

Erdogan's New Year's Resolutions

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — January 1 is always a good time for pledging better behavior. It is a time for political leaders to reflect on the outgoing year and project plans for the immediate future. Turkey was no exception. In his New Year's Eve address, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that after a hard year, he was looking forward to being a friend of Europe again. His country would like to minimize the number of its enemies and increase the number of its friends, he said. There were actually no problems, he continued, with European countries, like Germany or the Netherlands; indeed they were old friends.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu flanked the president's pronouncements with a guest editorial to the Funke media group. After having experienced a difficult year, he wrote, both Germany and Turkey should seek a new beginning in relations which had gone on "for 300 years in friendship and cooperation." This, he continued, could occur "only if we break through the current spiral of crisis." Identifying four preconditions for this, as summarized in the Turkish wire service TRT, he said the two must relate as equal partners, and Germany should recognize the progress Turkey has made over 15 years. The political dialogue, he suggested, should take place at the highest level "in trust and, if necessary, through informal back channels." Instead of "megaphone diplomacy," and "avoiding populist, egocentric and short sighted internal political aims," the dialogue should be pragmatic. What was required was a "language of empathy" for the other side. Germany, he wrote, had "not fully realized" the "trauma for the Turkish population" created by the coup attempt in 2016. Turkey would expect Germany to adopt a "determined attitude" towards the Gülen movement and the PKK.

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World Jewish Student Group Motion Formally Recognizes Armenian Genocide

TEL AVIV, Israel — The World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS) has formally recognized the Armenian Genocide at its 44th World Congress in Israel, after a Jewish-Australian advocate, Ariel Zohar was among the key speakers for the motion, reported the Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANCAU).

Zohar, who was key behind the recent Victorian Young Labor motion recognizing the Armenian Genocide, was joined in his advocacy of this historic motion by Aaron Meyer and Yos Tarshish.

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Patriarch of Jerusalem Archbishop Nourhan Manougian and Kevork Atinizian, holding the special bible bound with mother of pearl given to the latter as a gift

Philanthropist Kevork Atinizian Receives Knights of Saints James Medal from Patriarch of Jerusalem

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — On December 29, 2017, Kevork Atinizian received the Knights of Saints James Medal, a newly-created award of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in recognition of his philanthropic services to the Patriarchate.

A small group of Atinizian family members and friends gathered that Friday evening at Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston. When the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Archbishop Nourhan Manougian, arrived, he was greeted by the local Armenian clergymen present, and led to the chancel. There, Fr. Mampre Kouzouian presented the biography of Kevork Atinizian, and then invited the Patriarch to speak.

Manougian expressed his thanks, and the thanks of the Brotherhood of St. James, to Kevork Atinizian for all the assistance he had provided for the monastery. A number of years ago, for example, he renovated the residence of the Grand Sacristan, which is the dominant building overlooking the main courtyard.

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The Knights of Saints James Medal

Margrit and Nishan Atinizian Honored at 20th Anniversary of Holy Cross Church

BELMONT, Mass. — On December 9, 2017, under the auspices of Bishop Mikael Mouradian, Bishop of the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of US and Canada, a large crowd gathered at the Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its move to Belmont.

Present were many prominent members of the greater Boston community, among them were the faithful parishioners of the church, as well as clergy from various other churches.

Nishan and Margrit Atinizian, longtime benefactors of the church, were honored that evening and recognized for their years of devotion and generous support of the church.

Maral Der Torossian, master of ceremonies for the evening and a longtime active member of the church, welcomed the guests and reflected briefly on the history of the church, its goals and its mission. She thanked all present, specially Mouradian for attending. She also thanked the Holy Cross Church's beloved priest, Monsignor Andon Atamian, for serving and leading

the parish with great love and dedication.

Following dinner, Mouradian and Atamian addressed the guests, thanking all for their presence on that snowy and stormy evening, as well as for their contin-



From left, Monsignor Andon Atamian, Margrit and Nishan Atinizian and Bishop Mikael Antoine Mouradian

uous support of the church.

Marcel Karian, who has been a longtime devoted parishioner, parish council member, as well as an altar server every Sunday, presented both men with a Declaration of Appreciation, issued by Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Armenia Considering Measure to Recognize Yezidi Genocide

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Armenian National Assembly's Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs is scheduled to consider on January 11 a draft statement on condemning the genocide against the Yezidi people in the parts of Iraq controlled by terrorist groups.

The statement praises the efforts of the international community aimed at implementing the provisions of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

It also emphasizes the responsibility of states to respect the rights of ethnic and religious minorities stipulated by international law.

The statement reiterates the commitment of the Republic of Armenia and the Armenian people to prevent genocides and crimes against humanity.

The Armenian Parliament statement also calls for the investigation of those crimes through international structures and holding the perpetrators accountable.

Square Named for Armenia in Uruguay

PUNTA DEL ESTE, Uruguay (Agencia Prensa Armenia) — The Republic of Armenia Square was inaugurated on January 7 here, with a sculpture of an Armenian woman by Gor Davtyan.

The project was developed jointly between the Embassy of Armenia and the Municipality of Maldonado, following a resolution passed in December 2015. The ceremony was attended by the Maldonado Mayor Andres Antia Behrens, the Punta del Este Mayor Andres Jafif and the Minister of Tourism of Uruguay, Liliam Kechichian, along with the Ambassador of Armenia for Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Peru, Esther Mkrtumyan, the Archbishop Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Uruguay, Monsignor Hagop Kelendjian, and representatives of the Armenian National Committee of Uruguay.

"The Armenian community has a lot of teamwork and a lot of people," said Jafif. "We have been working for many years for this place that I think our community deserves, in a beautiful place like Punta del Este. Our community has won the affection of all Uruguayans, a strong, hardworking community that continues to maintain its traditions," added Kechichian.

The action is a sign of friendship that takes place within the framework of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Eastern Republic of Uruguay and the Republic of Armenia, and the centennial of the Armenian diaspora in Uruguay. In addition, during the event Punta del Este and Ijevan were declared sister cities.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

President Presents Optimistic View of 2017

YEREVAN (RFE/RL)— In his New Year's address to the nation, President Serzh Sargsyan claimed that his administration brought about "large-scale" positive changes in Armenia in the course of 2017.

He also promised continued economic betterment that will lead many Armenians working abroad to return to their homeland.

"The year 2017 was a year of hard work and implementation of serious programs," he said in televised remarks aired on the New Year's Eve. "The pace of large-scale changes did not diminish. Furthermore, we pushed them forward with greater determination."

"Our ambitions are big and we will be consistent in putting them into practice," he said, adding that the results of government policies should be "considerable and tangible" to every citizen.

"Together we will bring back to Armenia our loved ones that had left the country," he declared. "They will come back because they will see more room to work and distinguish themselves in Armenia."

Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan also sounded an optimistic note about the country's future when he congratulated Armenians on the New Year. He pointed to faster economic growth achieved in 2017.

Karapetyan vowed to speed up growth through reforms and fighting corruption when Sargsyan named him prime minister in September 2016.

Tankian and Wife Donate Food to Families

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Serj Tankian and his wife, Angela, have joined the charitable initiative of providing vulnerable families in Armenia with food.

This is the second year when the couple has donated food to vulnerable families in Orran ahead of the New Year holidays.

Due to their donation, along with the 215 families of Orran, another 212 vulnerable families received large quantities of food. The families were selected from Gyumri, Vanadzor and remote villages.

The selection and distribution process was assisted by Teach, Armenia and Women's Resource Center organizations.

Sniper Killed Artsakh Soldier, Wounds Two

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Chief of the General Staff of the Armenian Armed Forces Movses Hakobyan presented details of the Azerbaijani shooting of a soldier in Artsakh on January 8.

During a press conference, Hakobyan said the soldier was shot dead by an Azeri sniper.

"It is definitely a fact that the serviceman was shot by a sniper. The commander, who rushed to assist the serviceman, was also wounded. The vehicle of the tactical group which was dispatched to the scene also came under fire. One of the soldiers in the vehicle was also wounded," Hakobyan said.

"I would like to specially emphasize the heroism of the officer who didn't hesitate and went to save the life of his soldier, but was wounded. While our soldier didn't commit kind of violation, the adversary is simply looking for means to shoot our servicemen," he said.

Joss Stone Says More Armenian Wine, Please

LONDON (PanARMENIAN.Net) — English singer, songwriter and actress Joss Stone has revealed her admiration for Armenian wine in an interview with the international online magazine *Pop Matters*.

Asked what have been some of the treats she wished to always have with her, she remembered the Armenian wine she drank while in Yerevan.

"There was a wine in Armenia, it was in a ceramic jug and it was very specific to that place," Stone said.

"You need to get some when you can! Sadly I can't always have the wine because I don't drink the day before I sing."

The singer had visited the Armenian capital in October 2016 to perform at the Yerevan Jazz Fest.

Opposition Bloc Schedules First Anti-Government Rally of 2018

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The opposition Yelk alliance has called on Armenians to take to the streets on January 19 and protest against the latest increases in the prices of fuel and some foodstuffs.

The prices of petrol and liquefied natural gas, which powers most vehicles in Armenia, rose by roughly 5 percent on January 2 following the entry into force of a new Armenian Tax Code mandating higher excise duties on fuel, tobacco and alcohol. Recent months' increase in the international oil prices may have also been a factor.

Also, Armenia tax authorities also began collecting this month higher customs duties from around 40 types of imported products, including cooking oil, butter and poultry. This stems from Armenia's membership in the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), which sets higher uniform tax rates for most goods and commodities imported from third countries.

Yelk blamed the Armenian government for the price hikes when it announced the upcoming demonstration in Yerevan late on Monday. In a statement, it urged supporters to join Yelk leaders in marching through the city center in protest.

"It's a vital issue that directly impacts the welfare of all citizens," Ararat Mirzoyan, a parliament deputy from Yelk, told RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am) on January 2.

"The rally must demonstrate that it's

not just the opinion of nine parliament deputies [representing Yelk] ... I hope it will demonstrate that the issue preoccupies many people," he said.

Mirzoyan claimed that the cost of liv-

least 6 percent in 2017 from just 0.2 percent in 2016.

Despite continued growth projected for this year, the government decided not to raise public sector salaries and



Ararat Mirzoyan

ing in the country has been rising because "for many years Armenia's citizens have been tolerating the Republican Party (HHK) rule." The HHK-led government's economic policies have been a gross failure "in all areas," he said.

Senior government officials said last month that economic growth in Armenia is on track to accelerate to at

pensions in 2018. Instead, it is planning a sizable rise in public spending on infrastructure projects. Officials say this is a better way to further stimulate economic activity and thus reduce poverty.

Yelk, which holds 9 seats in Armenia's 105-member parliament, has condemned the caps on social spending.

Catholicos of All Armenians Receives Newly Ordained Priests

ECHMIADZIN — On December 18, Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, received six newly ordained priests, led by Bishop Hovnan Hakobyan, Grand Sacristan of Mother See.

Hakobyan introduced the catholicos to the newly ordained clergy and asked for his blessing.

Catholicos Karekin II conveyed his congratulations to Rev. Mkhitar Aharonyan; Rev. Njdeh Keshishyan; Rev. Kirakos Simonyan; Rev. Hrant Manookian; Rev. Kerovbe Barseghian and Rev. Serovbe Patvakanyan, expressing joy on the occasion of their ordination.

He emphasized the great need for priests, stating that the newly ordained priests come to fill the shortage of spiritual shepherds caused by persecution of priests during the Armenian Genocide and the Soviet years. Catholicos Karekin II added that they should continue the mission of the martyred clergymen, realizing their dreams and vision through their humble and devoted service to the life of the Church.

He also called the attention of the newly ordained to the character of the clergy, specifically mentioning that spiritual service is both an honor and responsibility, therefore, the young

spiritual servants, through their high consciousness and love, should be committed to their mission, enriching and brightening the Armenian Church.

The pontiff urged the priests to be a good example for the faithful, and through their godly, pious, and patriotic service grant joy and comfort to the faithful people, to further enhance the good reputation and authority of the Armenian Church.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the catholicos blessed the newly ordained priests with the "Protector" Prayer and gifted to each of them a "Mashtots" breviary.



Catholicos of All Armenians with the newly-ordained priests



ARMENIA

Tycoon Sanctioned by US Reveals Armenian Government Post

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – A controversial Russian businessman blacklisted by the United States for his alleged ties to organized crime has worked as an “adviser” to Armenia’s Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian, the



Ruben Tatulian

Foreign Ministry in Yerevan acknowledged on Tuesday.

The US Treasury Department imposed financial sanctions on the ethnic Armenian businessman Ruben Tatulian and nine other Russian nationals last month. The department’s Office of

Financial Assets Control (OFAC) accused them of joint involvement in “serious transnational criminal activities.”

Tatulian, who is based in the Black Sea city of Sochi, holds an Armenian diplomatic passport, raising questions about his ties to Armenia’s government.

The businessman shrugged off the US sanc-

tions in an interview a Sochi-based Russian blogger published over the weekend. He said he cannot be affected by them because he has no assets in the United States.

Tatulian also said that he not only has an Armenian diplomatic passport but also uses cars belonging to Armenia’s Embassy in Russia. “I am an adviser to the foreign minister of Armenia,” he added when asked about the reason for that.

“Ruben Tatulian was a freelance adviser to the foreign minister and he does not have that status now,” the Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Tigran Balayan, told RFE/RL’s Armenian service (Azatutyun.am).

Balayan declined to clarify when Tatulian had such a status. Nor would he say why or when the Russian-Armenian tycoon reportedly nicknamed “Robson” received his diplomatic passport.

According to Russian media reports, Tatulian has extensive business interests and strong government connections in southern Russia. An OFAC statement released on December 22 described him as a regional “overseer” of the alleged organized-crime syndicate targeted by the US Treasury Department.

Grigor Zohrab Carpet on Display

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – A carpet with the portrait of Grigor Zohrab is the first and most anticipated exhibit of the National Center of Armenian Carpets, which opened on December 27.

Grigor Zohrab (1861-1915) was an outstanding writer, one of the most prominent lawyers of the time, a public and political figure, a member of the Ottoman parliament, Armenian Genocide victim.

Living and working in the Ottoman Empire, the western Armenian writer enjoyed a reputation among both the Armenian and Turkish population.

As a member of the Ottoman parliament he actively participated in parliamentary debates, touched upon the most challenging issues and demanded solutions for them.

Zohrab described himself as “the advocate of the Constitution.”

Although Grigor Zohrab enjoyed the close friendship and affection of the Ottoman Empire political elite, he did not escape the fate of his people.

