would happen to us,” said Ismail, who created a network to share experiences of other communities that experienced genocides.

Akshaya Kumar, touched upon the urgency of documentation of atrocities, advocacy work and public mobilization for action, saying, “Just like

Arts & Living

Reception to Be Held for Painter Koko Hovaguimian

LOS ANGELES – International artist and architectural designer Koko Hovaguimian will be the guest artist at Stephanie's Gallery, 466 Foothill Blvd., La Canada, on December 16, 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

From an early age Hovaguimian was drawn to abstract art. His fascination with form and composition lead to his education in architecture. There is an identifiable vernacular in his painting that is clearly his own signature style



Koko Hovaguimian

of painting. The paintings have vivid colors, strong brushstrokes and the soft touch of the human figures from his subjects. he also contributes his efforts in artistic endeavors within the arts commu-

nity. He most recently designed a unique, on-of-a-kind, surfboard for the Architecture and Design Museum in Los Angeles. In 2012, during a venture with the Walt Disney Concert Hall, KOKO participated in the production design of the opera "Don Giovanni" with culture fashion duo Rodarte, conductor Gustavo Dudamel and architect Frank Gehry.

He holds a master's in advanced architectural design from Columbia University in New York. His design experience includes six years with the renowned architect Frank Gehry. It was during these years with Frank that Hovaguimian also developed his artistic language as a painter; finding passion between his two worlds: art and architecture.

His mother was a fashion designer and father a culinary chef. Growing up in a household that embraced and cultivated artistic expression, Hovaguimian began painting. His fascination with form and composition lead to his education in architecture. His background in design impacted his paintings that forever changed the course of his work. There is an identifiable vernacular in his painting that is clearly his own signature style of painting. The paintings have vivid colors, strong brushstrokes and the soft touch of the human figures from his subjects. His paintings resonate with collectors seeking contemporary art of conceptual character, deep expression and resonance to the soul.

Hovaguimian's collections have been exhibited at many high profile showcases. Since his return to Los Angeles from New York, he debuted a series of acclaimed oil painting collections that have since been exhibited locally and abroad. His experience includes both group and solo exhibitions as well as public and private commissions. In 2012, he was a featured artist for the SoulPancake network in association with YouTube and the Oprah Winfrey Network. A time-lapse film accompanied with an interview captured Hovaguimian painting in his studio. For the first time, viewers were able to see him at work. Thousands of views poured into the network and the national response was substantial.

Whether painting in his studio or collaborating with larger design teams, Hovaguimian is always developing new and exciting work for his collectors and viewing audiences. He continues to push the boundaries of his work and always seeks innovative ideas to develop his work.



"Armenia's Day," June 13, 1917, Armenian Refugees (Lord Mayor's) Fund card pin, England

Armenian Relief Fundraising Memorabilia Cataloged in New Publication

WILLOUGHBY, Australia – Armenians seem to be collectors by nature, and amass all types of items. Armenian art collectors are major donors to museums in many parts of the world, and there are even esoteric collections, such as Elizabeth Tashjian's nut museum in Connecticut. It is understandable, then, that if there are collectible items pertaining to the topic of the Armenian Genocide, so significant for Armenians, and in particular aid to its victims, that this would be of particular interest to Armenians. Indeed, as there are many stamps, pins, and medals concerning Armenian relief fundraising, it is high time for a guide to such memorabilia. Noubar Nick Pezikian recently published a 26-page booklet, aptly titled *Armenian Relief Fundraising Memorabilia*, which attempts to survey such extant items created in various countries around the world from 1896 to the 1930s.

Organizations such as Near East Relief in the United States, Armenian Relief Fund in Austria, and the Armenian Refugees (Lord Mayor's) Fund in Great Britain produced souvenirs like badges, pins, buttons, medals, and various types of charity, poster or Cinderella stamps (postage stamps are excluded from this category). Pezikian provides photos of each item, of obverse and reverse when suitable, and descriptions, including estimates of the date of production. The index gives summary information and references to articles or books which mention each item.

Such a work is helpful both for collectors and also researchers interested in Armenian relief efforts.

The author expresses his gratitude not only to the Armenian Numismatic and Antiquities Society and the Armenian Philatelic Association, but also to a number of individual collectors who provided him with information and images from their private collections. One of the latter is Dr. Levon (Leon) A. Saryan, who authored a similar study, *Vintage Armenian-American Pins*, issued as an offprint of the *Armenian Numismatic Journal* by the Armenian Numismatic Society in 2001. This

see MEMORABILIA, page 15



"Syria Armenia Serbia For the Suffering Nations," (sterling silver enamel brooch), December 7, 1917, Victoria, Australia, Commonwealth Button Fund pin

New CD of Works By Komitas Played By Pianist Lusine Grigoryan

MUNICH, Germany – Complete in itself, ECM records is releasing the debut of Armenian pianist Lusine Grigoryan, which can also be considered a companion volume to the Gurdjieff Ensemble's critically-acclaimed album of Komitas's music.

The album was recorded at the same 2015 session in Lugano, directed by Manfred Eicher, and has some overlapping of repertoire. Where Levon Eskenian's versions with the Gurdjieff Ensemble explored some of the composer's sonic inspirations with folk instruments, Lusine Grigoryan conveys some of the same colors with her wide palette of piano articulation and her exploration of timbral possibilities: in her playing one can catch the flavor of the duduk, the tar, the zurna et cetera, as Komitas intended. As Eskenian has noted, Grigoryan "conveys the mysterious presence typical of rustic and ritual music." Pieces heard on this recording, the ECM debut of Lusine Grigoryan, include Komitas's Seven Songs, Seven Dances, Pieces for Children, and Msho Shoror.

Komitas Vardapet (1869-1935) is revered as the founder of contemporary music in Armenia. A poet, priest and ethnomusicologist, as well as singer and composer, he explored the full range of his country's musical history and wrote music that found points of contact between sacred and secular tradition. His piano pieces are mostly based upon Armenian folk songs and dances.

The "Seven Songs" of the album title form the sequence Yot Yerg, composed in 1911. They consist both of appeals to Nature and descriptions of it. Msho Shoror, "a vast dance scene" inspired by the mountain region of Sasun, is also comprised of seven movements, while Yot Par takes the form seven dances, each evoking the sonority of Armenian folk instruments.

Grigoryan was born in Gyumri, Armenia, and studied at the music school of Akhuryan, and the Kara-Murza Music College. She continued her musical education at the Yerevan State Komitas Conservatory, and completed her graduate studies under Professor Robert Shugarov. Parallel to classical music, Lusine also studied folk music interpretation, thoroughly researching the works of Komitas and Bela Bartók also from this perspective. Her interpretation of Komitas' works has been praised both for its originality and its faithfulness to the composer's vision.

Music composed – or collected and transformed – by Komitas has been heard on a number of ECM recordings over the years, beginning with Kim Kashkashian's album "Hayren: Music of Komitas and Tigran Mansurian," in 2000.

Since then, Komitas has been an inspiration for a very wide cast of musicians, from jazz improvisers to classical interpreters. Although the Gurdjieff Ensemble's album "Komitas" was the first ECM disc entirely devoted to the Armenian composer, his work can be heard on albums by Jan Garbarek and the Hilliard Ensemble ("Officium Novum"), Anja Lechner and François Couturier ("Moderato Cantabile"), Norma Winstone ("Stories Yet To Tell"), and Glauco Venier ("Miniatures"). Tigran Hamasyan's "Luys I Luso" embraced Komitas in its broad sweep of Armenian sacred music, and Komitas compositions served as a basis for improvisation on *Atmosphères* by the quartet of Hamasyan, Arve Henriksen, Eivind Aarset and Jan Bang. Savina Yannatou's "Songs of Thessaloniki," meanwhile, includes one of Komitas's folk song adaptations.

The CD booklet includes an introduction to Komitas by Paul Griffiths, and notes on the compositions by Lusine Grigoryan.



ARTS & LIVING

Arshile Gorky's Art of Bliss Remembered

NEW YORK (*New York Times*) – Some artists you enormously admire. Others you admire and enormously love. For many people, Arshile Gorky is a loved one. And much of what makes him cherishable is distilled in “Ardent Nature: Arshile Gorky Landscapes, 1943-47,” an exhibition as manic and tender as a Schubert song cycle, at Hauser & Wirth’s Upper East Side space.

Organized by Saskia Spender, one of the artist’s two granddaughters and president of the Arshile Gorky Foundation, it’s a large exhibition: more than 30 paintings and drawings, on loan

from museums and private collections, installed on three gallery floors. Yet its time frame, roughly four years, is tight. It coincides

By Holland Cotter

with the beginning of the artist’s most fully developed work, ends a year before his death, and spans some of the happiest and saddest days of his short life.

That life was rarely easy. Gorky was born Vosdanik Adoian, around 1902 (the exact year is unclear) on the shores of Lake Van, in mountainous rural Armenia near the Turkish border. And for a brief time, in the beauty of that natural setting, in the closeness of his family, he experienced bliss.

As an adult, he recalled that close to “our house on the road to the spring, my father had a little garden with a few apple trees which had retired from giving fruit. There was a ground constantly giving shade where grew incalculable amounts of wild carrots, and porcupines had made their nest. There was a blue rock half buried in the black earth with a few patterns here and there like fallen clouds.” He remembered a “Holy Tree.” He remembered “the sh-h-h-sh-h of silver leaves of the poplars.”

These were memories he spent a lifetime revisiting, talking about, dreaming about, and trying to recover through art.

In reality, this eden soon ended. In 1908, his father immigrated to the United States. Within a few years, his mother, whom he adored, moved the household from the country into the city of Van. Then a nightmare began. In 1915, the Turkish government initiated a genocidal slaughter of the Armenian population. Gorky’s family lived as hunted refugees, camping here and there. His mother died in his arms of starvation. Still in his teens, he escaped to America, where he took the name Gorky and turned himself into a modern artist.

Why he decided to become an artist, we don’t know, though we do know how he went about it, initially through a kind of ventriloquism of other artist’s voices and styles. He began with Cézanne, moved on to Picasso, and further on to Surrealists like Joan Miró, André Masson and Roberto Matta. He approached each model with an eye to what he could learn about color, texture, combining images and abstraction. As it happened, he was naturally gifted with an angel’s hand and his editing of sources was substantial: He pared away what he didn’t need and added his own increasingly autobiographical content.

By 1943, form and content were in sync in his art. And in his life, he was as close to a return to Eden as he would ever get. Two years earlier, this moody, outsider-minded man had, with

joy, married a young woman named Agnes Magruder. Simultaneously, after decades of struggle, his career was finally starting to yield rewards. This allowed him to spend long stretches out of the city, first in Virginia, where his wife’s parents had a farm, and later in rural Connecticut, where he drew and painted for weeks outdoors and turned a barn into a studio.

All the work in the show comes from this time of return to the natural world. Not just in memory, but in reality, he could “look into the grass,” as he put it, and up into the trees.

In certain drawings from 1944, he literally seems to be down at grass level, nosing around, pencil and crayon in hand. He finds a fantastical, earthbound world of abstract forms resembling slugs, fungi, pods and bulbs, glommed together parasitically and erotically. It’s a mesmerizing vision, vivacious, but hungry and scary, the way the drawings of Samuel Palmer, that keyed-up Romantic soul, can be.

Then within a few years, the forms thin down, grow lighter. A 1946 drawing titled “Virginia-Summer” is an all-over web of scraps: like a centerless scatter of stems, clods and hard-shell insects turned up by a rake. (This all-over tactic influenced Jackson Pollock and other Abstract Expressionists, for some of whom Gorky was a mentor.) Elsewhere, the view tends upward. A succulent green pastel drawing called “Apple Orchard” suggests buds and leaves on a branch, maybe one of the trees in his father’s Armenian orchard, in sudden, miraculous bloom.

And in several large pieces, Gorky appears to pull back to take in whole landscapes, as in a pair of oil paintings, both titled “Pastoral,” from around 1947. Even the messiest, most impetuous of his graphite drawings have a sense of precision and fineness of detail. But these two “Pastorals,” one dark (a field of brown-black with pink-white patches), the other light (chrome-yellow and white with green scribbles), are so loosely painted as to seem unfinished. (The yellow-white one, at least, isn’t: it’s conspicuously signed on the front.)

This effect is partly from a change in painting method, possibly learned from Matta. For most of his career Gorky had applied paint thickly and precisely, within outlines, in a way that made his forms look inorganic, overly deliberated. But in the 1940s, he started to thin his oils with turpentine to a water-color consistency, which brought a relaxed softness and fleetness to his art.

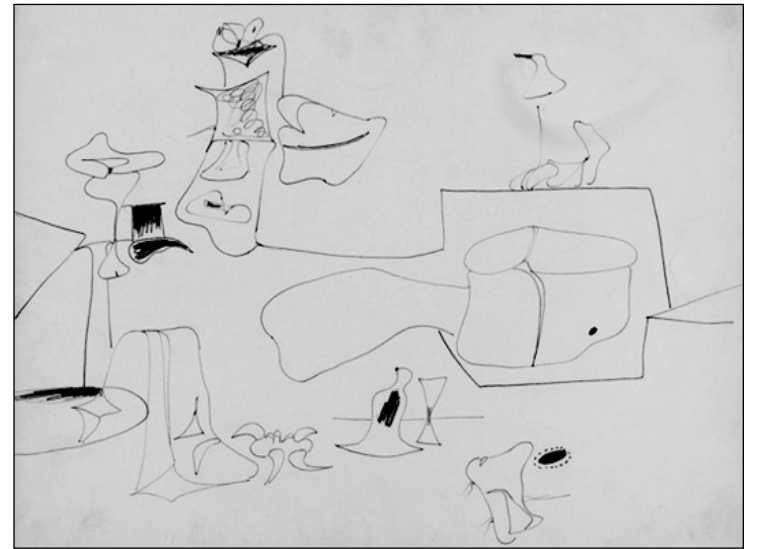
“I prefer not to see the strength of my arm in the painting but only the poetry of my heart,” he wrote of this change. “The trouble is everyone uses their arms too much. I want to leave only the ghost of the painting to spur imagination.”

And he did produce what look like ghost-paintings. One titled “The Opaque,” from 1947, is done almost entirely in gray oil washes, with a few white elements swimming behind. It’s like a vision of nature sleepwalking, or veiled in mourning, or seen through a thick smoke haze.

By the time it was painted, Gorky’s paradise had been lost again. In January 1946, his Connecticut studio caught fire, destroying more than two dozen paintings and many drawings and books. In February, he learned he had rectal cancer and underwent debilitating surgery. He spent a recuperative working summer on the Virginia farm, then in 1947 moved permanently with his family – he had two daughters by then – to Connecticut.

A little before this, the Museum of Modern Art, which had acquired one of his paintings, asked Gorky, along with several other artists, to speculate on what single factor in their past had done most to shape their art. Without hesitation he wrote: “The fact that I was taken away from my little village when I was five years old yet all my vital memories are of these first years. These were the days when I smelled the bread, I saw my first red poppy, the moon, the innocent seeing.”

That kind of seeing – the old, original bliss – proved irrecoverable, as calamity continued to hammer Gorky down. In June 1948,



Untitled, ca. 1946. Pencil on paper. 27.5 x 37.7 cm / 10 7/8 x 14 7/8 in
© 2017 The Arshile Gorky Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

in a car crash, he broke his back and lost use of his painting arm. Shortly afterward, his wife moved out with the children. In July, wrecked and unhinged, he hanged himself in his barn, after writing the words “Good-bye, my loveds” in chalk on a crate.