He was brutally murdered by the Ottoman Government decree. On June 2, 1915, the night, when Zohrab was arrested, he was playing card game in the club Cercle d’Orient with Talaat Pasha and Halil Bey. It was already midnight when Zohrab rose to his feet to leave the club. Talaat Pasha also got up, came up to him and kissed him

on the cheek. That kiss was to be known in history as “Talaat Pasha’s kiss of death.”

The carpet is a symbolic achievement for the Armenian carpet museum. It summarizes a whole period of the Armenian people’s history with endless struggle, great losses and the ability to survive.

The carpet with the portrait of Grigor Zohrab is a unique example of portrait carpets, which, according to the experts, was woven by the Bedoukian family before 1909 in Sebastia (Sebastia province, Ottoman Empire).

The carpet was lost during the Armenian Genocide, and later found in the collection of Jack Kadry, a collector of Oriental carpets. In spring 2017, the carpet appeared in the Australian auction organized by the Mossgreen company. The carpet was of particular interest at the auction, which indicated the number and geography of the buyers. Victor Mnatsakanian, the founder of the Armenian National Carpet Center, succeeded in buying the carpet and donating it to the Armenian Carpet Museum.

The carpet, no doubt, will be included in the permanent exhibition of the Armenian Carpet Museum.

The National Center of the Armenian Carpet will refer to the history of Armenian carpet weaving in Sebastia in its future publications.

Catholicos Laments Hardship in Armenia

ECHMIADZIN (RFE/RL) – Catholicos Karekin II, the supreme head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, called for more government action against poverty and injustice in Armenia as he celebrated a Christmas mass at the Echmiadzin cathedral on Saturday.

“Along with the achievements gained through the unshaken will and dedication of our people, our country is still facing unemployment and poverty,” Karekin said in a homily read out during the service attended by senior government officials.



“Along with the achievements gained through the unshaken will and dedication of our people, our country is still facing unemployment and poverty”

–Catholicos Karekin II

“There is a need for continuing efforts to strengthen hope for the future, faith in justice, and to overcome the social, economic, and other challenges facing our national life,” he added in an apparent appeal to the Armenian government which he rarely criticizes in public.

A key member of the government, Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan, participated in the liturgy as a ceremonial “godfather” of a large cross with which Karekin blessed holy water inside vessels placed on the ancient church’s altar.

Karekin also deplored lingering hardship as well as wars and other conflicts around the world. “In this time of defense of human rights, the rights of people and nations are being violated,” he said. “In our days of dialogues, many people become subject to intolerance, hatred on a religious

basis, terrorism; and become victims of various kinds of violence.”

“Drug addiction, alcohol abuse, and other kinds of addictions, become evil to societies and families: people addicted to these become unable to properly organize their lives, some find themselves in despair and commit suicide,” he went on.

The Armenian Apostolic Church, to which the vast majority of Armenians nominally belong, has traditionally marked Christmas on January 6. Celebrations of the holiday start late on January 5 with Christmas Eve candlelight services held in churches in and outside Armenia. Christmas became a public holiday in the South Caucasus country after the break-up of the Soviet Union.

In his latest Christmas message, Karekin urged the church faithful to become “new souls free of sins.” “By accepting in our hearts infant Jesus, let us keep strong our faith and our pious path of life so that we may always enjoy the care and endless love of God,” he said.

Karekin decried attempts to “build a world without God” in June 2016 during a mass held in Echmiadzin in the presence of the visiting Pope Francis. He said they are at the root of political, socioeconomic and even environmental problems facing humanity.

In a joint declaration issued at the time, Francis and Karekin similarly voiced concern at the declining role of religion and “the crisis of the family” in many Christian nations. They also reaffirmed their opposition to same-sex marriage.



Prime Minister Congratulates Soldiers on New Year

YEREVAN – On the occasion of New Year and Christmas holidays, Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan visited military stronghold “N” at one of the army units of the Ministry of Defense. The Prime Minister got acquainted with the service and living conditions provided to servicemen, answered their questions.

Karen Karapetyan congratulated the servicemen of the Armenian Army on the upcoming holidays and thanked them for dedicated service.

“It is extremely important for us, the public officials, to provide an appropriate environment so that you could make sure that we all highly value your service. We all owe it to you; we have a commitment to you, and it is the primary obligation of a civilian to ensure that your service does not go unnoticed.

“If the country proves unsafe, civilian officials will not be able to provide progress. But it is also extremely important to be sure that we will actually have a good country. All we need is peace, tolerance, and we will move forward step by step.

“Rest assured that we have the necessary determination and political will, and we know which way to lead the country. Be sure that we will have a good country. We just have to work hard: every day and everyone at their place,” Karen Karapetyan said.

Wrapping up his visit, Karapetyan wished all servicemen good health and a peaceful year.





INTERNATIONAL

International News

Armenian Wrestlers Rule World Rankings

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Two Armenian Greco-Roman Wrestlers top an updated World Rankings released by United World Wrestling (UWW), the international governing body for the sport of amateur wrestling.

Olympic Champion Artur Aleksanyan tops the ranking of the world's best wrestlers in the 98-kilogram weight category.

Maksim Manukyan, who claimed the Olympic silver, is on top in the 80-kilogram weight category.

In addition, Karen Aslanyan (66 kg), Karapet Chalyan (75 kg) also ranked among the world's strongest.

Georgy Ketoev (97kg) and Levan Berianidze (125kg) are on the 4th and 3rd spots, respectively, in the freestyle ranking.

Turkey to Install Surveillance on Armenia Border

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soyly said the Turkish government plans to install surveillance devices on the Armenian-Turkish border for security purposes, Anadolu reports.

The Turkish side also plans to install similar devices on the Turkish-Georgian border.

The minister said no wall will be constructed on the borders in the future; only cameras will be installed.

As for the construction of 144-kilometer-long wall on the Turkish-Iranian border, the minister said almost half of the wall is constructed.

Air Travel Between Armenia, Tajikistan to Start Soon

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan (Public Radio of Armenia) — The Government of Tajikistan has ordered the relevant authorities of the country to take necessary measures for establishing air communication with Armenia, AKIpress NeTaws Agency reported.

The decree of the government orders that the agreement between the governments of Tajikistan and Armenia on air communication which was signed on June 14, 2017 in Yerevan, be approved.

The Ministry of Transport of Tajikistan, in cooperation with other bodies of the country, is tasked with taking measures to implement the agreement.

The establishment of direct flights between the two countries was considered during the official visit of President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon to Armenia in June.

Kurdish MP Given Ministerial Role in UK

LONDON (Rudaw) — British-Kurdish member of the UK parliament, Nadhim Zahawi, has been appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Education in a cabinet reshuffle.

This is the first ministerial role for Zahawi who has been an MP since 2010 when he was the first British-Kurd to make it into the legislature.

UK Prime Minister Theresa May reshuffled her cabinet's junior ministerial team, giving Zahawi the role, according to a tweet from her office.

"Nadhim was born in Baghdad to Kurdish parents in 1967. Under threat of persecution from Saddam Hussein's regime, his family immigrated to the UK when he was 9. He grew up in Sussex and was educated at King's College School in West London and University College London where he studied Chemical Engineering," according to his website.

He has been an outspoken supporter of the Kurdish question in the UK and has frequently visited the Kurdistan Region. He also showed his support for last year's vote for independence.

The *Guardian* describes him as "one of the richest MPs" noting he has ties with Gulf Keystone, which operates in the Kurdistan Region's Shaikhan oil field, and owns significant property.

Armenian Community in Jerusalem Shrinks But Perseveres

By Anush Babajanyan

JERUSALEM (Eurasia.net) — Late at night in Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a small group of Armenians took their turn to clean the site where Jesus Christ is believed to have been crucified and buried.

They wiped the top of the tomb and refilled the oil lamps. The priests did it a bit perfunctorily, part of a daily routine, while the ritual visibly moved the pilgrims. Some were in tears.

There has been an "Armenian Quarter" in Jerusalem, covering about one-sixth of the territory of the Old City, for centuries. Armenians began settling in the city in the 4th century, after the official conversion to Christianity.

As a result of a painstaking agreement worked out centuries ago, when Jerusalem was under Ottoman control, Armenians share responsibility for maintaining some of the city's most sacred Christian sites. At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Armenians clean inside the edicule, which encloses the tomb, and its surrounding area, several times a week.



Armenian women pray in the Grotto, the believed location of the cave where Jesus Christ was born

In 1948, Armenians in Jerusalem numbered about 16,000. Today, that number has shrunk; estimates range from 700-1000, with a smaller community in Bethlehem.

Some in the community are concerned about the decline in their numbers. In addition to continuing unrest in Jerusalem, some Armenians feel they are less welcome in Jerusalem these

days, despite their integral, centuries-long presence in the city. "We are not given international passports and are often mistreated — like other ethnic groups who are not Jewish," one woman from the Armenian Quarter, who did not want to be identified, said.

This has implications for Armenians' role in maintaining Jerusalem's sacred sites, as well: the community supports the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem, which in turn administers the Armenian Quarter. Some Armenians feel that their declining numbers, and their quarter's high value — a hub of tourism in the Old City — could lead to them losing ownership.

Today, though, in spite of their relatively small numbers, Armenians work to maintain their presence in Jerusalem. About 40 students, most of them from Armenia, study at the Theological Seminary of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. There are daily Armenian church services in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and a steady stream of visiting pilgrims from Armenia and the diaspora. Centuries on, Jerusalem's central role in Armenian religious life remains constant.



Young men study in the Theological Seminary of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem

World Jewish Student Group Motion Formally Recognizes Armenian Genocide

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ANC-AU Executive Director Haig Kayserian thanked the WUJS on this important statement for human rights.

"We thank Ariel Zohar and his colleagues at the World Union of Jewish Students Congress for passing a motion that does not only recognize the genocide committed against the Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians of the Ottoman Empire, it also 'condemns' and 'rejects' any 'attempt to deny, distort, or ignore the historical reality of this genocide,'" Kayserian said.

"This sends a strong message to the governments of Israel, and others like Australia, that human rights are not there to be bargained for diplomatic gain, no matter the circumstance," he added.

The motion reads as follows:

This Congress notes...

That between 1915 and 1923 millions of Armenians, Pontian Greeks and Assyrians were murdered at the hands of the Ottoman Caliphate.

The tragic crime was undisputedly carried out with the genocidal intention of eliminating these Christian communities. This was a premeditated and systematic execution of an estimated 2-3 million civilians; not a legit-



Outgoing Chairman of the WUJS, Yos Tarshish (left) pictured with Jewish-Australian activist, Ariel Zohar

imate act of war.

This Congress believes...

That it is incumbent upon us as a Jewish organization to fight all forms of racism.

This Congress resolves...

To condemn and reject any attempt to deny, distort, or ignore the historical reality of this genocide.

To recognize the importance of remembering and learning from this genocide, and to join the Armenian, Pontian Greek and Assyrian communities in honoring the innocent people

who fell victim to this crime.

On his Facebook page, Zohar wrote: "Jewish students have a long proud history of perusing on the forefronts of social justice. Today is another important milestone in our activism history."

"WUJS will now be formally calling on governments of Israel, Australia and others to join a growing list of 28 countries around the world to formally recognise the sufferings and injustice of the Armenians and other minorities at the hand of the then Ottoman Empire (modern day Turkey)."



INTERNATIONAL

Works by Cartoonist Saroukhan to Go on Display in Egypt

CAIRO (Public Radio of Armenia) – Works by the late Egyptian Armenian cartoonist Alexander Saroukhan have gone on display in Cairo. The exhibition,

titled “Echoes of Past Visions,” will run through February 19, Egypt Today reported.

This is the second edition in a series of exhibitions on

Saroukhan’s legacy. The previous was called “Political Comedy,” which showcased dozens of examples of the artist’s work done between 1930 and 1970.

“Echoes of Past Visions” will collect 35 original drawings of the artist that primarily relate to Egypt’s internal and foreign policies, along with comments on world events from nearly 50 years ago that are still relevant today, such as the Jerusalem conflict.

Born on October 1, 1898 in an Armenian town in the Russian Empire, Saroukhan is considered to be one of Egypt’s first cartoonists, helping to pioneer the art form as a type of important political commentary within the region. He moved with his family to Turkey’s capital of Istanbul in 1909, Saroukhan created a small newspaper



Cartoon by Saroukhan

with his brother – his first foray into his future career.

Upon going to study at the College of the Mekhitarists with his brother, the Armenian Genocide in 1915 forced them to stay after graduating. After his parents died, the only thing left was his art. Saroukhan focused on drawing until the end of the war, where he worked as a translator for the British Army until 1921.

Saroukhan passed away on January 1, 1977. His artwork is currently shown at the Tate Modern Museum in Liverpool.

Advocate, Scholar Seeks Israeli Documents Linking Turkish-Azeri Pressure Against Genocide Recognition

JERUSALEM (Public Radio of Armenia) – Advocate Eitay Mack and genocide scholar Prof. Yair Auron have asked the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs to present to the public any documents showing agreements, understandings, commitments vis-a-vis Azerbaijan and Turkey as to the question of recognizing the Armenian Genocide.

In a request sent to Aryeh Zini, the official in charge of implementing the Freedom of Information Law at the Israeli Ministry of

(TIMES OF ISRAEL PHOTO)



Eitay Mack



Prof. Yair Auron

that and we are very satisfied with the level of this cooperation,” they add.

The request reminds that “on 2011, at the time of a hearing at the Knesset’s Education Committee, on the Armenian genocide, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Danny Ayalon, former Chairman of the Knesset Education Committee, MK Alex Miller, as well as additional MK’s from ‘Israel Beitenu’ party clarified unequivocally to the Azeri media that the State of Israel would not recognize the Armenian genocide so as not to harm relations with Azerbaijan.”

In an interview in 2011, Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon said: “There is not a chance that the Knesset will recognize the Armenian Genocide...We cannot afford to tarnish our relations with Azerbaijan, our key strategic ally in the Islamic world, over controversial historical issues concerning century-long events.”

And Knesset member Alex Miller said: “We are not going to determine whether or not genocide occurred. It would be naive to presume that the commission on education, culture and sports would be an entity within which we will not only address issues dating back almost a hundred years but also our strategic relations with Israel’s key ally in the Islamic world.”

Palestinians Rally against Greek Orthodox Patriarch

JERUSALEM (Al Jazeera) – Protests have broken out in Bethlehem as Palestinians rallied against the Greek Orthodox patriarch, accusing him of selling church land to Israelis.

Angry protesters on January 6 threw eggs and attacked the convoy of Theophilos III as it made its way to Bethlehem’s Manger Square in the occupied West Bank.

The patriarch was visiting the Church of the Nativity for services marking the Orthodox Christmas Eve. Many Orthodox Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on January 7.