This farewell, among the saddest monuments in 20th century art, is well known; it’s part of why Gorky is treasured. Less familiar, I suspect, is what preceded it, the great surge of love for life, present and past, that is concentrated in his late art and that tingles with burning belief through this show.

(This review originally appeared in the *New York Times* on December 7, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/07/arts/design/arshile-gorky-hauser-wirth-review.html>.)

Armenian Relief Fundraising Memorabilia Cataloged in New Publication

ARMENIAN RELIEF FUNDRAISING MEMORABILIA



NOUBAR NICK PEZIKIAN

MEMORABILIA, from page 14 work, as evident by its title, only specializes in pins, but covers a wider range of themes and chronology.

Many of the items cataloged in Pezikian’s booklet may be seen at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan.

Pezikian, who lives in Australia, began collecting stamps at a young age. In 2004, he published *The Bibliography of Armenian Philatelic Literature*, a 20-page booklet which lists over 400 works. Pezikian writes in club journals and local newspapers, and runs a website selling sports collectibles and general memorabilia (www.victory-badges.com).

The present work can be purchased at his website, and, in the US, at the bookstores of the Armenian Museum of America (www.armenianmuseum.org), and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (<https://naasr.org>).

The author calls for further contributions to his work in order to produce more complete catalogues in the future. There are indeed items which are not covered in his catalogue in other collections, such as felt Armenian relief badges, which Pezikian promises to add to a later edition. While it would take much work, an expanded edition with more extensive material providing the story or context behind each cataloged pin or badge, as Pezikian did in an earlier article in 2016 on the Serbia, Syria Armenia World War I fundraising pins

(<http://anasociety.org/2016/06/australian-wwi-fundraising-badges-serbia-syria-armenia/>) would also be very interesting and useful.



“Save the Starving in Bible Lands,” American Committee of Armenian and Syrian Relief, celluloid tin pin-back, 1919

Elie Berberian: A Singer Reignites Passion for Armenian Pop

BERBERIAN, from page 1

to perform in his signature style for the Armenian community, blending both traditional Armenian songs and contemporary pop compositions.

Berberian is among an innovative crop of singers who are reinvigorating the Armenian pop genre, resonating with millions of Armenians across the world. Insightful and devoted to his craft, Berberian brings inventive music, entertainment, and professionalism to his music and live performances, which have been met with great fanfare across the globe. Most recently he performed at the 70th anniversary celebration for the Tekeyan Cultural Association at Biaggio's in Paramus, NJ and the Tekeyan Cultural Association's Mher Megerdichian Theater group's holiday gala that took place on Saturday, December 9 at St. Thomas Armenian Church in Tenafly, NJ.

What follows are excerpts from an interview in New York on Friday, December 8, between journalist Taleen Babayan and Elie Berberian:

Taleen Babayan: You were born and raised in Lebanon, studied in Canada and have spent considerable time now performing in the United States. What similarities and differences do you see among Armenians in the Diaspora?

Elie Berberian: The unified theme is being Armenian at heart. Here in New York, you have different challenges than other Diasporan communities, which face their own difficulties. The challenge, for example, in Beirut, is political unstableness, which gives Armenians there the opportunity for "hayababanoom," that is to do your best to keep your Armenian identity. The challenge here in the US is assimilation and losing the language and identity. But what's interesting here is that even without the language, the Armenian identity and pride is still alive. Lebanon is a war-torn country and we were raised to defend our neighborhoods. Growing up, I saw three wars and it was our youth who were protecting the Armenian homes. Here it's a different type of survival game, which is more focused on ambition and work. But overall, the main similarity is being Armenian at heart.

TB: Did you always know you wanted to be

a singer? Did you ever feel a calling?

EB: I was born a singer. My father had a very beautiful voice and my mom was culturally rich in providing me information and repertoire and giving me that spirit of feeling the song and the lyrics at an early age. I was bullied in school at times because I was a singer and both students and teachers targeted me. There was, however, encouragement at school from the right people. I remember the first song I ever sang on stage was *Nubadagees Hasneem Miayn* (If I could only reach my goal), an Armenian patriotic song very well known in Lebanon. With the support of my parents, at the age of 9 I performed two recitals and sang over 40 songs with a whole band. Each had a standing ovation and each had its tears and joys. But then I hit puberty and I had to stop singing because the voice changes during that time. I started again at 19 years old and here I am.

TB: You sing both nationalistic and pop songs and you can range from songs such as the catchy *Arev Arev* to the patriotic *Gini Lic*. Which gives you more satisfaction?

EB: The most important thing for me, and for every artist, should be to make people happy. It is fulfilling to me as an artist if I'm singing on stage and I can touch your heart with a nationalistic song or if I see you dancing at a wedding to one of my pop songs. People would ask why I would sing *Tamam Ashkhar* and then *Arev Arev*. They question the choice to move from one to the next so quickly. I say that every generation has its tastes and my first and last objective is to spread joy and the Armenian culture.

TB: Armenian musicians oftentimes put a modern spin on our traditional songs and also compose their own music. Why are both important for our community?

EB: Every time has its own demands, art-wise. Armenian music is now evolving into something new because we have two or three generations at any given time, such as a grandmother, mother, daughter. Each listens to a certain kind of music. My responsibility as an artist is to identify all three generations and find a solution that satisfies all of them because I don't want to lose anyone. My joy as an artist is to bring my music to all three of those generations.

TB: Are there any musicians who inspired

you?

EB: Armenian *kusanagan* (troubadour) musicians, such as Norayr Mnatsakanyan, Roupen Matevossian and Hovhannes Badalyan. From the new artists, I'm proud to say they are my friends, such as Arman Hovhannisyanyan, Martin Mkrtychyan and Armenchik, who was the pioneer in bringing Armenian pop music back to life. He reached a new generation of people who weren't interested in Armenian music before. From the classical point of view, my influences are artists dating back to the 19th century, such as Enrico Caruso, Beniamino Gigli, Franco Corelli and Luciano Pavarotti, who, like me, are all tenors. All of these artists have an input in my art.

TB: What is your writing process like?

EB: It all starts with the concept. In my song *Arev Arev* that I composed, I had the feeling of wanting people to feel sunny, happy and easygoing. I wanted to portray that sunniness so I started from that subject. And then I started thinking about blue skies and friends getting together and having fun on a beach. Once I visualize the concept, I can begin to write the lyrics accordingly.

TB: Can you take me through your professional music training?

EB: It started by encouragement from the elders. I used to go to class and get bored but then I realized it gave me a passion and that I had so much to learn. I followed the phrase, "know that you don't know." The most successful people in the world know they don't know. University gave me that insight to always keep my teaching index open, to be humble and to work hard. Nothing is granted to you. As long as you're bringing quality to the people and not imitating anyone and as long as you're innovating, this is the key process of being an artist. The hit song *Mi Gna* made such an impact. It was discovered by the rapper Super Sako and he chose the singer and production. In fact, I had a very interesting conversation with Super Sako a couple months ago. We were sitting at a table and I asked him this same question about his writing process. He said he follows his feelings. If he's going to write a song about happiness, he'll think about it during his wedding anniversary or his child's birthday. If he's going to write a sad song, he reflects on a fight with his wife. You have to create the atmosphere for a song to be born.

I refined my operatic studies at McGill University in Montreal. I was accepted among 300 students with a full scholarship to study there for five years. I graduated with a bachelor's degree and performed five operas as a student. The tenor voice is a rare voice. My voice was a God-given talent and with hard work I was able to elevate it. We put McGill on the map, in terms of opera. The last opera we did had a \$700,000 budget, which is huge for a university. We performed Puccini's "La Boheme." At the same time, it was playing at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and the Opera de Montreal so it was significant achievement for the university.