The patriarch has been at the center of public anger after recent news reports alleged that the church leader had been involved in property sales to foreign tax havens, and those properties may end up in the hands of Israeli businesses.

A protest calling for the removal of Theophilos III was also held in September following the publication of reports claiming that he had colluded with a settler organisation.

The settler group, Ateret Cohanim, has been working for decades to evict Palestinians from their homes and shops in the city, including around important holy sites such as the al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

Speaking to Al Jazeera, representatives of the Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem denied the reported allegations.

“We did not, as they claim, sell our land to the Israeli occupation,” said Father Issa Musleh.

“Those are old deals the patriarch wants to rectify and clarify, because all those old deals are detrimental to the rights of the patriarchate and its congregation.”

Reporter Mohammed Jamjoom, reporting from Bethlehem, described Saturday’s scenes as “unprecedented” and “dramatic”.

“There have been protests before, but not at this level. There were eggs being hurled at the convoy, people sitting in the middle of streets. It really underscores how angry people are about these reports,” he said.

“Local officials also gave him a cold shoulder when they refused to welcome him to the square,” added Jamjoom.

The Orthodox Church is reportedly the second-biggest landowner in East Jerusalem, and many Palestinians think the sales of East Jerusalem land to Israelis will endanger the future of East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

However, the land sales have triggered a broader campaign demanding an end to the church’s dominance by Greek-born clergy.

Past protests have called for Palestinian clerics to take over the patriarchate.

“Our demands are clear and simple,” Aghlab Khoury, a member of the Orthodox Central Council, told Al Jazeera at the Bethlehem protest.

“We want the patriarch to resign; we want reform to the patriarchate; assign a legal committee to evaluate the situation in the patriarchate; and appraise the existing property.”

The protests came one month after US President Donald Trump officially recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and said he would start a process to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to the holy city.

That decision led to massive protests in the occupied Palestinian territories and major rallies in support of the Palestinians across the Muslim world.

A majority of UN member also heavily criticized Trump’s announcement, declaring his Jerusalem move “null and void”.

Al Jazeera’s Jamjoom said the events of the past month reinforced the somber mood in Bethlehem and overshadowed the traditional Christmas festivities.

“I spoke to a man who has been coming here for decades to celebrate, and he said he had never seen it this empty,” said Jamjoom.

“In the past, Muslims would be out here, Christians would be out here. The courtyard would be full of children. But up until now, it has been very empty outside of the Church of the Nativity,” he added.

“It is one more thing that highlights the hopelessness that Palestinian Christians are feeling right now, in a period where they should be feeling peaceful, festive and hopeful.”

Community News

AIWA New England Executive Elects Two New Members

WATERTOWN — The Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) New England Affiliate announces the election of two new members to its Executive Committee.

Zela Astarjian, AIWA New England Executive Committee president, is business development and consultant relations professional at RhumbLine Advisers, an institutional investment management firm located in Boston Massachusetts. Before joining RhumbLine, Astarjian was a vice president of business development for P-Solve Asset Solutions, an independent investment consulting firm.

Astarjian attended L'Insitut D'Etudes Politiques in Paris, France and received her MBA from Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey. She is fluent in several languages including French, Arabic and Armenian. She considers herself a citizen of the world, having grown up in the Middle East, studied in Paris, and finally settled in Boston after

teaching French at the University of Kansas. She has been involved with One World Classrooms, and is also the Boston chair of Women on Non-Profit board committee with 100 Women in Finance.

Astarjian was involved with the AIWA

Planning Committee for its 25th Anniversary Conference in Fall 2016.

Seta Eskanian, AIWA New England Executive Committee secretary, is a licensed attorney at CMBG3 Law, which is a law firm in Boston specializing in toxic torts, products liability and insurance litigation. Eskanian is also an author of several web articles for her firm website and co-authored a cover story article for a nationally renowned insurance magazine. She graduated from Suffolk University, summa cum laude, and from New England Law, magna cum laude. She serves on the Advisory Committee for Suffolk University's Applied Legal Studies program, and represents Massachusetts for the Young Lawyers Committee for the Armenian Bar Association's Board of Governors. An active mentor, Seta provides students with valuable and practical insights based on her personal experiences.

Deeply entwined with her Armenian culture and heritage, Eskanian also has strong connections to the wider Armenian community. She is dedicated to AIWA's mission and

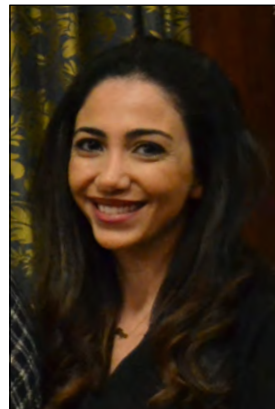
programs and is particularly interested in raising AIWA's profile among her peers. Seta also served on the Planning Committee for AIWA's 25th Anniversary Conference.

Continuing on the Executive Committee are Gayane Karen Merguerian,

vice president, Becca Kharajian Abruzzese, treasurer, and Alisa Stepanian, member-at-large.



Zela Astarjian



Seta Eskanian



A selection of Nairian products

Nairian Makes Armenia's Nature Take Center Stage in Organic Skincare Line

SAN FRANCISCO and YEREVAN — Many upscale skin care and cosmetic brands now tap into the power of nature, leading to the creation of many creams and potions that not only are gentle on the skin but provide real benefits and smell fresh, without harmful chemicals.

Now, an Armenian brand, Nairian, has jumped into the organic, all-natural, cruelty-free market, and it is aiming for worldwide reach.

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

before moving to the US, and both have backgrounds in science.

"The inspiration for Nairian came to my wife when we were taking a family road trip through Southern Armenia. Anahit was very impressed with the biodiversity of the native plants that grew abundantly across the countryside, and thought it was a shame that no one was utilizing this natural treasure. At first the idea to start an all-natural cosmetics company in the highlands of Armenia was voiced jokingly, but the proposal very quickly grew more serious. Then in 2012, it really took shape when we set up an experimental lab in Yerevan where we began a three-year research and development process, trying to understand if the line of cosmetics we envisioned would really be feasible. In 2015, we officially launched the Nairian brand and opened our first store in Yerevan," Markosian said.

"The decision to move back to Armenia was not hard to make. Both Anahit and I had been working as engineers in the tech industry for over 20 years, and we felt it was high time for some change. Since Anahit has a background in physics, the research involved with developing formulas and building a lab was

see SKINCARE, page 9



Checking out harvested plants

Tufenkian Holds Fundraiser for Artsakh Wounded Soldier Home

YEREVAN and MOONACHIE, N.J. — In April 2016, the people of Artsakh suffered unprecedented violence, as Azerbaijan launched unprovoked assaults along its eastern border. This escalation has since been known as the "April War" or "Four-Day War." Mher Araqelyan, a 35-year-old father of one, was one of the soldiers mobilized to protect Artsakh during this war. He fought and was heavily wounded at a front-line base near Jibrayil. Since then, he has been facing serious health difficulties and is currently without a home.

To support Mher Araqelyan, the Tufenkian Foundation has launched a crowdfunding campaign to purchase a house for the family in their native Karmir Shuka, a small village in one of Artsakh's border regions. With donations from 56 individuals, predominantly Diaspora Armenians, the campaign has just reached its 50-percent mark and raised \$7,500. Another \$10,000 has been pledged to this cause by the Tufenkian Foundation itself.

The initiative to provide housing support to wounded soldiers of Artsakh was launched by the Tufenkian Foundation in April 2016, in response to the Four-Day War. Since then, houses have been built, reconstructed or purchased for families of eight soldiers, and the construction of the ninth soldier's house is currently underway. Find out more about this initiative here.

When selecting beneficiaries, the Tufenkian Foundation gives priority to families in difficult socio-economic conditions. All eight houses provided to date have been given to wounded soldiers who are unable to work and cannot built, renovate or purchase homes due to battle injuries and health difficulties. Araqelyan is in a similar situa-



Mher Araqelian and his family

tion. Because of a deep thigh wound, he is prohibited from doing any physical work, is unable to stand for extended periods and is set to undergo another difficult surgery soon.

As Araqelyan has been unable to work since his injury, the family primarily relies on his disability pension and the support of his and his wife's parents. Without a house of their own, the family spends most of their small income on rent.

Mher and his wife will soon become parents for the second time - they are expecting a child. As they prepare to welcome their second child, their only dream is to have a home they can call their own.

The Tufenkian Foundation was launched in 1999 by entrepreneur James Tufenkian with the mission to empower the initiatives of local citizens, support the most vulnerable strata of the society, promote environmental protection and awareness, and advance social justice in Armenia. Since 2003, the Foundation has broadened its scope to embattled Nagorno-Karabakh, where it promotes resettlement and development projects in the vulnerable border zones of For more information visit www.tufenkianfoundation.org.



COMMUNITY NEWS

'Tree of Life' for Armenia

By Florence Avakian

YEREVAN and NEW YORK – Following a recent two-week trip to Armenia, Dr. Sam Mikaelian, an award-winning American educator, and a former consultant for a national recruitment company in Illinois, suggested that the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR) is the “tree of life for Armenia. It is truly one of the pathways to the future for Armenia.”

Before venturing on this trip with other FAR supporters, he said he had “limited” expectations. “I had heard about FAR, read about FAR and contributed to FAR, but I was anxious to see the services and programs first hand and to witness the program directors’ relations with those they supervise, as well as their relation-



Dr. Sam Mikaelian greeted outside the Gavar School with the traditional bread and salt ceremony

ships with program participants, and their working relationships with one another.”

After visiting and observing the various programs with the FAR staff and personally engaging with them about the depth of their work, “I became a firm believer. “Seeing is believing,” he declared.

“For me, there were three objectives: competency, commitment and compassion. FAR has transparency, and very low operating costs



Children at the Gavar School

which amount to less than seven percent, while others range from 20 to 25 percent. And the FAR staff is passionate about their work,” he stressed.

On his previous two trips to Armenia, Mikaelian had seen evidence of the 60-percent poverty level. “Now, the efforts to combat this degree can be seen in many places. And tourists from 50,000 to one million a year are coming to Armenia. Hotels are being built everywhere. Armenia is safer.”

Among the many projects he visited was the Gavar School for Special Needs children that includes 52 handicapped children from the Gavar district who are taught and cared for by 35 teachers, social workers, doctors and nurses. There the youngsters learn sewing, clay work and other handiworks to prepare them for different trades in the future.

“It is such a warm environment, with compassion and concern by the staff and directors. I saw the directors getting down on their knees, touching the children who hugged them in return. There was such dedication.” FAR supporters from New Jersey, as well as local donors who own a brandy company support the school which recently received a complete renovation, including vans, elevators, wheelchairs, sewing machines, and a sparkling new coat of paint.

Friends of Gavar include a group of dedicated senior donors from New York who sponsor periodic yard sales and birthday raffles to con-

tribute to the upkeep of the school.

Afraid to show his emotion to those on his visit to the school at the time, Mikaelian said he experienced “great joy and happiness” after he saw how far the school had advanced in his services for the children.

Another emotional stop was the Vanadzor Old Age Home, housing 60 elderly men and women, with 20 caretakers. The donors to this project include the Diocesan Women’s Guild. Recently, Mikaelian was part of a group which sponsored acclaimed concert pianist Sahan Arzruni to perform in Chicago. Proceeds from the concert were donated for the upkeep of this institution.

“And who cannot be emotional” after visiting the Children’s Center in Yerevan where shockingly abused and homeless children receive one-on-one care, love, attention and instruction around the clock,” he exclaimed. The devotion



Dr. Sam Mikaelian at the Nor Nork soup kitchen

by the director and staff to these youngsters, ranging in age from toddlers to teenagers, “would bring even the stone-hearted to tears,” Mikaelian stated emotionally.

He also visited the village of Zankegadoun where famed poet Parouyr Sevak hails from, and where the Harry Toufayan family has constructed a modern kindergarten and a massive refrigerator to preserve their precious gems – the most delicious apples in Armenia. And in a factory near the Haghartzin Church which has been underwritten by Greg Toufayan, berries from the nearby forest are gathered, made into mouth-watering jam and sold countrywide.

Also on the trip were the soup kitchen north of Yerevan where a hot lunch is provided daily to 120 indigent people, and the Medical Library named for the late Dr. Edgar Housepian, one of the founders of FAR, and a FAR Board of Trustees member.

Eye-opening and “very impressive” was the Gyumri Information Technological Center (GITC), where hundreds of young students are learning all the latest tech devices. FAR is the major source for instructing them in programming and other mechanisms and innovations.

Mikaelian, who has a doctorate from Northwestern University and a master’s degree from Columbia University, has managed searches for executive positions throughout the US, and also served as Executive Director for the Diocese of the Armenian Church (Eastern) for several years.

But it is his work in the educational field for which he is most proud. For his many decades as an educator and administrator in the Illinois school system, he has received multiple honors.

One of which he is especially proud is the Mikaelian Education Center, an administration building which was officially renamed by the Board of Education “in recognition of (Mikaelian’s) visionary educational leadership, commitment to excellence and tireless devotion to the children of District 39 from 1967 to 1998.” He also inspired the creation of the Sam Mikaelian Fine Arts Endowment Fund to bring leading performers into the community.

“My family always talked about education. My father was very bright but had no money. When he came to this country, he worked days, and my mother worked nights to take care of their children. We were taught to work hard and to seek the best education we could afford.”

Mikaelian who has been to Armenia three times, stated that he would enjoy returning to Armenia, and assist with education programs, staff development seminars, and workshops.

“Armenia’s good things must be improved. We have to help our countrymen and women, and keep the momentum going forward.” His deep desire is to go back to Armenia with FAR. “It is Armenia’s lifeline.”

Bedoukian, Health Donors Honored

By Barry Lytton

RIDGEFIELD, Conn. (News Times) – This past December, Western Connecticut Health Network, which includes Danbury Hospital, recognized three donors Monday night who have endowed chairs in research and in palliative care.

Dr. Robert Bedoukian, a founding member of the network’s Biomedical Research Advisory Board, gave \$1 million recently to establish the Bedoukian Endowed Chair in Innovation and Research. Greg Smith and his wife, Meghann, gave what officials described as a “substantial seven-figure” amount to create The Andrew Cruz Endowed Chair in Palliative Care.

WCHN also honored the memory of Fred Bering, who donated \$2 million in 2008 to establish the Fred and Irmi Bering Endowed Chair in Minimally Invasive Surgery, which will now be held by Dr. Linus Chuang, who was inducted Monday. Bering died in 2013.