TB: Do you see yourself returning to the opera world one day?

EB: Maybe. As an artist and as a vocalist I may face technical difficulties, though. Opera is all about dedication. It's a disciplined art and one of the hardest arts to perform because you're an actor and you're a vocalist. You have to learn your music by heart and you have to know your character. As an artist, you're portraying a certain character that gives certain emotions to people. Opera is like acting, singing and playing at the same time. My desire to sing opera again can reactivate at any time but it would be more so because of my passion than world-class operatic singing.

TB: How do you feel when you perform on stage at an Armenian event? Is there a distinction in your emotions when you sing for an Armenian versus a non-Armenian audience?

EB: Both audiences bring me joy. In an artistic aspect, the audience gives you more energy if they're from your culture, regardless if you speak the language. I've seen an Armenian-American who didn't speak Armenian, in tears when I'm singing

Pajakneruh (Raise your glasses) and he tells you he doesn't understand the words, yet, there are tears streaming down his face. That gives me another boost and appreciation for what I'm doing.

TB: Aside from your live performances, are you also working on recording an album?

EB: That's another goal. Studio work is not easy because it requires a lot of planning and you have to keep your signature too and be cautious of what you're releasing. I am always thinking of those three generations and how to bring in the younger generation. I want to do with Adiss did, what Paul Baghdadian, what Levon Katerjian did for their time. They were pioneers because their generation was still listening to Turkish songs. Eastern Armenian singers don't have the same challenges we face in the West. They all speak the same dialect. We have a big issue here with the language. For example, a Bolsahye may not understand a Beirut expression. There, it's universal. They sing and everyone understands the words and the subject. For us, it's even more difficult to write lyrics for an 18-year-old guy or girl and make sure he or she can relate it to their culture and linguistics. If you make it a little difficult, you won't hit that goal. Assimilation is worrisome to us at the same time. We can't forget that we have to show appreciation and love to everyone. Maybe those who don't speak Armenian feel more Armenian at heart and maybe one day will be very successful in gaining Armenian Genocide recognition. So, for me it's to invite them in and balance my music with those who do speak the language.

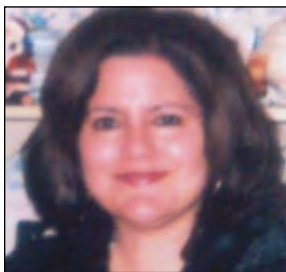
TB: Singers such as yourself and those of your generation are carrying on our Armenian musical traditions. How do you feel about the torch being passed onto you and your fellow musicians?

EB: It's a burden because it's not easy to fill in the shoes of those legends before us, even living legends like Adiss and Harout Pamboukjian. It's very hard to gain people's hearts. That is something you earn and you shouldn't take it for granted because you can lose it in a heartbeat if you don't know what you're doing. Love is reciprocal. Some singers understand this concept and love their fans right back because we're born to make them happy.

TB: Is there a network or collaboration among Armenian singers?

EB: I've heard legends talk about other legends very badly and even singers of our generations have this same competitive mentality. The way I address it is that each one of us is a king in our own kingdom. We can all be successful and work together as long as we respect one another. If I'm singing with Harout Pamboukjian, I would enter the stage with humility. My body language would change because I know I am singing with a legend. And in 15 years if someone is singing with me, they better show the same respect as well. You cannot overmaster the master.

Right now, there's a good channel among Armenian artists as well as friendship. Just yesterday I was talking with Armenchik and since I first met him, I felt the connection and the love right away. We give one another respect and love. They have to respect your art before you because they don't know you as a person yet. Armenchik the other day told me he saw my Sayat Nova clips on YouTube and he then he began singing my song *Arev Arev* to me and I sang his songs right back. There's a real brotherhood going on. Our goal is to keep the Armenian identity. We all face our challenges. I call singers pioneers because it's really a blessing to keep that fire alive. When people are singing *Arev Arev* or *Mi Gna* I feel like it's a real victory. These kids aren't supposed to sing songs like that. They're not even supposed to be interested in it, so we must be doing something right. Assimilation is not just limited to Armenians. Every nation outside of its roots is suffering. There has to be more effort. Do your own homework. Light a candle. Instead of saying "it's dark," light a cultural candle in your house. "Oor vor kales, togh dzaghik dzaghgee." Wherever you walk, let flowers bloom.



Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

Baked Eggplant Appetizer with Vegetables

INGREDIENTS

2 large eggplant, washed and pierced with a fork
 1/3 cup tahini (to taste)
 3-4 cloves garlic, minced
 2 tablespoons olive oil
 Juice of 2 large lemons (to taste)
 1/2 cup red onions, minced
 1/4 cup green bell pepper, chopped
 Salt, black pepper, paprika, cumin and cayenne pepper (to taste)
 Olive oil
 Chopped fresh parsley, mint and dill
 Assorted vegetables including fresh carrots, cabbage, celery, cucumbers and radishes

PREPARATION:

Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees. On a cookie sheet, bake the eggplant until they collapse and the skin is slightly charred. Cool eggplant completely and peel off skin. In a large bowl, mash the eggplant until smooth, then add tahini, garlic, olive oil, lemon juice, red onions, bell pepper, and choice of seasonings. Mix thoroughly until all ingredients are well blended; add more lemon juice or spices if desired. Cover and chill overnight or serve at room temperature. Drizzle with olive oil and garnish with choice of parsley, mint and dill. Serve appetizer with assorted vegetables, crackers, cheese, olives, Armenian pita bread and lavosh.

Serves 6-8.

*Christine's recipes have been published in the Fresno Bee newspaper, Sunset magazine, Cooking Light magazine, and at <http://www.thearmeniankitchen.com/>



ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

MASSACHUSETTS

DECEMBER 17 — St. James 86th Anniversary Name Day Celebration. Sunday. Abp. Khajag Barsamian, Primate, Presiding. Honoring Michael G. Yapchaian, Parishioner of the Year, and Nishan & Margrit Atinizian, Diocesan St. Vartan Award Recipients. 10 a.m. Divine Liturgy. Name Day Banquet to follow. Keljik Hall. St. James' Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center. \$45 per person. \$10 for children 12 and under. Advanced Reservations Required — purchase tickets online at www.stjameswatertown.org. 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown 617.923.8860 info@stthagop.com

JANUARY 6, 2018 — Saturday family Armenian Christmas program for children of Neponsit Valley. 10-11:30 a.m. Norwood. An un-pageant, pageant. A fun, interactive, and participatory account of Jesus' birth followed by an Armenian Christmas craft. Sponsored by Amaras Art Alliance. For location and additional details contact Neponsitvalleyarmenians@gmail.com. The program is free but registration is required.

FEBRUARY 10, 2018 — Poon Paregentan Dinner Dance - Family Kef Night, Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church, 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. Featuring Jason Naroian Ensemble: Jason Naroian — Vocals and Dumbeg, Joe Kouyoumjian — Oud, Ara Jeknavorian — Clarinet, and Dave Anisbigian — Guitar, and. Children Activities - 5 pm and Dinner/Dancing at 6 p.m. Paid in advance tickets must be received by February 6: Adults \$25, Students (6-12 years old) \$10, and 5 & under, free. At the door: Adults \$35 and Students \$15. For reservations, contact Maria Kazanjian (617) 240-3686 or Ria.tk@verizon.net. Tables of 8 can be reserved in advance with full payment Checks made payable to: Sts Vartanantz Armenian Church.

MARCH 11, 2018 — "Jazz and Art for YerazArt" on Sunday, 5 p.m., at Anoush'ella Saj Kitchen, 35 W Newton St., Boston. More information will follow.