Smith, the president and CEO of Maplewood Senior Living, a Westport-based operator of

senior homes, established the palliative chair in memory of a cousin, Andrew Cruz, who died in his 20s in 2008.

“There is not enough being done” for palliative care, Smith said. “I felt obligated to help.”

During the last few months of Cruz’s life, Smith and Cruz’s family learned firsthand how much palliative care means to those suffering from pain and to their families. Danbury Hospital became a “second home” during that difficult time, said Cruz’s father, Philip.

“(Cruz) was made comfortable,” Smith said. “It’s unfortunate to think that there are people out there who don’t get that care.

The endowment will underwrite a chair to be held by Dr. Damanjeet Chaubey, who was inducted before a packed house at Bernard’s restaurant Monday, and to help pay for other support staff.

Chaubey said she has two missions: to extend the strong palliative care program at Danbury Hospital to other hospitals and to promote research to better understand palliative care, which is often difficult for physicians, families and insurers to handle, she said.

Smith declined to say how much he was donating.

“It’s not about me,” he said. “It’s about the legacy of my cousin.”

Bedoukian, president of Bedoukian Research in Danbury, a supplier of aroma and flavor ingredients, made his donation because he recognized a gap between what is learned in research and what is practiced in health care, he said.



Dr. Robert Bedoukian, left, Western Connecticut Health Network President and CEO, Dr. John Murphy and Joann Petrini, PhD and the recipient of the new Bedoukian Endowed Chair in Innovation and Research.

Joann Petrini, who has been hired as the new chair, is charged with stimulating “new learning and innovation ... and pioneering research”

Petrini said her aim is to “take great ideas to the front lines of medicine.”

Bering, who fled Nazi Germany in 1938, was inspired to donate by his late father, who gave him a note that read, in German, “If you should ever find yourself in a position where you have

more than you need for yourself, think of those who are less fortunate.”

As holder of the Bering chair, Chuang will develop a fellowship program for minimally invasive surgery in gynecology, while researching and standardizing care across the network. He said he hopes to put Danbury and Western Connecticut on the research map, and plans to host a symposium in coming years.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenia Embassy Honors Woodrow Wilson for Genocide Relief Efforts

WASHINGTON – The Armenian embassy in the United States paid tribute to the 28th U.S. President Woodrow Wilson on his 161th birthday at the Washington National Cathedral on Thursday, December 28 morning.

“President Wilson played a special role in the Armenian history for saving refugees and orphans after the Genocide and arbitrating the boundary between Armenia and Turkey in 1920,” the embassy said in a tweet.

During a special service at the cathedral, a ceremonial laying of wreaths on Wilson’s tomb was held in Washington, with the public and diplomatic missions joining the U.S. military services on the occasion of the anniversary of Wilson’s birth.

President Wilson extended his moral support for the efforts of the Near East Relief organization during the Armenian Genocide by dedicating two days in October 1916 for a nationwide fundraising drive.

Under the Treaty of Sèvres, as drawn by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson’s Department of State, Armenia’s boundaries would incorporate the Ottoman vilayets of Erzurum, Bitlis and Van, which once had Armenian populations of varying sizes.



Embassy of Armenia in the US

Dr. Sergio La Porta and Dr. Alison Vacca to present “An Armenian Narrative on Early Islam: Ghevond’s History”

FRESNO – Dr. Sergio La Porta and Dr. Alison Vacca will present a lecture entitled “An Armenian Narrative on Early Islam: Ghevond’s History” at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, January 26, in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, Room 191.

The presentation is the second in the Fall Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program. The Leon S. Peters Foundation is a co-sponsor of the event.

With the fall of the capital Dvin to caliphal armies in the seventh century, Armenia became a province of the Islamic Caliphate. In the following century, the caliphs integrated the region within the Caliphate by stationing armies, minting aniconic Arabic coins, extracting taxes, and placing Muslim governors in Armenia. Around 788, an Armenian vardapet, Ghevond, who witnessed the circumstances of caliphal rule in Armenia wrote a history of early Islam from the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 up to his own time. It is the only work of its kind that illuminates how Armenia was transformed during a century and a half of caliphal rule.

In this talk, La Porta and Vacca take an interdisciplinary look at this history by situating it in relation to the Armenian Christian and Arabic-Islamic historical traditions. They not only address Armenian perceptions of the circumstances of Islamic rule in Armenia, but

also speculate on the relationship between Armenian and Arabic historical texts.

La Porta is the Haig and Isabel Berberian Professor of Armenian Studies and chair of the Department of Philosophy at California State University, Fresno. His areas of research include medieval Armenian intellectual and political history, philology, and apocalyptic literature. La Porta’s publications include a three-volume study on Armenian commentaries on the works of Dionysius the Areopagite (Peeters, 2008) and several articles on political legitimacy and intellectual history in medieval Armenia. He recently co-edited a volume with Dr. Kevork Bardakjian titled, *The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition: A Comparative Perspective* (Brill, 2014). La Porta is also currently the editor of the *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*.

Vacca is an assistant professor of history at the University of Tennessee and author of *Non-Muslim Provinces under early Islam: Islamic Rule and Iranian Legitimacy in Armenia and Caucasian Albania* (2017). She is interested in early Islamic rule over Armenia, intercommunal conflict, and the relationship between Arabic and Armenian texts. Her new book project investigates the role of women as cultural mediators in the medieval Caucasus.

The lecture is free and open to the public.

OBITUARY

Linda (Cellucci) Petrosian

Model, Mother, Charity Activist

WALTHAM, Mass. – Linda (Cellucci) Petrosian, 57, of Waltham, passed away peacefully on January 2, surrounded by her family.

She was an accomplished model in the Boston area, using the name Linda Cole professionally. She was a big contributor to many charity fashion events.

Her sense of humor was contagious; she had a laugh and a smile that could light up the world. She touched the lives of everyone she knew.

Visiting hours were held Sunday, January 7, followed by a funeral mass at 5:30 p.m., at St. Stephen’s Armenian Church, Watertown, Massachusetts.

She leaves her husband, Sebu Petrosian; parents Yolanda and Daniel Cellucci; sons Dimitri and Alec; sister Sondra Damirjian and nieces, Milan Damirjian and Shakeh Dadigian.

Memorial donations may be made on the fundraising page; “Our Girl Linda” <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/ourgirlinda>, to benefit St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.

Arrangements were made by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Watertown.



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Deadline for returning completed applications: March 15, 2018

Donations

The Ajemian Foundation, based in Michigan, donated \$1,000 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

Gayane K. Merguerian and Malik Mufti of Woburn donated \$50 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

The Armenian Missionary Association of America donated \$150 to *Baikar* newspaper.

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COMMUNITY NEWS



Anahit and Ara Markosian, founders of Nairian

Nairian Makes Armenia's Nature Take Center Stage in Organic Skincare

SKINCARE, from page 6

like second nature to her. During my career, I had launched several startups in Silicon Valley and had always worked to build teams in Yerevan to support those initiatives. The opportunity to do this again, to explore a new field that is unusual in Armenia, and in a totally different sphere of business for me, was quite an exciting proposition. I should also add that since both of us grew up in Yerevan, the move was actually a kind of homecoming."

He added, "In that sense we are a very Armenian brand, we try to source locally as much as possible. In fact, over 70 percent of our ingredients are sourced from within a 100-kilometer radius of our eco-farm, located among the highlands of the Kotayk region in Armenia.

People in Armenia clearly know what to do with herbs when it comes to cooking. It is unusual and interesting to see those delicious herbaceous scents in Nairian soaps, with the scents of tarragon, lemon and basil and thyme.

Nairian products, while smelling good, need to perform, Markosian said. "All of our essential oils are active ingredients in our products, meaning that we never use an oil just for the sake of its smell. Every essential oil is added to a product in order to provide specific benefits to the skin or hair, and react in a specific way with other ingredients. This is achieved by doing GCMS analysis of our essential oils to find out their component structure and make choices based on rigorous scientific research conducted by our scientists with health and natural beauty in mind."

"In terms of what ingredients go into which products, that research is done at the lab, headed by Anahit. As a rule, Nairian never uses any chemicals, parabens, synthetic fragrances or dyes. Our ingredients are always natural, and most of the essential oils that we use in our products have been distilled on our eco-farm from herbs and plants that we grew ourselves, or commissioned from other local farmers."

According to Anahit Markosian, on the brand's website, "Our lab is run by a skilled team who come from various fields, including chemistry, physics, biology, horticulture and aromatherapy. We've found that the best results are obtained through a marriage of science and nature; therefore, each of our formulas is designed to bring out the full potential of its ingredients, promote health, and enhance beauty."

And the products are never tested on animals.

"We sometimes joke that our products are not tested on animals, but on friends and family. We have a pool of volunteers who test any new product before it actually becomes a product. Most of our products are also vegan, while we use beeswax or honey in a select few," Ara Markosian said.

Nairian's farm was set up two years ago, based on research toward the use of specific plants.

"While we have yet to receive our organic accreditation — we are preparing for that process this year — everything on our eco-farm is grown organically, and also as sustainably as possible. We grow many of our ingredients on the farm or in the company's neighboring fields, which we are always expanding," he said.

He added that the lab is on the premises of the farm, "so we

don't waste energy on transporting ingredients here and there. Pretty much everything—from growing ingredients and developing formulas to packaging bottles—is done at the farm in Aragyugh."

He encouraged customers to visit the facilities anytime between May and October to get a feel for how the products come together.

While the biggest market for Nairian is Armenia, they have started exporting to the United States, Russia, Japan, Korea and Hong Kong.

"Every country that we work in requires its own unique approach. In Armenia, we sell through our own Nairian bou-

nourish dry, maturing skin."

Because of the product's success at the Las Vegas cosmetics expo, importers from South Korea heard about it and have started importing it. South Korea now plays a dominant role in setting the tone for cosmetics and skin care globally, exporting hundreds of brands with cult followings to the US and Europe as well as the rest of the world.

"Korea is home to many cosmetic brands, and is a huge exporter. At the same time, Korean customers are very conscious about the quality of their products, and the ingredients that are used in their cosmetics. We think that this awareness opens up a lot of opportunities for Nairian, which is a brand that is dedicated to quality and natural ingredients. The distributor that we met at the Cosmoprof event this summer very much appreciated the quality of our products, as well as the packaging and the brand over all. Before putting in large orders, they took their time to test our products and evaluate their quality, so we are confident that our products fit the high expectations of this very knowledgeable and demanding market. Actually, we just shipped the first full batch of products to Korea, and we are eager to see what the response will be like to our cosmetic lines," Markosian noted.

For the Markosians, it is not just crafting a luxurious skincare brand that matters. Rather, the endeavor puts Armenia and many villagers on the map, they hope.

"I would say that Nairian products represent a couple of things. On the one hand, each product is an embodiment of the wonderful nature of Armenia, and is meant to celebrate the natural wealth of our home. On the other, every phase of production in our company is carried out with dedication to quality and community. From farm to bottle we control the entire production process, so that we can ensure the final product is spectacular. Moreover, through this process of production, we bolster an entire village community in Armenia, and work hard to provide as much opportunity for the local population as possible. I would hope that when our customers buy a Nairian product, that they are aware of what they are investing in—which is so much more than just natural skincare—and feel engaged with the many important processes that are necessary to the functioning of our company," Markosian noted.

And just what is next for this young brand? "There is so much to do! We have to confirm and consolidate our brand in the markets where we are already present, and also explore new opportunities—we are very open to all types of collaboration. At the same time, we are going to extend our product portfolio and develop more anti-age products. In later plans, we want to make grooming products for men, as well as baby products. We are also extending our agricultural activities: this year we planted a whole field of damask rose, and still want to expand," he concluded.

To check out the products, visit Nairian.com. In Russia, it's www.nairian.com.ru; in Japan, www.nairian.jp. In Hong Kong Nairian is represented on another online commerce platform: www.lifeisorganic.hk. Aside from online sales in the US, Nairian goods can be found at a luxury spa in New York called RISEbyWE, an offshoot of the WeWork brand. They are also actively pursuing more spas and salons.



Anahit Markosian, co-founder, and head of research and development

tiques, including the one which is located on the Nairian premises next to the lab on our eco-farm. In the US, we have a warehouse from which we ship worldwide. You can order our products at www.nairian.com. The ability to ship worldwide is very important to us, because when tourists visit our lab, get acquainted with our processes, and buy our products, we want them to have the opportunity to access our products in their home countries as well," Markosian said.

The best-selling item for the brand is the night serum, part of the anti-age line, made with apricot kernel, sea buckthorn, rosehip and coconut oils.

Markosian was exuberant about the product. "It really smells like heaven! This product was also spotted at the Cosmoprof Las Vegas International exhibition and was selected as one of the top innovations in skincare by top influencers. In terms of popularity, the Night Serum is followed by our Hand Cream that features Geranium and Ziziphora essential oils, the Rose Toner, and some of our hand-crafted soaps. The Nairian Anti-Age Night Serum is very unique in that it is solid until it comes into contact with the skin — at that point it melts into a wonderful liquid serum that seeps into the skin effortlessly. Our formula was developed using rosehip and sea buckthorn oils, for their extraordinary anti-aging properties, coconut oil, that strengthens and restores dry and flaking skin and apricot kernel oil for its vitamin A and E, which helps to moisturize and



COMMUNITY NEWS

Margrit and Nishan Atinizian Honored at 20th Anniversary of Holy Cross Church

ANNIVERSARY, from page 1

In turn, Atamian invited Nishan and Margrit Atinizian to the stage, and honored them with a commemorative plaque featuring the Armenian Khatchkar, Naregatsi, and martyred Archbishop Maloyan stamps, published by the Vatican on the occasion of the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

Next, the cultural portion of the evening commenced and Dr. Marine Margarian Kavlakian, a pianist, composer and piano teacher, who also has been the Holy Cross Church Choir music director and organist presented to the audience a couple of musical pieces. Following her performance, Rafael Hovanesian, a young and inspiring jazz singer who was born in Yerevan and recently moved to Los Angeles, entertained the audience with all-time popular Armenian Favorites as well as contemporary pop songs. Accompanying him on the keyboard was local talent, musician and composer, Gegam Margarian.

The evening ended on the joyful notes of the popular song Yerevan/Erebuni, with the whole audience chiming in with great spirits and enthusiasm.

Before Atamian, the longtime pastor of the church was the late Very Rev. Raphael Andonian, a member of the Mekhitarist Order in Venice. In 1995, under the leadership of



From left, Vatche and Maral Der Torossian, Dr. Marine Margarian Kavlakian, Rafael Hovanesian and Gegam Margarian

Father Andonian, with the financial assistance of Petros Palandjian and his building firm

Intercontinental, with the talents of architects Nishan and Florence Nahikian, and with finan-



Rafael Hovanesian performs

cial support of Nishan and Margrit Atinizian, the church purchased a plot in Belmont that became the site for the new church. On September 14, 1997, Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church was consecrated.

The church was formerly located in Cambridge.



Patriarch of Jerusalem Archbishop Nourhan Manougian bestows the Knights of Saints James Medal on Kevork Atinizian

Philanthropist Kevork Atinizian Receives Knights Of Saints James Medal from Patriarch of Jerusalem

MEDAL, from page 1

The Patriarch made the important point that Atinizian had made his contributions without being approached or asked. He presented the medal, which is diamond studded and cruciform, with S. H., standing for Saints James, written on the four sides of the cross in Armenian. As Kevork Atinizian is the first recipient of this award, he became the first knight. The patriarch also gave him a beautiful bible, bound with mother of pearl.

At the end of the ceremony, the patriarch led those present in the traditional Armenian Lord's Prayer.



From left, Fr. Arakel Aljalian, Fr. Krikor Maksoudian, Kevork Atinizian, Patriarch Manougian, Mrs. Jacqueline Atinizian



Patriarch Nourhan Manougian, center, with members of the Atinizian family. From left, Lori, Jaqueline, Kevork and Nigoghos.

Talk at Zohrab Center Explores Role Of Liturgy in Istanbul Community

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK – What does it mean to be a member of the Armenian religious minority in Turkey?

That was the focus of Dr. Christopher Sheklian's eye-opening lecture on November 7, at the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center of the Eastern Diocese in New York before a crowd of more than seventy.

The talk was introduced by the Zohrab center's director, the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan. The evening's speaker recently earned his doctorate in anthropology at the University of Chicago and is currently a Manoogian post-doctoral fellow at the University of Michigan. He spent two years in Istanbul, from 2012 to 2014, studying and reflecting on the "sense of belonging that Armenians feel toward Istanbul."

Accompanying his talk with a Power Point demonstration, Sheklian who is also an ordained deacon of the Armenian Church, recalled his days at the Sourp Prghich Hospital, where there is a chapel on the grounds. "Every Sunday, I went to *badarak*," he said, calling Armenian life in Turkey, "one of the reminisces on the other side of the Genocide."

There are currently 60,000-70,000 Armenians in Turkey today, he related, including those from Armenia, as well as countless Islamized or "hidden" Armenians. And in Istanbul with its population of 14 million, there are five daily calls for Muslim prayer, a recurring sound in the background of daily life. If you are Armenian, "You can live there, but it's not your city," Sheklian said.

Though Istanbul has been a home to Armenians for centuries, they feel a sense of exclusion. "They rarely speak Armenian on the street, and many churches are hidden behind high walls. Still, most Armenians living there do not feel segregated or discriminated against. 'Bolis' is their home."

Sense of Belonging through Liturgy

Sheklian suggested that the liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, and the constant exposure to Armenian hymns, "helps many Armenians feel that they also belong. And even though Armenians are a very small minority, there are some Armenian signs throughout the country."

Outside of Istanbul, Armenian life is encountered through its historic ruins, the speaker indicated. "The stones of Ani's ruined churches and monasteries have been incorporated into people's homes, and there is no mention of Ani's Armenian past on any sign. Minorities

don't belong, or they belong problematically. In the ghettos, they exist in a state of paranoia. It was a decade ago that noted journalist and editor Hrant Dink was murdered.

"However, Armenian Istanbul is not a ghetto," the speaker declared. "Armenians are everywhere. They go to schools and hospitals. There are 36 Armenian churches in Istanbul. These churches survived because there was no mass deportation in Istanbul during the Genocide due to international news scrutiny. There is also a large Armenian cemetery in the Shishli neighborhood.

He revealed that Armenians engage with the



Dr. Christopher Sheklian

city through the perennial cycles of the Armenian liturgy, which also determines what the person does depending on where one is. For many Armenians, one's day is shaped by the liturgy.

The Armenian Church's liturgy changes its character and expression based on ancient and predictable cycles of musical tones that are analogous to, but developed independently from the more familiar western tones of Gregorian chant. In this way, the young scholar asserted, "Liturgical time is pushed out of the church walls and into the city. This creates a robust liturgical life in Istanbul. And that is how Armenians live their life," he said.

"This liturgical subject has emerged as a minority mode of belonging, so that not all of life is paranoid. Thus, there are different ways of being Armenian in Istanbul," the speaker declared to the awe-struck crowd.

Following the lecture, a reception took place during which robust conversations continued among the attendees on this fresh and captivating perspective of an ancient, unique and precious Armenian community.



COMMUNITY NEWS

St. James Church Celebrates Name Day

WATERTOWN – On Sunday, December 17, Diocesan Primate Archbishop Khajag Barsamian visited St. James Armenian Church to observe its 86th anniversary and annual Name Day celebration. The Primate presided over the Divine Liturgy and delivered the sermon of the day.

Afterwards, a banquet to celebrate the Feast of St. James the Bishop of Nisibis (for whom the Watertown church is named) brought together a large crowd to honor several parishioners – including long-serving parish pastor Rev. Arakel Aljalian, who was honored by the Primate with the floral stole.

Also taking part in the day was the parish's former pastor Rev. Dajad Davidian and assistant pastor, Fr. Arsen Barsamian.

Lifelong parishioner Michael Yapchaian – a leader of the Armenian Church in America on many levels – was presented with the “Parishioner of the Year” award, while Nishan and Margrit Atinizian received the Eastern Diocese's St. Vartan Award for their decades of service. Outgoing parish council members Edward Kazanjian and Linda Sahagian were recognized for their service.

The banquet also occasioned the formal announcement that St. James had received approval from the Watertown Council to purchase the East Branch Library building next door to the church.



From left, Michael Yapchaian, Rev. Arakel Aljalian, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Nishan Atinizian and Margrit Atinizian



From left, James Kalustian, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Margrit Atinizian, Nishan Atinizian and Rev. Arakel Aljalian



From left, Fr. Arsen Barsamian, Fr. Dajad Davidian, Michael Yapchaian, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Rev. Arakel Aljalian, Yeretzgin Natasha Aljalian, James Kalustian, Margrit Atinizian, Nishan Atinizian

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Nishan and Margrit Atinizian flanked by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian family members



Carolyn Atinizian Yardemian

Armenian Assembly Leaders Discuss 2018 Priorities With Catholicos, Praise Him for Outreach

WASHINGTON – Armenian Assembly of America Board of Trustees Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian and President Carolyn Mugar met with Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, and thanked him for the church's support for legislation aimed at combating domestic violence and helping its victims, which was adopted this month by the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia.

The bill on “Prevention of domestic violence, protection of domestic violence victims and restoration of solidarity in the family” introduces criminal and administrative penalties for specific cases defined as domestic violence. The legislation obligates the state to protect victims by providing them with special shelters or banning their violent spouses from approaching them and their children. During the general debates and open discussions, Primate of the Shirak Diocese Archbishop Mikael Ajapahyan strongly endorsed the government efforts to combat domestic violence.

“The Armenian Church is the moral center of society and is voicing its timely support for legislation to protect women, children, and elderly victims of domestic violence. We commend His Holiness for his commitment to Armenian families everywhere and the work he has done to stand firm against violence,” Barsamian said.

In addition, the Assembly expressed appreciation for Catholicos Karekin II's outreach to the Armenian Evangelical community during his recent visit to California. Assembly Board Members Talin Yacoubian and Lisa Kalustian, along with Executive Director Bryan Ardouny and Western Region Director Mihran Toumajan, were on hand during the pontifical visit, of which His Holiness addressed many topics and encouraged sustained involvement and support to the Armenian Church and to Armenian educational and cultural institutions throughout the diaspora.

Barsamian also commended the Catholicos on his recent statement to Protestant Armenians in Germany, and his outreach efforts to other sects of Christian Armenians. “The Armenian Church is now leading on these issues and should be commended for not sitting on the sidelines of the priorities of the day,” he stated.



REFLECTING • CONNECTING • INSPIRING

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator

Thank you for your support. We had a great 85th anniversary symposium and gala, and, as long as you continue to support us, we will work to further improve the *Mirror* both in its print and digital version.

We want to let our readers know that we have been working hard over the past year to bring you more news and services.

Feel free to visit us in our Watertown Baikar Building headquarters, or call, write or email us with your comments and suggestions.

- We increased the print edition of the paper from 16 to 20 pages weekly.
- We improved the paper quality used in printing the paper.
- We have begun to increase our coverage of events in various parts of the world through special correspondents.
- We redesigned our website (www.mirrorspectator.com), which now offers more functionalities: you can see videos, comment, and contact us directly. You can directly input *free* calendar notices for your events. You will also shortly be able to pay with credit cards for your subscriptions or make gifts online.
- We are now sending out emails twice a week with links to new articles and videos from our website. Please send us (info@mirrorspectator.com or through our website) the email addresses of your friends so that they too can enjoy this *free* service.

The Armenian Mirror-Spectator hopes your New Year will be a great one—and that along the way we can continue to keep you informed about developments in the Armenian world. Keep your friends and family in the loop by buying them a print subscription, and send us their emails to get weekly notices.

www.mirrorspectator.com

Arts & Living

Silk Rugs from Kesaria Topic of Talk at Ararat- Eskijian Museum

MISSION HILLS, Calif. — The Ararat-Eskijian Museum presents “The Silk Piled Carpets in the Telfeyan Collection from Kesaria” a talk by Sofi Khachmanyany independent researcher and instructor at various colleges in Southern California, on Sunday, January 14 at 4 p.m.

The Telfeyan brothers of Kesaria, Karapet and Movses, were highly successful rug producers at a time when piled carpet-rugs from Kesaria became very popular in the European markets of the second half of the 19th century. They were the first to produce “jejim” carpets, and their factories developed into thriving rug making facilities.

This lecture will focus on four particular rugs. The first is the larger of two rugs from the Telfeyan collection and is called “Gate of Paradise,” with an arch resting on two columns on the upper end. The second, smaller one has a floral, European-inspired design with a circle-centered, decorative background. These rugs were made in Movses Telfeyan’s factory prior to 1896, before the family left Kesaria. The third rug is from Setrak Timuryan collection. The fourth is also a large one and called “Gate of Paradise”. It is from the private collection of late Luther Eskijian and is currently on display at Ararat-Eskijian Museum.



Sofi Khachmanyany

Kachmanyany began her career in textile decorating and embroidery arts at Art-Technical College in Yerevan, Armenia. Shortly after her graduation, she earned the title “Master Folk Artist of Embroidery Arts” and participated in a variety of exhibitions in Armenia as well as in Russia. After moving to the US in 1988, she continued her education in fashion design and costume-making earning her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from California State University, Los Angeles. Her designs have been showcased at various venues in Los Angeles, New York, and southern France. She has received for best theater costume design in Los Angeles and has won the *LA Weekly* Award. Currently, she is working on her doctorate dissertation at the Institute of Arts, pre-Academy of Science of Armenia, Yerevan. The topic of her research is on the use of symbols on the vestments of the Catholicos and their presentation in Armenian medieval manuscript painting.

Armenian Genocide Documentary ‘They Shall Not Perish’ Is on Netflix

NEW YORK — Netflix subscribers were offered a rare look at the United States efforts to aid and assist the victims of the Armenian Genocide, when the popular streaming service made available the documentary “They Shall Not Perish, The Story of Near East Relief.”

Written and directed by George Billard and produced by Near East Foundation Board Chairman Emeritus Shant Mardirossian through his Acorne Productions, the film is chronicles the efforts of the Near East Relief to raise funds and save thousands of orphans of the Armenian Genocide.



Joan Agajanian Quinn, captured in a portrait by the great David Hockney

AIWA-LA to Honor Ellis Island Medal Recipient Joan Agajanian Quinn at Luncheon

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles affiliate of the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA) will honor Joan Agajanian Quinn, the recipient of the 2017 Ellis Island Medal of Honor, at a luncheon on Saturday, January 28, at the Mr. C Hotel (1224 Beverwil Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90035). The event, which will start at 11:30 a.m., will be attended by special guest Dame Zandra Rhodes who has created a limited edition special print to celebrate the afternoon.

Quinn received this prestigious medal, along with studio executive Sherry Lansing, astronaut Buzz Aldrin, CNN’s Fareed Zakaria, and author Victoria Kennedy in May 2017 at a moving ceremony on Ellis Island in New York, in recognition of her enduring contributions to both the Armenian and American communities. The Ellis Island Honors Society sponsors the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, established in 1986, and presented annually to American citizens who have distinguished themselves within their own ethnic groups while exemplifying the values of the American way of life. Joan was nominated by the president of the Women’s Caucus for Art, J. Cheryl Bookout. Letters acknowledging community service were presented to the Ellis Island Society by Beverly Hills Mayor Lili Bosse, Ambassador Grigor Hovhannissian, Lourdes G. Baird (Ret.) and Reverend Scott Colglazier.

Nicole Nishanian, president of AIWA-LA, states, “We are proud to honor Joan Agajanian Quinn who has had an illustrious career in both public and community service. She has served on the Executive Board of AIWA-LA since 1997 and has served with distinction as our NGO representative to the United Nations and as Board Liaison. Joan and her late husband, attorney John J. Quinn have garnered praise for their support of artists for over 50 years.”

Quinn supports many local and global humanitarian, educational and cultural activities focusing on causes that benefit diverse communities, some of which are: Board member of the California Film Commission; 17 years on the California Arts Council; The Institute for the Study of and Development of Legal Systems (ISDLS), a group that conducts international legal reform and exchange projects in collaboration with foreign governments to stimulate international relations, human rights and civil liberties; Member of Cedars Sinai Hospital Arts Council; Commissioner for the Beverly Hills Architectural Council; Trustee of the Armenian Library and Museum of America (ALMA) in Boston working to uphold the museum’s objectives to locate, collect, preserve and present the culture, history, art and contributions of the Armenian people; Trustee of Pilgrim School, a college preparatory school associated with The First Congregational Church of Los Angeles; former Vice President of the Los Angeles Music Center’s Blue Ribbon 400; and Commissioner for the Beverly Hills Arts Council. When she was appointed by the Armenian Minister of Culture to be the honorary commissioner of the Armenian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, she founded the American-Armenian Pavilion Council.