St. James Armenian Church of Watertown, Mass., will host its Name Day Celebration on Sunday, December 17. Abp. Khajag Barsamian, Primate, will preside. The day will honor Michael G. Yapchaian, Parishioner of the Year, and Nishan & Margrit Atinizian, Diocesan St. Vartan Award Recipients. Services will start at 10 a.m. The Name Day Banquet to follow. Keljik Hall. St. James' Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center. \$45 per person. \$10 for children 12 and under. Advanced Reservations Required. purchase tickets online at www.stjameswatertown.org. 617.923.8860 or info@stthagop.com

RHODE ISLAND

SEPTEMBER 13, 2017-MARCH 14, 2018 — Armenian Film Festival "The Nation's Past & Present" Sponsored by Cultural Committee of the Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church, in Hanoian Hall, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence. Wednesday, October 11, , at 7 pm, "Garni, Geghard" Wednesday, November 15, 2017, at 7 pm, "Armenia" (Yerevan, Echmiadzin, Khor Virap, Zvartnots, Sevan, Dilijan, Lori) Wednesday, January 24, at 7 pm "Country of Armenian Kings - 2" (Ani, Kars, Edesia, Musaler) Wednesday, February, 21, at 7 pm, "Country of Armenian Kings - 3" (Cilicia, Kharbert, Adana, Zeytoun) Wednesday, March, 14, 2018, at 7 pm. All presented in English, donation of \$10.

WASHINGTON, DC

JANUARY 9, 2018 — Knights and Daughters of Vartan program, co-sponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, Dinner and Public Discussion, guest speaker, Gregory Aftandilian. "The Impact of the Armenian Genocide on the Children of the Survivors." Tuesday, January 9, 2018, 7 p.m., St. Mary Armenian Church Cultural hall, 4125 Fessenden Street, NW, Washington, D.C. Reservation is a must. Please call Takuhi Halajian (301) 219-4041 or Jake Bournazian (202) 380-6948

Calendar items are free. Entries should not be longer than 5 lines. Listings should include contact information. Items will be edited to fit the space, if need be. A photo may be sent with the listing no later than Mondays at noon.

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Armenian National Library Announces Publication Of Armenian Review Bibliography-Index

YEREVAN and WATERTOWN — The National Library of Armenia (NLA) announces the publication of *The Armenian Review: A Bibliography-Index (1948-2008)*.

Established in 1919 with the charter to preserve and help further develop the written heritage of the Armenian people, the NLA is the largest repository of Armenian literary chronicles. It houses over six million items, predominantly in Armenian with several collections in major and minor languages covering a broad range of topics. The NLA collection offers an impressive assembly of 3,652 Armenian periodical titles.

Over the decades, the National Library of Armenia has published a large number of titles, catalogues, and reference materials, including bibliographies and bio-bibliographies. Cognizant of the importance of the latter two categories for research and scholarship, the Library has printed 276 bibliographies, including 25 bio-bibliographies of prominent Armenian writers, poets, literary scholars and intellectuals.

The Armenian Review: Bibliography-Index (1948-2008) constitutes the first English language project of its kind which the NLA has sponsored in collaboration with the Armenian Diaspora. "It is our hope that this project will inspire other diasporan colleagues and Armenian Studies scholars to undertake similar initiatives thus strengthening academic ties between Armenia and the diaspora" said Tigran Zargaryan, director of the NLA, remarking on this major achievement.

Recognized, as the longest continually-printed English-language Armenian publication, *The Armenian Review* is an internationally acclaimed multidisciplinary academic journal. First published in 1948, the journal's mandate has been to "strive to acquaint the English-speaking public with the history and cultural achievements of the Armenian people." Reflecting the realities of the time, in general, and the Armenian experience in the 20th century and the post-Genocide period, in particular, the Review has made a major contribution to Armenian

studies by providing a forum for a generation of emerging Armenologists. The Armenian Review, Inc. began as part of the Hairenik Association's three major publication.

The Armenian Review: A Bibliography-Index (1948-2008), compiled and edited by Ara Ghazarians, the curator of the Armenian Cultural Foundation of Arlington, Mass., is the most comprehensive index of the journal to date.

Comprised of more than 3,000 entries in three main parts, the Bibliography-Index, spanning over 300 pages, covers 50 volumes and 200 issues, more than 20,000 pages. The first and largest part, "Articles," is composed of 25 subject categories (2,055 entries), including anthropology, sociology, ethnography, philosophy, the arts, Armenian church, language and linguistics, literature, history from antiquity to the present, Diasporan communities and institutions, political parties, education, Soviet Union (its republics, ideology, nationalities policy, law, political and civil liberties).

A second section, "Book Reviews," provides a wealth of information on close to 500 titles (484 entries) related to Armenia, the Armenian experience and people, and topics relevant to the history of Armenia in particular and the region in general. Lastly, "Illustrations" provides a detailed index of all the images, sketches, maps, drawings, portraits and photographs (762 entries) that have accompanied the issues of the Armenian Review throughout the years. The Bibliography-Index concludes with an alphabetically listed detailed index of names, subjects, and book reviews.

A limited number of copies will be available from the National Library of Armenia in Yerevan. Printed in the United States and in a limited quantity, the bibliography-index is available for purchase through Amaras Art Alliance of Massachusetts and through select Armenian bookstores beginning in January. Proceeds from the sale of this book are designated to fund future publication of similar works sponsored by Amaras Art Alliance.

For details visit www.AmarasOnline.com.



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Mirror Spectator



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EDITOR
Alin K. Gregorian

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR
Marc Mgrditchian

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST:
Edmond Y. Azadian

CONTRIBUTORS:

Florence Avakian, Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian, Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, Diana Der Hovanesian, Philip Ketchian, Kevork Keushkerian, Harut Sassounian, Hagop Vartivarian, Naomi Zeytoonian

CORRESPONDENTS:

Armenia - Hagop Avedikian
Boston - Nancy Kalajian
New York/New Jersey - Taleen Babayan
Berlin - Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Contributing Photographers:
Jirair Hovsepian

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FAX: 617-924-2887

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E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

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755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472-1509

COMMENTARY

Armenia's Economy Choked by Undeclared War

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Armenia is caught between a rock and a hard place. All regional developments bypass Armenia either by design or by neglect.

Azerbaijan and Turkey are dead-set against Armenia and have been using their economic and political clout to isolate Yerevan from all regional projects, using the Karabakh conflict as an excuse, and prompting some desperate Armenians and disinterested pundits to advise Armenia's government to give in to concessions or to compromise in the disputed conflict.

However, those familiar with history will warn against such compromises and the Armenian people realize in their guts that the conflict with Azerbaijan does not begin nor end in Karabakh; it goes deep into history to face the real intentions of the Pan-Turkic movement. Armenia is and has been an obstacle in the path of a large Ottoman Empire and it was already the target of an attempt to wipe it off from the map to achieve that dream.

The other regional powers – and some friendly nations at that – have a pragmatic approach to all those problems; their participation in the regional projects is dictated by their own national interests. Georgia, Iran and Russia are supposedly nations friendly to Armenia but they have virtually abandoned Armenia in its confrontation with Turkey. In view of their self-interest, Armenia has become politically dispensable and left to its own devices to survive.

The hostility of Turkey and Azerbaijan is not simply imagined by Armenia. It is out in the open; It is expressed in words and deeds.

As reported by the Turkish news outlet Haberler, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaking at his AK Party's recent conference, complained that "official Yerevan keeps the gates of friendship with Turkey locked under pressure from the Armenian Diaspora. As a result, Armenia is ousted from regional transport and energy projects. Moreover, it is plunging into deeper isolation," adding that by contrast Georgia has successfully built bridges between Turkey and the West.

On the other hand, Georgia has not changed the tone of its relations with Armenia

since the days when Mikheil Saakashvili was president and had arrogantly announced that "whoever opposes Azerbaijan is Georgia's enemy."