Quinn, a Los Angeles native, is a journalist, curator and arts advocate. She was appointed the West Coast editor of *Interview* magazine by Andy Warhol, and was

see QUINN, page 14

The Long-Lost Story of an Indian Rescue During the Armenian Genocide

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

YEREVAN — In the run-up to the centenary of the Armenian Genocide, more and more incidents and details came to light, many touching on unexpected subjects and geographic settings. In 2012, during a visit to Yerevan to take part in the “Strategies of (Un)Silencing” conference, organized by the late Armenian-American art historian and curator Neery Melkonian, the famous contemporary Indian writer Amitav Ghosh presented a lecture based on his work, “Shared Sorrows: Indians and Armenians in the prison camps of Ras al-Ain, 1916-1918,” and it came as a major revelation to all of us. (See the full text of the paper in amitavghosh.com/blog/?cat=23.)

We learned that in April 1916 a large number of British-Indian troops fighting in Iraq fell prisoner to the Ottoman army. Some of them were sent to the prison camp of Ras al-Ain in northern Syria to work on the railroad line, this at a time when thousands of Armenians filled the deportation routes. Indian and Armenian prisoners crossed paths and their lives sometimes intertwined. Years later, Sisir Sarbadhikari, who had been a volunteer in the Bengali emergency aid organization, wrote a memoir based on his diary of his years in the Middle East. This Bengali work, published in 1958, received little attention at the time and was soon forgotten. Amitav Ghosh presented us with some of the contacts Sarbadhikari had with Armenians in those years.

This reality, previously unknown to specialists in the Armenian Genocide, found an echo in a July 13, 1919 article published in *Zhoghovurt*, an Armenian newspaper in Constantinople. It told the truly moving story of an Armenian orphan boy whom an Indian soldier had rescued from Turks and delivered to the director of an Armenian school. The author of the account was Mesrob Sahagian (1889-1968), a lawyer and editor from Malatia who, under the pen name Sahag Mesrob, contributed to the Armenian press of Constantinople (Istanbul), France and the United States between 1910 and 1919.

We here offer Sahag Mesrob’s account, especially for those interested in the Armenian genocide and Armenian-Indian relations.

The Indian’s Gift

BY SAHAG MESROB

Suddenly a tall Indian soldier entered my room. He had a noticeably robust bearing and showed signs of being fresh off the road. He held a folder of papers in one hand and in the other the hand of a boy barely 5 years who, like him, seemed quite travel weary. With his feeble hands fixed at his sides and his head hanging down, the child seemed to be fatalistically waiting to see what the soldier had in store for him.

I looked up, breaking off my reading of a letter that had come to me from an untimely world, a cry loosened from the boundless

see RESCUE, page 14



ARTS & LIVING

The Long-Lost Story of an Indian Rescue During the Armenian Genocide

RESCUE, from page 13

sands of the desert, a ghost, a storm – a plea for help for those wasting away on burning sands, for those Armenian orphans and martyrs languishing unprotected under tents, for those sacred souls snatched away from their lives.

“What do you want?” I asked.

“You are the director of the Armenian school,” he said.

“Yes.”

“Mr. Director, take this little Armenian orphan given to me by a Turkish officer in Kirkuk. He spoke Turkish and at first, we thought he was the officer’s child or relative. We only discovered that he was Armenian later. One day, when we had an Armenian interpreter with us, we stopped near a camp of Armenian prisoners and suddenly this little fellow burst out sobbing and crying ‘mommy, mommy!’ in the Armenian language. With that cry of ‘mommy, mommy’ he revealed his true identity. I heard that you were searching for the remnants of your people, so I offer him to you as a gift from an Indian soldier who came to these far-off

deserts to fight against tyranny in the name of civilization and freedom.”

I was struck dumb. I couldn’t say a thing. I couldn’t even manage a thank you. I could only listen wide-eyed to what this kind Indian soldier said and his words, spoken in his flowing, Indian-accented English, echoed in my ears after he fell silent. He stood there before me for a long time while I returned from that world of sorrow to the present moment. I was shaken and I begged his pardon.

“I am very grateful to you for this immortal and moving gift. I’d like to have your name so that the donor may always be remembered.”

“That isn’t important. I don’t want anyone to know. All you need to know is that the donor is an Indian Christian.”

“But the boy should at least know some day who saved him so that he can always remember,” I pressed. “Please give me your name so that I can record it.”

“It is not at all necessary,” he insisted. “Just remember and tell him that an Indian Christian found him in the desert and delivered him to his own. That is

enough,” and, so saying, he hugged the little boy, pressed him tight against his breast with parental love, kissed him on the eyes and left

....

The little child stood before me in my room, now completely alone. He looked at me looking at him with a thousand emotions surging through my heart. I was shaken to the core of my being. I was trembling and felt hot tears clinging to my cheeks.

This little orphan, this little fragment of his people, suddenly began to break down too. What transpired between his heart and mine no one can say. It is enough to know that he had a good, long cry. A couple of hours later when he began to feel hungry he barely raised his troubled head to accept a piece of bread.

Today, a month later, he is in the care of an American orphanage and attending one of the Armenian schools of Baghdad, this gift from an Indian soldier. In just that one month he has made considerable progress in learning his ancestral language and is very enthusiastic. He is always singing, singing away, seeming to find in the waves of song a

way to dispel the worries of his childhood. He sings without understanding the words, but he seems to gain a lot of meaning from the melodies, for it must surely be the spirit of his people in those melodies that moves his lips to flights of yearning song. And today he has a name, a name I gave him: Hratch Hntgazadian. (The root of the name “Hntgazad” means “freed by an Indian.”) All his little classmates and everyone who meets him know him by that name and he, unconsciously, seems to be very pleased with it: Hratch Hntgazadian!

And to think that one day a son of far off India would come to Mesopotamia to find and rescue an Armenian orphan boy out of the hands of a Turkish criminal and return him to his own, saying, “Take this little boy. Let him be a gift to you from an Indian soldier. . .”

Indian soldier, may your gift be blessed. . .

(Translated by Donald Abcarian. The piece originally appeared in Vartan Matiossian’s blog, Armeniaca.)

AIWA-LA to Honor Joan Agajanian Quinn

QUINN, from page 13

society editor of Hearst’s *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*. Her work with Condé Nast included staff positions on *Condé Nast Traveller* and *House and Garden*. The interviews conducted on her public television programs, “Beverly Hills View” and “The Joan Quinn Profiles” (filmed at the Hollywood Museum) as well as the numerous periodicals to which she has contributed are aimed at sharing information to a multi-cultural society (ie: editor at *Manipulator* magazine, Germany; senior editor at *Stuff* magazine, *Los Angeles* magazine, *LA Style*, *Main* magazine, founding arts editor at *Venice* magazine, *Detour*, *Vogue-Paris*).

As a curator, Quinn has presented art and fashion exhibitions by luminaries such as photographer Paul Jasmin (Citrus Gallery); designer Zandra Rhodes (Otis Parsons, La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Parsons School of Design-New York, The Phoenix Museum of Art); Rene Bouche (Otis Parsons); Issey Miyaki (The Mori Museum-Tokyo, Japan and The Contemporary Art Museum-Houston, Texas); and Tandori Yokoo (Otis Parsons). A current project dear to Joan’s heart involves her role as chair of the Art and Spirit exhibition presented in the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles. As founder of this project, she partnered with Art Division, a non-profit arts organization dedicated to supporting and training underprivileged youth.

She has earned a reputation as a visionary who, over the last 50 years, has inspired more than 200 artists to paint or sculpt her image. This unique collection includes works by Claire Falkenstein, David Hockney, Billy Al Bengston, Beatrice Wood, Dahlia Elsayed, Shepard Fairey, Robert Graham, Robert Mapplethorpe, Antonio Lopez, Peter Carapetian, Zandra Rhodes, Don Bachardy, George Hurrell, Magu, Tony Berlant, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Srboohie Abajian, Larry Bell, Ed Moses, Frank Gehry and Ed Ruscha, to name a few.

She was married for 55 years to Jack Quinn, who passed away in March 2017, two months prior to her receiving the Ellis Island Medal of Honor. They strongly believed in supporting the need to acknowledge victims of domestic violence in Armenia through the Women’s Support Center in Yerevan. (The WSC, a shelter harboring families in need, is an AIWA program). She credits her participation in public and community service to Jack’s unwavering support and pride in all her endeavors. Their twin daughters, Amanda Quinn Olivar and Jennifer Quinn Gowe, accompanied her to Ellis Island to receive the award.

For more information & reservations, contact: Arsine Phillips at aphillips@pmcos.com or Lily Balian: at hyeLil@aol.com.






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ARTS & LIVING

Armenian 'Love Notes' On Valentine's Day with Metropolitan Opera Star Yeghishe Manucharyan

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Armenian love songs will melt your heart in a Valentine's Day celebration concert with one of the world's great tenors, Metropolitan Opera star Yeghishe Manucharyan, the award-winning soprano Victoria Avetisyan and renowned pianist Judith Lynn Stillman. "Love Notes" features romantic and poignant love songs, duets and arias from around the world in Armenian, Russian, French, Italian and English.

This is a unique collaboration of consummate artists.

Manucharyan made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Eustazio in Rossini's "Armida," sang the roles of Ottavio in "Don Giovanni" and Nadir in "Pearl Fishers" at the New York City Opera, and earned critical acclaim for his Carnegie Hall appearances with the Opera Orchestra of New York as Percy in "Anna Bolena," Gérald in "Lakmé" and Ivan Lykov in Rimsky-Korsakov's "Tsar's Bride."

Avetisyan, soon after her dazzling débuts with the Caramoor International Music Festival as Gluck's Orfeo in "Orfeo ed Euridice" and as soloist at the Washington's Kennedy Center with Bobby McFerrin, was honored with Caramoor's Young Vocal Artist of the Year award.



Yeghishe Manucharyan

Stillman, whose epic composition about the Armenian Genocide, When the Music Stopped, won top prizes in four international film festivals, holds bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from the Juilliard School and is the classical duet partner of Wynton Marsalis on Sony.

Two concerts will take place at the Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts, Sapinsley Hall, Rhode Island College, 600 Mount Pleasant Avenue, Providence, on Valentine's Day, Wednesday, February 14, at 1 p.m. and 8.30 p.m.

Admission is free and tickets can be had at the door.



Victoria Avetisyan, Judith Lynn Stillman



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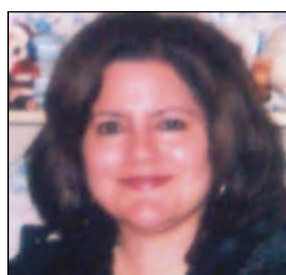
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Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

Lentil Rice Pilaf with Almonds and Golden Raisins

INGREDIENTS

1 cup dried green, brown, or French lentils, rinsed
1 cup long grain white rice
1 cup chopped onions
1 medium carrot, peeled and diced
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
4 cups low sodium chicken, beef or vegetable broth
1 bay leaf
1 teaspoon Kosher or sea salt
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
3/4 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon black or white pepper
1/2 cup each slivered almonds and golden raisins (chopped dates or dried apricots may be substituted)
2-3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley
Unsalted butter
Olive oil
Armenian or Greek yogurt, lemon wedges (garnish)

PREPARATION:

In a small pan, toss the almonds and raisins together in a tablespoon of melted butter until the almonds are lightly browned; set aside.

In a large saucepan over medium heat, sauté the onions, carrots, and garlic in 2-3 tablespoons of olive oil or butter, stirring occasionally until the onions are browned. Add the broth, lentils, rice, bay leaf, and lemon juice and bring to a full boil. Add the spices and stir to combine. Cover, reduce heat, and cook for 35-40 minutes or until rice and lentils are tender and liquid is absorbed.

Remove the bay leaf, fluff pilaf with a fork, and add the parsley. Cover pan and let stand 5 more minutes before serving.

Top pilaf with the almonds and golden raisins and serve with yogurt and lemon wedges on the side.

Serves 4-6.

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



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ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

CONNECTICUT

FEBRUARY 10 — Hye Hearts Dance. Second big annual event. Back By Popular Demand! 8pm - ??? LIVE MUSIC featuring Harry Bedrossian (oud, vocals), Mal Barsamian (clarinet), Bruce Gigarjian (guitar), Charlie Dermenjian (dumbeg). Continuous dancing with DJ Chris Habibian. Hosted by the Tri-Church Cultural Committee. Holiday Inn, 1 Bright Meadow Blvd., Enfield, CT (just off Interstate 91). Hotel \$89 room rate. 860-741-2211, mention "Hye Hearts" Adults \$45 advance, \$50 at the door. Students & Adults 80+ \$30 advance, \$35 at the door. Children 12 & under free. Mezzeh included. Cash Bar. Reservations for up to tables of 10. To purchase tickets: <https://hyeheartsdance2018.eventbrite.com> or mail checks (made payable to TCCC) to: Gary Hovhanessian, 81 Cope Farms Rd., Farmington, CT 06032. RSVP & Questions/Info: David Jermakian 413-727-2586, davidjermakian@gmail.com and Gary 860-690-5959 or gary-hov@aol.com. Tri-Church Cultural Committee includes members of the Armenian Church of Holy Resurrection, New Britain, CT and St. George Armenian Church, Hartford, CT and St. Mark's Armenian Church, Springfield, MA.

MASSACHUSETTS

MAY 5 — Save the date! Annual Meeting, Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA). Details to follow. Contact: info@aiwainternational.org or 617-926-0171.

FEBRUARY 10, 2018 — Poon Paregentan Dinner Dance - Family Kef Night, Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church, 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. Featuring Jason



The Hye Hearts Dance will take place on February 10 in Connecticut, hosted by the Tri-Church Cultural Committee, at the Holiday Inn, 1 Bright Meadow Blvd, in Enfield. The dance will feature musicians Harry Bedrossian, Bruce Gigarjian and Charlie Dermenjian and DJ Chris Habibian. To purchase tickets: <https://hyeheartsdance2018.eventbrite.com>

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.

RHODE ISLAND

JANUARY 24 —The Cultural Committee Proudly presents New exclusive showing ARMENIAN FILM FESTIVAL THE NATION'S PAST & PRESENT Presented in English In Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence, RI 02908 Donation \$ 10: "Armenia"Wednesday, January, 24at 7 pm (Yerevan, Echmiadzin, Khor Virap, Zvartnots, Sevan, Dilijan, Lori); "Country of Armenian Kings – 2," Friday, February, 16, at 7 pm (Ani, Kars, Edesia, Musaler), "Country of Armenian Kings – 3," Friday, March, 16, at 7 pm (Cilicia, Harbert, Adana, Zeytoun)

MARCH 17 — Kef Dance, Egavian Hall,70 Jefferson St., Providence. 7 p.m. to Midnight. Musicians Mark DerMugrditchian-clarinet, vocals, Kevin M... guest artist... \$25 at the door student... \$20. Light mezza and coffee/pastries will be served. Call Jeff Boghossian-401-924-1856.