Though nowadays Saakashvili is a renegade and a wanted man in his own country, the policy he crafted vis-a-vis Armenia still stands.

Tbilisi is a partner in all regional projects which exclude Armenia. For example, Tbilisi has voted in Azerbaijan's favor on UN General Assembly Resolution 62/243 while Armenia to this day has refrained from recognizing South Ossetia's and Abkhazia's independence despite Russian expectation for it to do so, in deference to Tbilisi.

After completing the energy pipeline network in the Caucasus bypassing Armenia, there was a period of anticipation concerning the construction of the railway system because of a dramatic drop in oil prices but China's \$1-trillion infrastructure development project gave a new lease on life to the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway line. This time, not only was Armenia the victim, but even Russia was excluded. Despite some cooperation and political coordination between China and Russia on international issues, deep suspicions and competition lurk in the background.

China supported the Central Asian nations to construct their share of the Silk Road railway system which will eventually link to the BTK.

This new railway system not only will punish the nation of

Armenia but also ethnic Armenians living in Akhalkalaki, where a train station is being built.

Tweeting from Georgia, Bradley Jardine states, "Georgia's authorities hope the BTK will provide jobs and security for isolated Akhalkalaki, in a region with a large ethnic Armenian population that Tbilisi authorities have long suspected of harboring separatist ambitions. Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili has stressed that the railroad's potential to achieve greater economic and sustainable development ... but Akhalkalaki locals complain they have seen little benefit so far from the station's opening. The mood among Armenians in the town is that the project is not for us."

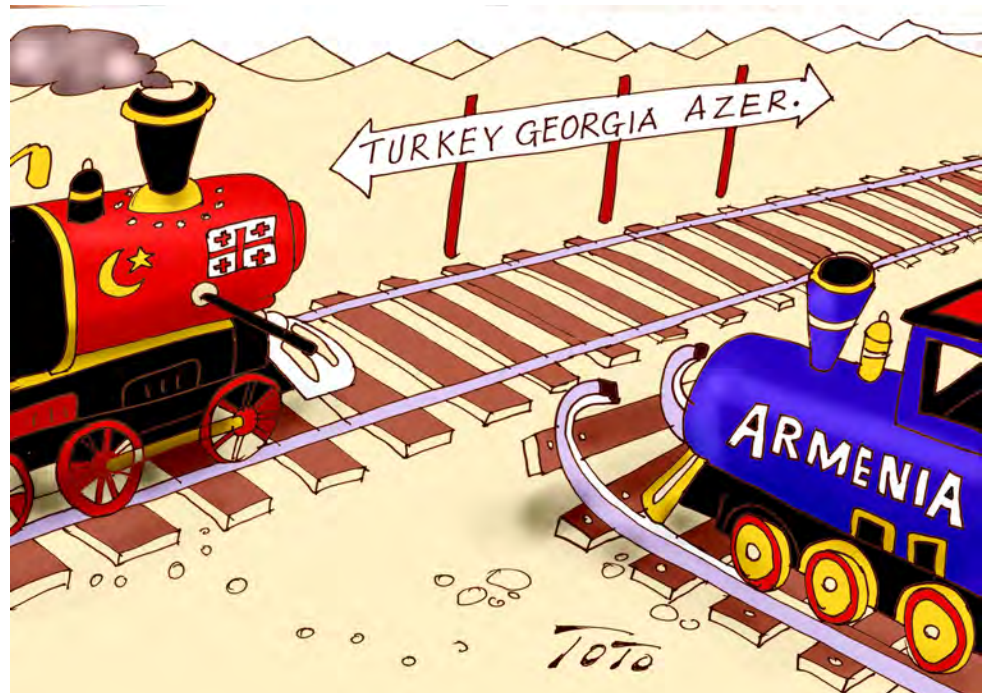
The Turks and the Azeris have built apartment complexes to bring their workers to settle and take those jobs. Even the Georgian government is encouraging Turkish Metskhets to resettle in the area to scare away the Armenians. In 2015, red graffiti appeared on Old Ottoman fortress in Akhalkalaki warning the local Armenians, "We will return."

Georgia's Turkification is progressing at a very fast pace. The Turks have overtaken Ajaria's economy and they even treat the local Georgians as second-class citizens.

The Georgians are concerned and they are up in arms. Recently, residents of another village called Dardash, on Georgia's border with Turkey, blocked the main highway connecting Turkey to Georgia to protest the lawlessness introduced in Georgia since the opening of the border with Turkey in 2015.

President Erdogan himself publically announced that Ajaria has been part of the Ottoman Empire and has to be returned to Turkey.

Now comes another railway system to circumvent Armenia:



the North-South Corridor (NSTC). NSTC is the Armenian-Iranian railway link, also known as the South Armenian Railway, which would connect Iran's southern port of Bandar Abbas with the Black Sea and Russia through Armenia and Georgia.

Writing in Eurasian Daily Monitor, Rahim Rahimov, a London-based correspondent states: "President Aliyev pointedly mentioned last month that two transport corridors would be integrated. This effectively puts an end to Armenia's ambitions to become a regional transit country and adversely affects it politically and economically. Yet, Armenia's closest ally, Russia, has essentially been unresponsive of Yerevan's position in this issue."

Incidentally, Tbilisi took advantage of Azerbaijan's determination to exclude Armenia and to include Georgia in the BTK system. The Georgian government claimed that it did not possess enough funds to construct its share of the railway system, thus forcing Aliyev to cough up another \$775 million in terms of a loan to Georgia.

In this war of monopolizing land transport routes and energy systems, Baku and Ankara seem to be more motivated by isolating and stifling Armenia than truly reaping the rewards of the economic benefits these developments bring.

This is an undeclared war against Armenia; a war of attrition with Georgia's active participation and Russia's passive negligence.



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Fifth Century Historian Describes Deplorable State of Armenian Society

A friend recently sent me an excerpt written in the 5th Century by historian Movses Khorenatsi in which he described the deplorable societal conditions in ancient Armenia.

My friend commented: "St. Movses could have easily written these words about our Armenian clergy, leaders, church, organizations, judges, institutions and us today in 2017 as he did in the 5th Century. So what has changed in 1,600 years? What will change? What if nothing changes? What if this is who and what we are? The greatest challenge we face as Armenians is how to survive and succeed on the world stage in spite of ourselves and not give up hope. Because despite the worst of our nature that St. Movses describes, somehow this small nation found a way to survive to this day. Let's not lament over Armenia. Let's rejoice over our children, grandchildren and the bright future that each of us can create for our nation."

The quotation below is from Movses Khorenatsi's trailblazing book, "History of the Armenians." The chapter is titled, "Lament over the removal of the Armenian throne from

Arsacid Family and of the archbishopric from the family of St. Gregory." The book has been translated from Armenian into English by Prof. Robert W. Thomson of Harvard University. I have added in brackets a few clarifications to the translation.

Movses Khorenatsi wrote:

"I lament over you Armenia; I lament over who you are superior to all the nations of the north. For your king and priest, counselor and teacher, have been removed. Peace has been disturbed, disorder has taken root, orthodoxy has been shaken, and heresy has strengthened through ignorance.

"I pity you, church of Armenia, which has lost the splendor of the sanctuary and has been deprived of the noble pastor and his companion. No longer do I see your rational flock pastured in a verdant place and by peaceful waters nor gathered in a fold and protected from wolves, but scattered to the wilderness and precipices.

"The teachers are ignorant and presumptuous, taking honor by themselves and not called by God, elected by money and not by the [Holy] Spirit; lovers of gold and envious, they have abandoned gentleness, where God dwells, and have become wolves, tearing their own flocks.

"The religious are hypocritical, ostentatious, vainglorious, lovers of honor rather than lovers of God.