TO BE RESCHEDULED

What's an Ancient Roman Temple Doing in Armenia?

By Benjamin Kemper

YEREVAN (*Smithsonian*) — “Church fatigue?” my tour guide asked rhetorically, noticing my dragging feet and glazed-over eyes. I’d never heard the term, but after eight hours of monastery-hopping under the Armenian sun, it certainly resonated. It was only 3 o’clock, and we’d already hit St. Echmiadzin, Khor Virap, Geghard and Noravank, four spectacular sites that were starting to blur together in a fever dream of conical roofs, cruciform floor plans and dizzying frescoes. “Final stretch,” he said, patting me on the back, “and don’t worry, this place is nothing like the others.”

He was right. Here, 2,500 miles from Rome and 1,500 miles from Athens in a remote corner of the South Caucasus, sits an unmistakably Hellenic temple of colossal proportions — the only remaining standing structure of its kind in the former Soviet Union. I gazed, mouth agape, at its geometrically impeccable colonnade, reminiscent of the Maison Carrée in Nîmes or the Parthenon on the Athenian Acropolis. Beneath it, double-height stairs wrapped around the entire foundation, and above it, triangular pediments rested on its capitals. Pedestals displaying carvings of Atlas, the Greek sky-bearing Titan, flanked the entrance. My mind was racing: How did a Greco-Roman architectural masterpiece end up in Armenia, and what was its purpose?

The leading theory is that the temple was erected in 77 AD during the reign of Tiridates I, who, 11 years prior, had been crowned by the Roman emperor Nero. The story goes that as a token of goodwill, Nero sent the Armenian monarch back east with a cadre of Roman craftsman and a generous sum of money, resources that were used to build the fortified city of Garni and its central temple, a shrine to the ancient Armenian sun god Mihr.

This hypothesis hinges on a Greek inscription found near the site that mentions the comple-

tion of an important construction project in 77 AD. But some scholars, like Elizabeth Fagan, an assistant history professor at Truman State University, are hesitant to jump to conclusions. “There’s no compelling reason to connect the Greek inscription to the temple,” she said. “The text in question seems to allude to the construction of a residential building, not a holy site.”

Another band of academics maintains that Garni isn’t a temple at all but rather the tomb of one of the Romanized Armenian kings of the 2nd century, based on architectural similarities between Garni and contemporaneous mausoleums in Asia Minor. (Fagan isn’t sold on this theory, either, since tombs — even prominent ones, according to her — were customarily erected outside the city walls; Garni Temple was built well within them. She does pin the construction in this timeframe, though, the 2nd or 3rd century, based on the structure’s stylistic elements and drilling techniques.)

If everyone can agree on one thing, it’s that Garni Temple is pre-Christian, making its existence today somewhat miraculous: When Armenia adopted Christianity as its national religion in the 4th century — one of the first nations in the world to officially do so — King Tiridates III’s regime razed virtually all of the pagan temples. It remains a mystery why the temple at Garni survived.

It almost didn’t, for more natural reasons. In 1679, a violent earthquake toppled the temple and reduced it to rubble, and for three centuries the structure sat in utter disrepair. It was only in 1975 — following the imprimatur of the Soviet Union — that the edifice was fully, meticulously restored to its former glory. It may seem odd that the U.S.S.R. would fund the restoration of a supposedly holy structure, given their crackdown on religion generally, but as Christina Maranci, professor of Armenian art and architecture at Tufts University, explained, “The Soviet aesthetic often prized classical forms, so Garni Temple was an inspirational place.” While most of the stones you see today



Garni

are original, any missing fragments were purposely replaced with blank gray rock, so as to differentiate between the new and old materials.

Today Garni Temple welcomes some 136,000 visitors each year, and a handful of those are Armenian Neopagans, who call the site their spiritual capital. Armenian Neopaganism is a relatively new grassroots religious movement that aims to reclaim the pre-Christian Armenian faith. “The movement officially began with the first celebration of the birth of Vahagn, the ancient Armenian god of fire, at Garni Temple in 1991,” said Yulia Antonyan, assistant professor of the Department of Cultural Studies at the Yerevan State University. “So that tells you how important this site is to their identity,” she added. “To this day, Armenian Neopagans congregate there on their holidays to practice ceremonial dancing and ritual prayer and sacrifice — though a new law forbids them from actually slaughtering animals on-site.” Tour the site on Navasard (August 11), the Neopagan New Year, or Khaghoghhorhnek, their Day of the Dead, and you’ll likely happen upon a congregation of praying Neopagans. (Visitors can observe these rituals but aren’t generally welcome to participate in them.)

Regardless of how visitors choose to experience Garni Temple today — as a primeval shrine to pagan gods or simply an enigmatic archaeological site — this ancient structure, with its many untold secrets, is sure to spur everyone’s imagination long into the future.

(Read more: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/whats-ancient-roman-temple-doing-armenia-1-180967756/#agHYhK4Kx4eeLpMk.99>)



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Iran: The Unfinished Business of Neocons

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Recent massive demonstrations in major Iranian cities have focused news outlets and commentators once again on the region, with a variety of analyses and interpretations based on each party's interests. The US and Israel have a distinct view and have overwhelmingly supported the demonstrators. European countries have cautioned all sides not to inflame the situation, while Russia has a muted approach and Armenia is watching the situation with apprehension. There is subdued cheer in Azerbaijan where the leadership is expecting dividends in terms of territorial reward should a collapse similar to Iraq, Syria and Libya occur. We should be reminded that during the administration of Abulfaz Elbichey, Azerbaijan openly laid territorial claim on Iran's northern region.

Of course, Iran has its own interpretation of and explanation for the events. Iran's Attorney General Mohammad Jafar Montazeri has accused the West of fomenting trouble, stating "that the mastermind behind the eruption of protests in the country was a US-Israeli-Saudi think tank that had been plotting for the rallies [for the past] four years."

Of course, any observer of the Middle Eastern politics does not need Mr. Montazeri's accusation to get to know the real cause of disturbances; it is very easy to extrapolate from the events which destroyed Iraq, Libya and Syria. Iran was on the list of the neocons during the Bush-Cheney administration, but the plans did not work as Vice President Dick Cheney had predicted and planned. He was sure that once the US invaded Iraq, the local people would welcome the soldiers with bouquets of flowers as liberators. Those bouquets never materialized; instead bombs and grenades were showered on the forces and they continue to this day, in the process killing more than one million Iraqi citizens and 4,500 US military personnel on the field and an equal number of Iraq veterans in the US because of suicides.

President Barrack Obama changed the course of US policy in the Middle East, but the neocons and their cohorts never changed their plans. President Obama negotiated the nuclear deal with Iran to save the peace and to protect Israel's security, but in recent years, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Trump have been labeling it as a "bad, bad deal."

Let's make some things clear. Iran is a theocracy and the regime there is repressive. The economy is in shambles and many suffer in poverty. Still, the Iranian people at least have more security and can lead safer lives than those in neighboring countries, where in the US lexicon, are enjoying democracy after overthrowing repressive regimes. Because of its energy resources, Iran was once a prosperous country but Western economic sanctions have crippled the country with the specific purpose of making it ripe for eruption. And the Trump administration has decided that time has arrived to take up again the unfinished business of the neocons.

The scenario, the script and the signature are all the same whether promoting the Arab Spring or regime change in the Ukraine: Use social media to foment unrest in the target country, infiltrate segments of society and use the legitimate grievances of the people and threaten the respective government that it is accountable if it tries to quell the unrest through the use of force. Libya and Syria were both stable countries, albeit neither was a democracy but was led by a strongman, but the foreign instigations of unrest, coupled with invasion, created wars supposedly to bring democracy to those people, who are instead suffering even more, in bloodbaths. In fact, in the case of those two countries, little remains of the country. Cities have been turned to rubble and it is almost impossible to lead a normal life.

Of course, there are also internal tensions in the Iranian society. The hardliners, who brought about Iran's isolation from the world community, are still powerful. But an internal process of liberalization is in progress. President Hassan Rouhani, who brought Iran out of isolation, has ruffled some feathers within the ranks of the hardliners. Now, he is cautiously moving toward a more relaxed social order. He even has dared to make public that liberalization drive stating: "Some believe that people only want money. But would someone be fine having a good monthly pay and have Internet access fully blocked, or have his move-

ments outside the house restricted or not have the right to speak?"

There is also the issue of succession to the all-powerful supreme leader, the ailing Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. And as President Rouhani cannot run for a third term in office, he seems to be the natural choice for that position.

Under Rouhani, Iran has gained significant power in the Middle East, which alarms the US and its allies in the region.

•The Iraq war was waged specially to put in place a regime friendly to the US and Israel. But the irony is that by bringing the Shias into the government, replacing the Sunnis hostile to the West, Iraq has become almost a satellite of Iran.

•Iran's participation in the Syrian war boosted its prestige in the region, especially after brokering a deal with its regional competitors, namely Russia and Turkey.

•With all the US military hardware pouring in Saudi Arabia, Iran's allies, the Houthis, were able to overthrow Yemen's government supported by Riyadh.

•During the standoff between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, Tehran airlifted supplies to Qatar, breaking the blockade instituted by Riyadh and the United Arab Emirates.

After Iran scored those political points, it became more urgent for the US and Israel to plan for a regime change. But the war in Syria came to prove that those kinds of interventions may only prove counterproductive.

British shadow government's Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry has warned that the West had been too quick to welcome the Arab Spring in Egypt and Libya. Similarly, "Predictions of the strength of western-backed anti-Assad rebel forces proved as mythical as many of us had always thought."

French President Emmanuel Macron has warned Western powers strongly not to be tempted to interfere or encourage protestors. Because Europe has vital interests in trading with Iran. As the US is contemplating further sanctions against Iran, Tehran might scrap its \$100-million deal with Boeing and turn to the European Airbus instead.

Short of a Bush-style invasion of Iran, President Trump is left with two unpalatable options: either decertify the Iran nuclear deal or opt for additional sanctions. Reuters reports that in October, Trump refused to certify that Iran was complying with the deal, also known by its acronym, JCPOA, even though the International Atomic Energy Agency said it was.

Our president, who also claims to be a "genius and a stable one at that," claimed that Iran had violated the "spirit of the deal."

Trump is weighting whether the pact serves US security interests while the other world powers that negotiated the deal – France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China – still strongly support it.

Armenia is vitally interested in the stability of Iran, for a variety of

reasons.

From 80,000 to 120,000 Armenians live in Iran, in the cities of Tehran, Tabriz, Urmia and Isfahan.

Recently, an Armenian member of the Iranian Parliament, Karen Khanlarian, in an interview with Armenpress, confessed that "there are indeed social and economic hardships in the country. There are always demonstrations in Iran. People are complaining about the economic situation, which is the outcome of the sanctions. Those problems affect all Iranian citizens, including Armenians."

Armenia is also concerned with Iran's fate because the latter is the only reliable outreach to the outside world, Georgie being the unreliable one.

Iran is one of the main sources of energy for Armenia, along with Russia. But above all, it is a stabilizing political factor in the region. Outwardly, Tehran maintains a balanced position between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but the latter poses an existential threat to Iran, because of its close military cooperation with Israel and Turkey and because of its territorial ambitions to annex portions of Northern Iran.

As Armenia and Israel are moving closer, Prime Minister Netanyahu has complained to Armenia's Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian about Iran's military buildup in the region.

The recent shakeup in Iran may turn the government more vigilant and consequently more repressive and therefore closed to outside influence, or on the contrary, it may serve as a wake-up call to liberalize society.

Whether conservative or liberal, Iran's stability remains a vital political asset for Armenia and indeed the world.



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COMMENTARY

Moscow, Tehran to Fight ‘Turkification Of Azerbaijan’

By Paul Goble

Russia is once again focusing on Azerbaijan’s attachment to Turkey and on its “Turkification” of the minority nationalities within its borders, something one advisor to the Kremlin says is a threat to stability in the region and to the interests of Russia and Iran (*Ekonomicheskkiye Izvestia*, December 6). The warnings come amidst Russian concerns about the opening of the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars (BTK) railway, which will allow Chinese and Central Asian goods to reach Europe while bypassing Russia (*Turan Today*, November 23; *Ekonomicheskkiye Izvestia*, November 1; see EDM, October 16), as well as anger that Azerbaijan has become the first post-Soviet government to reject a Moscow-nominated ambassador to its capital (*Ekonomicheskkiye Izvestia*, December 12; see EDM, December 5).

The construction of the BTK railway has been a long time coming, and Moscow has opposed it from the beginning, viewing it as a threat to Russian influence not only in the Caucasus but in Central Asia and with China as well (see EDM, January 31, 2013; October 16, 2013). Meanwhile, the Azerbaijani-Russian diplomatic spat over the appointment of a new ambassador to Baku is still intensifying. Azerbaijani officials explain that their anger was motivated by not being approached for agreement in advance as well as reservations about Moscow’s candidate who, they say, is pro-Armenian. At the same time, Russian commentators suggest that others, including Turkey and the United States, who have an anti-Russian agenda, are behind the conflict between Baku and Moscow (*Narodnyye Novosti*, December 12; see EDM, December 5).

Now, there are indications that Russia plans to counter Azerbaijan on both points – the BTK railroad and the dispute over the ambassador. And it may seek to do this by attacking Baku for its connections with Ankara as well as for its Turkification programs with regard to ethnic minorities in Azerbaijan. Moreover, it appears Russia may try to involve the Iranian government in that action, a prospect which significantly raises the stakes for Azerbaijan and its supporters in Turkey and the West. The clearest evidence of this strategy can be found in a new interview given to the Real Tribune portal by Ismail Shabanov, an ethnic Talysh who serves on the Russian Presidential Council on International Relations (*Ekonomicheskkiye Izvestia*, December 6).

In this interview, Shabanov said bluntly that “the Turkification of Azerbaijan” and indeed Azerbaijan’s ties with Turkey and efforts to involve Ankara in the Caucasus are “a very dangerous development for Russia and Iran” and something the two powers must work together to oppose before things there become even more explosive. Indeed, he argued, “The restoration of the rights of the

indigenous peoples [of Azerbaijan] corresponds to the strategic interests” of those two countries (*Ekonomicheskkiye Izvestia*, December 6).

According to the Russian presidential advisor, the Azerbaijani authorities not only want Turkey to become a paramount power in the South Caucasus but are promoting Turkish-style repressions against ethnic minorities there, denying these peoples basic rights and even the possibility of asserting their identities. Baku sees in Turkey its basic protector and thus seeks to curry favor by pursuing a policy under the Aliyevs’ (President Ilham Aliyev and his late father and former president, Heydar) doctrine of “one people, two states” with regard to minorities that is even more Turkish than Turkey now is.