"The [senior] clergy are proud, slothful, frivolous, lazy, haters of the arts and instructive words, lovers of commerce and buffoonery.

"The students are lazy to study and eager to teach; they are theologians before their examinations [before they finish their studies].

"The laity are arrogant, insubordinate, blusterers, loafers, topers [drunks], pernicious, and they flee their patrimonies.

"The soldiers are cowards, false boasters, hating their weapons, negligent, lovers of ease, intemperate, thieves,

drunkards, marauders, imitators of brigands.

"The princes are rebellious, companions of thieves, robbers [bribeable], rapacious [greedy], avaricious, grasping, plunderers, despoilers of the land, depraved, likeminded with their subjects [servants].

"The judges are inhuman, false, deceitful, venal, [not protectors of rights] ignorant of the law, volatile, contentious.

"And [in general], love and shame have been entirely removed from all...."

"The kings are cruel and evil rulers, imposing heavy and onerous burdens and giving intolerable commands. Governors do not [keep the order] correct disorders and are unmerciful. Friends are betrayed and enemies strengthened. Faith is sold for this vain life. Brigands have come in abundance and from all sides. Houses are sacked and possessions ravaged. There is bondage for the foremost and prison for the famous. There is exile abroad for the nobility and innumerable outrages for the common people. Cities are captured and fortresses destroyed; towns are ruined and buildings burned. There are famines without end and every kind of [epidemic] illness and death. Piety has been forgotten and expectation is for hell...."

My friend who sent me this "lament" is comparing Movses Khorenatsi's description of the deplorable state in Armenia 1,600 years ago to today's conditions in general both in Armenia and the Diaspora! Of course, one cannot generalize to everyone in Armenian society. There are respectable exceptions in every segment of our society, among the teachers, clergy, military, students, judges, and rulers.

I agree with my friend when he expresses the hope that our nation will survive despite all the shortcomings and setbacks, and despite all enemies inside and outside of the country, as it has for centuries since Movses Khorenatsi wrote his highly critical observations!

Trump's Siege of Jerusalem

Trump's recognition of Jerusalem has raised eyebrows in the political circles of the world. Jerusalem has been the primary source of tension between Israel and the Muslim World. Israel occupied the Palestinian majority East Jerusalem after the 1967 war. United Nations does not recognize Jerusalem as the sole capital of Jewish State, and has termed the status of Jerusalem as "corpus separatum" meaning a separated body. In addition to that United Nations believes that Eastern Jerusalem should be the capital of future Palestine state. But Trump's declaration

has demolished all hopes of a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli dispute. Turkey has called for an emergency summit of Islamic countries. The effective response of the Islamic world to Trump's declaration is facing a big hurdle in the form of Iran-Saudi rivalry. Riyadh has significantly tilted towards Israel in the recent years in order to contain the rise of Iran in the Middle East. Iran's rapid rise has forced Saudi Arabia to side with Israel, the arch rival of Iran, in order to balance the power equation in the region. Furthermore, according to media reports Saudi leaders have vowed to support Israel in its war with Iranian-backed Hezbollah.

Pakistan has rejected the unilateral recognition of Jerusalem by the United States and termed it a blatant violation of international law. Moreover, Pakistan like Turkey has also called an emergency meeting of Muslim countries. Islamabad has no diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv and does not recognize it as a legal member of international community. American President Donald Trump has taken several unpredictable and unilateral decisions in the past. He withdrew the United States from Paris climate change agreement and Iran nuclear agreement, threatened North Korea with nuclear weapons on the floor of United Nations General Assembly, and now the recognition of Jerusalem has evoked a strong reaction from the European Union and Muslim countries. It will harm American moral superiority. Washington has

officially joined the Israeli camp in the Middle East. It will further alienate it in the Muslim World which has long considered America's war on terror as against Muslims. Many political scientists believe that Saudi Arabia's enmity with Iran will seriously affect its response to the declaration. Riyadh is engulfed by many problems. Its military action in Yemen has not been successful. Its diplomatic blockade of Qatar has also resulted in failure.

The latest American move will weaken its position in the Middle East. It will bolster Iran's anti-American rhetoric in the region. Trump said that the process of shifting embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem will start soon. It is the perfect time for Muslim countries to sit and devise a proper strategy for tackling American move. What Muslim nations need is unity. A strong political and diplomatic response is needed to pressurize Trump's administration for taking back this decision. It is not that Muslim nations lack power for a

befitting response. What they require is a strong political will and coherent action. The United States of America is dependent on Muslim nations in many ways. It needs Saudi Arabia for oil imports to run its massive industry. Besides this Washington is dependent on Pakistan for vital supplies to its troops in Afghanistan. Furthermore, Pakistan will be an integral part of any future peace process with the Afghan Taliban. Turkey hosts North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) and American military bases. It can pressurize the West by withdrawing from Nato to which it is the largest contributor of troops after the United States. Apart from that Washington requires Ankara's support for keeping an eye on Russia.

Moreover, Muslim nations can put significant pressure on Washington by enhancing their ties with Russia and China. The United States is home to a strong Muslim minority. The Muslim lobby in America can play a vital role in forcing Trump's administration to review its decision by raising their voices through using different platforms.

Robert Fisk, an English writer and journalist, said in interview to Irish radio station, "I received a call from Palestinian women: 'Remember Kingdom of Heaven,' she asked me, referring to Ridley Scott's great movie. Well it's now the Kingdom of Hell."

(This commentary originally appeared on the website of *The Nation* on December 11.)

Why the US and Russia Should Support the EU-Armenia Agreement

By K. M. Greg Sarkissian

The European Union (EU) and Armenia signed a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) on November 24, 2017, in the presence of high representatives of both parties.

The US and Russia should support this agreement because Armenia lies along the geopolitical fault lines of two civilizations: the East and the West, Europe and Asia, Christendom and Islam. This agreement enhances the neutrality of Armenia and the security in the region.

The EU will be supporting democratic reforms in governance, the rule of law, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedom, the independence of the judiciary, and the development of public and social institutions in Armenia. CEPA also enables cooperation in the energy, transport, environment and trade sectors. It also promises improvements in banking, travel and business infrastructures along with investment opportunities and a healthier environment. CEPA does not include free trade arrangements as Armenia is a member of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

The road to EU integration enjoys broad consensus among Armenians in the political arena and civil society. Armenia chose this path because it is public knowledge that its discontinuation in 2013 of its newly-minted association with EU was due to clear warnings from Moscow that its security guarantees by Russia would be withdrawn if it proceeded with the association agreement. In fact, Armenia was the first country that experienced strong backlash from Russia in response to its negotiations with EU due to the problems in Ukraine.

Armenia signed this agreement knowing well that it needs the establishment of active bilateral relations with as many countries as feasible to overcome the risk of isolation and garner guarantees for its national security. One presumes that Moscow has been kept informed all along that Yerevan will sign such an Agreement.

Russia holds the keys to Armenia's security which was solidified by the November 2016 Agreement on the creation of Armenian-Russian Joint Military Forces. Russia also holds the key to the Karabakh issue and ener-

gy policies, given the Armenian-Russian gas agreement signed on December 2, 2013, substantially limited Armenia's options to devise an independent energy policy. Thus, CEPA is a huge step for Armenia to regain space for sovereign decisions and credibility with the international community.

However, the Russian press, a highly centralized and censored media, reacted negatively to Armenia signing this Agreement. There is nothing in the Agreement that may pose any danger or create tension toward a third party. Armenia, with an improved social contact, a stronger and more independent judiciary and rule of law, fairer business conditions, and modern regulatory frameworks will be a catalyst between the two economic unions. Russian officials such as the Ambassador to Armenia agree with Mr. Zhelezniak, a Russian politician of a ruling party who "...supports developing relations and cooperation with others on an open basis and in this context, Armenia is furthering its ties with both Russia and European Union... Wise and balanced policies being implemented in Armenia, that will allow for the greatest use of developmental potential that exists in Armenia."

If this agreement, which includes duties, obligations and commitments succeeds, it will create opportunities to improve the quality of relations between the East and West. The countries within EAEU, lead by Russia, would equally benefit if Armenia becomes a bridge between the EU and EAEU countries, in trade and development, as this agreement is a test case for co-existence between EU and EAEU.

Similarly, the benefit to the West is best described by Dan Coats, Chief of US National Intelligence, who states: "The main mediators of OSCE-Minsk Group, do not want the resumption of large scale military operation, as this does not meet national, regional and international interests." The European Union has huge economic interests in Azerbaijan, invested heavily in the country's energy sector, fears that war between Azerbaijan and Armenia can lead to disruption of supply of oil bypassing Russia. US on the other hand, uses Georgia to pursue its interest in Transcaucasia. The more peace in the region, the more chance that Georgia may become a member of NATO.

The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh is one of the most destabilizing factors in the Caucasus involving



Why the US and Russia Should Support The EU-Armenia Agreement

EU, from page 19

regional and international powers. The April 2016 Azerbaijani attempt to break through Armenian defense lines had no effect on the situation as a whole. The present stage of the negotiation process has reached deadlock, politically and militarily. Politically, the conflict is not resolved because the positions of the parties are irreconcilable. War, on the other hand, is unacceptable to the political forces and interests of both regional and international powers. All parties know that the outcome of war is by no means certain. It will involve a huge number of victims and damage to civilian structures.

While Azerbaijan showed the world that it is willing to take the risk of resolving the conflict by military means in April 2016, it too needs peace in the region, despite its belligerent language in its relations with Armenia.

Armenia's external foreign policy is carried out by establishing active, bilateral relationships with as many countries as feasible, and multilaterally, through participation in international organizations such as the EU and EAEU.

Both these approaches are critical for Armenia to earn a measure of respectability in the international system.

The signing of the CEPA is a milestone for Armenia as it represents a compromise between the old Association Agreement of Europe and Armenia's new commitment to a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement. The US and Russia should support the EU-Armenia Agreement (CEPA), invest in Armenia and help it to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict peacefully. A prosperous, neutral Armenia, defusing the fault line of tensions and the clash of civilizations, will be a critical component of peace and development in the region and the world.

(K.M. Greg Sarkissian, is a founding member of the Zoryan Institute, in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1982, and in Canada in 1984. He is the chief strategist of the Institute since 1990 and has been President since 1995. Along with his colleagues and Board Members, he has established the Genocide and Human Rights University Program in partnership with the University of Toronto.)

Confessionalization and Reform: Conference on Mkhit'arist Enterprise at UCLA December 16 and 17

LOS ANGELES – Over the last few decades, historians have come to refer to the period from the Protestant Reformation in Europe to the late 17th century as the era of “confessionalization.” Confessionalization has come to be understood as a global process marking the birth of early modern religious revival and reform movements that affected societies, states, and cultures across Eurasia, including in the Ottoman and Safavid empires. This conference seeks to place the birth of the Mkhit'arist congregation of erudite Catholic-Armenian missionaries and monks within the larger wave of confessionalization that was sweeping the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean in the late 17th century. Bringing together an international cast of scholars, the conference commemorates the 300th anniversary of the establishment of Abbot Mkhit'ar's reformist order on the island of San Lazzaro in the Venetian lagoon. Scholars will explore and analyze the pivotal role played by this Order in the remaking of early modern Armenian confessional and national identity through their interventions in print culture, Armenology, Armenian lexicography, grammar, and literary translation.

The conference is organized by the Richard Hovannisian Chair of Modern Armenian History at UCLA With the co-sponsorship of

the Narekats'i Chair of Armenian Studies (UCLA), the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), the USC Armenian Studies Institute, and the UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies (CNES).

It will take place on December 16 and 17 at the UCLA Faculty Center, California Room.

A long list of participants will speak at the two-day event, including Archbishop Levon Zekyan, Prof. Sebouh David Aslanian of UCLA, Prof. Paulo Lucca (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia), Prof. Cesare Santus (École française de Rome), Prof. Benedetta Contin (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia): Raymond Kévorkian of the Nubarian Libaray in Paris and Meline Pehlivanian (Berlin): “

For a detailed schedule of speakers, visit <http://www.international.ucla.edu/cnes/event/12927>

Axe Murderer Safarov Promoted to Higher Military Rank

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Ramil Safarov, the Azerbaijani serviceman infamous for the horrendous murder of Armenian serviceman Gurgen Margaryan while the latter was sleeping, has been promoted to a higher military rank.

According to Azerbaijani media reports, Safarov has been promoted to lieutenant colonel from major.

During a NATO training seminar in Budapest in 2004, Safarov broke into Margaryan's room at night and axed him to death while Margaryan was asleep. After a long court case, the Azerbaijani officer was convicted and sentenced to serve a life sentence, without the possibility of parole for 30 years. The Hungarian court repeatedly stated that Safarov's extradition to Azerbaijan was impossible, but in 2012, Safarov was extradited. Upon arriving to Azerbaijan, President Ilham Aliyev immediately pardoned the murderer and promoted to a higher military rank. The murderer was even given eight years of back pay. On the same day, Armenia severed diplomatic relations with Hungary.

Cyprus President Thanks Armenian Community for Contributions

NICOSIA, Cyprus (Public Radio of Armenia) – President Nicos Anastasiades expressed his country's pride in the contribution of the Armenian community in the political, social, and economic life of the island, the Cyprus Mail reported on December 12.

Anastasiades, who was addressing an event the previous day held in honor of the Armenians of Cyprus, recalled that both peoples have fallen victim historically to the same aggressor, noting that they did not give up but fought and are continuing to fight for the great principle of justice in order to prevail on the international scene.

“This is why Cyprus was one of the first European countries to recognize the Armenian Genocide and we have jointly condemned the perpetrators of this crime,” he said.

Referring to the Armenian community in Cyprus, he said that “as a state, we will always show off proudly the fact that your small community manages with its vigor to be present in all aspects of our country's life – political, social and economic.”

Anastasiades also spoke of his vision for a free and reunified Cyprus, which will be inhabited in peace and prosperity by all Cypriot citizens: Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Armenians, Maronites and Latins.

“We aim to put an end to the occupation and we insist on working towards a just, viable and functional solution, which will not allow for a dependence on any third country,” he stressed.

To that extent, he referred to the efforts over the summer in the Swiss resort of Crans-Montana to reach a solution to the Cyprus problem.

“It is true that the outcome disappointed us but there was no other alternative,” he pointed out.

According to Anastasiades, Turkey's persistence in retaining anachronistic treaty of guarantee, intervention rights and a presence of Turkish troops did not allow for anything other than a rejection of these positions.

He said that he has conveyed a message to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres that he is ready to return to the negotiating table on the internal aspects of the problem.

On the international aspect, he said he has “made it clear to the UN SG, our European partners and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council that a new conference on Cyprus should be well prepared so that it does not lead to disappointment.

“What we seek is mutual respect and political will from both our Turkish Cypriot compatriots and Ankara, because human rights and security are not negotiable,” he stressed.

The Armenian Representative Vartkes Mahdessian, on behalf of the Armenian Community of Cyprus expressed words of gratitude to the government of Cyprus, for catering to the needs of the community, thus strengthening and safeguarding the preservation of the rich Armenian culture, language and religious identity.

Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia also addressed the event and decorated the President of the Republic of Cyprus with the “Prince of Cilicia” medal.

Afterwards a cultural program took place, with the participation of both Sourp Asdvadzadzin Cathedral choirs, as well as the Hamazkayin Sipan and Nanor dance groups, followed by a reception.



President Nicos Anastasiades



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