The Azerbaijani government “wants to legitimate a Turkish presence in Azerbaijan by declaring that Turkey supposedly has the right to take part in Caucasus affairs,” Shabanov asserted. But “they are deeply mistaken. First, the Trans-Caucasus [a common Russian name for the South Caucasus region] is not only Turkey.” It is at the intersect point of other powers as well, in particular Russia and Iran; and Baku forgets that Tehran, in the 1813 Gulistan Peace Treaty, transferred to Russia the predominant position in the region. “From this it follows,” the advisor continued, “only Russia and Persia have rights in the region.”

“If the Azerbaijanis really want to play with the Turks,” Shabanov added, they have to expect that others will play as well. The Talysh ethnic minority, for example, has the full right to turn to Russia and Iran for help, he argued. “Why is it then that the Azerbaijanis think that they can do whatever they want but that others cannot?” According to him, the Turks are not “so stupid” that they will play this game, but the Azerbaijanis appear not to understand just how dangerous the path on which they are embarked at home and abroad can become.

Azerbaijani state ideology is now based on a shameless “chauvinism,” one that blames Armenians for all of Baku’s own failures and seeks to suppress all minorities. Azerbaijan is not a democracy, and it is intolerant despite its claims to the contrary. But the dangers involved here are even greater than that, Shabanov said. “If Azerbaijan finally become a place des armes for pan-Turkism and radical Islam, then this will affect the entire Caucasus.” Neither Russia nor Iran will let that happen, he contended.

One of the first tasks of Moscow and Tehran is to dissuade Ankara from overstepping its bounds, something the two powers have already been doing with success, the advisor said. But equally important, they must “help restore the rights of the Talysh and Lezgins so that these peoples will not disappear.”

Azerbaijani outlets have not yet responded to Shabanov’s remarks, but it is almost certain that they will read them as an indication that Moscow intends to interfere in Azerbaijan’s domestic affairs even more directly than in the past. And this interference may come either via its embassy or, more likely (as has been true earlier), via Armenian actions. To the extent the Azerbaijani government reads the Russian advisor’s remarks in this way, tensions between Moscow and Baku will only grow, making what is already a tense situation even worse.

(This commentary originally appeared in the Eurasia Daily Monitor.)

What Is America’s Mission Now?

INFORMING IRAN, “The US is watching what you do,” Amb. Nikki Haley called an emergency meeting Friday, January 5, of the Security Council regarding the riots in Iran. The session left her and us looking ridiculous.

France’s ambassador tutored Haley that how nations deal with internal disorders is not the council’s concern. Russia’s ambassador suggested the United Nations should have looked into our Occupy Wall Street clashes and how the Missouri cops handled Ferguson.

Fifty years ago, 100 US cities erupted in flames after Martin Luther King’s assassination. Federal troops were called in. In 1992, Los Angeles suffered the worst US riot of the 20th century, after the LA

By Patrick J. Buchanan

cops who pummeled Rodney King were acquitted in Simi Valley.

Was our handling of these riots any business of the UN?

Conservatives have demanded that the UN keep its nose out of our sovereign affairs since its birth in 1946. Do we now accept that the UN has authority to oversee internal disturbances inside member countries?

Friday’s session fizzled out after Iran’s ambassador suggested the Security Council might take up the Israeli-Palestinian question or the humanitarian crisis produced by the US-backed Saudi war on Yemen.

The episode exposes a malady of American foreign policy. It lacks consistency, coherence and moral clarity, treats friends and adversaries by separate standards, and is reflexively interventionist.

Thus, has America lost much of the near-universal admiration and respect she enjoyed at the close of the Cold War.

This hubristic generation has kicked it all away.

Consider. Is Iran’s handling of these disorders more damnable than the thousands of extrajudicial killings of drug dealers attributed to our Filipino ally Rodrigo Duterte, whom the president says is doing an “unbelievable job”?

And how does it compare with Gen. Abdel el-Sissi’s 2012 violent overthrow of the elected president of Egypt, Mohammed Morsi, and Sissi’s imprisonment of scores of thousands of followers of the Muslim Brotherhood?

Is Iran really the worst situation in the Middle East today?

Hassan Rouhani is president after winning an election with 57 percent of the vote. Who elected Mohammed bin Salman crown prince and future king of Saudi Arabia?

Vladimir Putin, too, is denounced for crimes against democracy for which our allies get a pass.

In Russia, Christianity is flourishing and candidates are declaring against Putin. Some in the Russian press regularly criticize him.

How is Christianity faring in Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan?

It is alleged that Putin’s regime is responsible for the death of several journalists. But there are more journalists behind bars in the jails of our NATO ally Turkey than in any other country in the world.

see IRAN, page 20

LETTERS

Charity begins at Home, in Armenia

In the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*’s issue of December 23, 2017, the Commentary by Edmond Y. Azadian, entitled “Armenian Charity Goes Universal,” eloquently addressed the benefits of international exposure of the Armenian genocide through charitable efforts such as the Hrant Dink Foundation and the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. Mr. Azadian concludes his editorial by stating that “if we wish others to be exposed to our tragedy and join forces against all evil, we need to amplify our pain to a universal level and view it with the pain suffered by a greater cross-section of humanity”. He also refers to Jews as examples of successfully having done so around the world.

Although the commentary is correct on many facts regarding these two initiatives I would, herewith, like to offer a different perspective specifically addressing the one-million-dollar award by the Aurora organization given in the name of the Armenian people every year to “those around the world who provide help in

the most difficult and direst situations, doing the most possible with the barest resources”.

The objective of such an award conceptualized by Vartan Gregorian, Noubar Afeyan and Ruben Vardanyan, the latter two being billionaires in their own right, is to make more people around the world learn about the plight of the Armenian people through their 1915 Genocide by the Ottoman Turks.

My view is that the entire Aurora effort was a proposal by a very creative New York public relations agency funded by the above billionaires as yet another way of getting away from the world’s old image of “the starving Armenians” to today’s successful Armenian entrepreneurs able to afford giving away even one million dollars to an humanitarian charity and thus gaining global recognition for the genocide.

Albeit certainly an intelligent and “large” method of promoting the genocide through world publicity, which also drew the international press to Armenia for the award’s first year in 2015 with George and Amal Clooney’s present for the award ceremony in Yerevan, let us look at an alternative of what that million dollars could do “at home” in Armenia today.

The Aurora award of \$1,000,000 is equal to

482,000,000 drams in Armenian currency, a truly mythical sum for the average Armenian. The nominal average monthly salary in Armenia last month was 173,000 drams (US\$364), up 11 percent from the same period last year, according to the country’s National Statistical Service as a median between the average civil service salary was 155,000 drams (\$322) and 199,000 drams (\$413) in the private sector.

So, simple arithmetic would take the monthly of \$364 and multiply it by 12 months in order to reach an annual income of \$4,368. Therefore, by simple arithmetic again, the Aurora award of 482,000,000 drams could provide annual income for 110,348 Armenians in Armenia today assuming they just stayed home and collected this benefit.

Now let us take a look at the unemployment rate in Armenia at 17.8 percent in the second quarter of 2017 with the number of unemployed persons at 225,900 vs 1,041,500 employed. The unemployment rate in Armenia averaged 11.80 percent from 1998 until 2017, reaching an all-time high of 20.70 percent in the first quarter of 2011.

Given the above human statistics in Armenia, the Aurora award is equivalent to a gift of a

year’s income to some 110,348 Armenians and would reduce unemployment by 50 percent. Reduce the award by 50 percent and give \$168 per month per person or \$2,184 per person per year and you wipe out unemployment altogether for an entire year. I am not suggesting a giveaway or a welfare-state type of award but compensation for work to be done by these unemployed people. Let them clean streets, white-wash buildings, plant trees in parks, go out to the country and help villagers.

Now, that, my dear billionaire Armenian compatriots would really be Aurora Humanitarian Initiative’s admirable achievement by proving that charity begins at home. Let us first take care of our own before we splurge on a global basis looking for self-aggrandizement. Put our house in order before you go universal!

— Miran P. Sarkissian

Editor’s note: These people have been equally generous to Armenia. All have been involved with education in Armenia, with Vardanyan and Afeyan footing the bill for the Tatev Tramway or UWC Dilijan School, IDEa, etc. It is only after their consistent involvement with Armenia that they have taken this novel path, in addition to their continuing help to Armenia.



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Jewish Professor Requests Information From Israeli Gov't on Armenian Genocide

Prominent Israeli scholar Yair Auron filed an official request with Israel's Foreign Ministry on December 21, 2017 asking for all internal documents on agreements and commitments undertaken by the State of Israel with Turkey and Azerbaijan not to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

The request sent by his attorney, Eitay Mack, to the Foreign Ministry, states that "official Israeli denial of the Armenian Genocide is tied to its diplomatic and military relations with Turkey, and in recent years to the relations with Azerbaijan."

Prof. Auron's request under Israel's Freedom of Information Law explains that "Turkey has purchased from Israel training and military systems worth billions of USD. The arms deals included the upgrading of planes and tanks, radar and monitoring systems, missiles and munitions." Azerbaijan has also purchased from Israel close to \$5 billion worth of advanced weaponry.

In 2011, during Knesset's deliberations on the Armenian

Genocide, Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon and Alex Miller, Chairman of the Knesset Education Committee, unequivocally ruled out the possibility of Israel recognizing the Armenian Genocide in order not harm relations with Azerbaijan — Israel's "key strategic ally in the Islamic world."

Prof. Auron's letter also quotes from several leaders of the right wing Yisrael Beiteinu party stating that they will ensure that the Knesset does not recognize the Armenian Genocide. Yisrael Beiteinu is led by Israel's Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman. Arye Gut, a propagandist for Azerbaijan and spokesperson for the International Israel-Azerbaijan Association, has affirmed that "Lieberman is one of the architects of the Azerbaijani-Israeli partnership." In an interview with RTV-TV, Lieberman announced that the Armenian Genocide "was a theoretical, disputed historical issue and that the lack of recognition was not necessarily related to Turkey, but primarily to [Israel's] strategic relations with Azerbaijan." Prof. Auron stresses that these arguments sound very similar to those who deny the Jewish Holocaust.

As an example of Israel's close relations with Azerbaijan, Prof. Auron's letter reports that "613 trees were planted" on February 26, 2016, "at the Chaim Weizmann (1st President of Israel) Forest, to mark '24 years to the Khojaly genocide,' in memory of 613 victims, attended by MK [Member of Knesset] Avigdor Lieberman. Only Azerbaijan and Turkey mark this 'genocide' event. In recent years, official Israel has become a direct and indirect supporter of the purported Khojaly genocide claim. The battle of Khojaly took place in February 1992, in the midst of a cruel war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno Karabagh province. There are several versions as to what happened there, including the number of those who perished, but one thing is not disputed among the

international community — no genocide by its common definition took place there."

Prof. Auron's concludes his request from the Israeli government by stating: "one suspects that not only does the State of Israel 'trade' in the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, but that it has taken upon itself real commitments on this matter, in agreements with Azerbaijan and Turkey."

Consequently, Attorney Mack specifically demands that the Israel's Foreign Ministry should disclose the following information:

1) "Any documentation of agreements, understandings, commitments vis-à-vis Azerbaijan and Turkey as to the question of recognizing the Armenian Genocide."

2) "Any correspondence with Turkish or Azeri representatives on the question of recognizing the Armenian Genocide."

3) "Any documentation of meetings or communications between the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Turkish or Azeri representatives on the question of recognizing the Armenian Genocide."

4) "Decisions and position papers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as to the question of recognizing the Armenian Genocide, in view of Turkey and Azerbaijan's objection."

It remains to be seen if the Israeli Foreign Ministry complies with Prof. Auron's legal request. Both the American and British governments, which have similar laws on requirements to disclose internal information, have responded to similar requests from their own citizens, making public secret documents on the Armenian Genocide. It would be understandable if certain portions of the disclosed documents were to be blacked out by the Israeli government for confidential reasons, to protect the identities of those providing the information or for national security reasons.

Turkey Should Take a Lesson from Greece

By Baskin Oran

HERE ARE TWO LESSONS in minority rights that Turkey should learn from its neighbor Greece.

The first lesson has been given by Greece since 1923, and the second, more important one, has been given in the past few days.

The first lesson is that, just two years after we signed the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, we violated Article 42/1 and we continue to do so. Greece, on the other hand, applied this most significant clause to its Muslim-Turkish minority with great diligence.

The article states: "The Turkish Government undertakes to take, as regards non-Muslim minorities, insofar as concerns their family law or personal status, measures permitting the settlement of these questions in accordance with the customs of those minorities." Article 45 says that Greece will apply the same to Muslim minorities in its own country.

This article introduces a "positive right" to minorities. A reminder: positive rights are not given to the majority, only to minorities. We will return to this at the end of the piece, because this is the second lesson given by Greece.

Turkey, at the end of 1925, told non-Muslims: "The Civil Code comes out next year, and now your church wedding does not replace official marriage. You will waive your rights granted at Lausanne and you will marry in the municipalities. Whoever desires can go to the church and have a ceremony."

Turkey had no right to say that. Because members of a minority or their communities cannot waive the provisions granted by an international treaty signed by eight states, such as the Lausanne Treaty. Article 37 of the Lausanne Treaty declares that these provisions are protected as a whole and "(...) no law (...) and no official action [s]" can prevail over them.

The result was as follows: the Jews immediately succumbed to this violation of Lausanne. The Armenians complied after much resistance. The Greeks, after much resistance also, complied because Greek community leaders and journalists were arrested and were not released without a "resignation" to the fact.

Greece never violated Article 42/1 and Islamic family law was applied to this minority in terms of: 1) Marriage 2) Divorce, 3) Children's custody, and 4) Inheritance.

This brings us to the second lesson that emerges from this.

Hatice Molla Salih and her husband from Komotini, in Western Thrace where the exceptions apply, had a discussion: "We do not have children. If one of us dies, our property will go to others. Our relatives will come like vultures

to claim a share of the inheritance." Because, according to Islamic Law, inheritance goes not only to children and spouses but also to brothers.

As a result, they made a will with a notary in 2003.

After 44 years of marriage, her husband died in 2008. Salih (67) won in court, thanks to the will, but the Greek Court of Cassation disagreed: "You are a Muslim of Western Thrace," it said. "We asked the mufti who stated that the testament you made at the notary according to Article 42/1 of the Lausanne Treaty is invalid under Islamic law. You will share the inheritance according to Islamic law."

The process in the Greek courts has not been completed, but the case has been open for eight years and Salih has applied to the ECHR. There, she will win for sure, because she has not been given the right to choose herself, and also because Islamic law, which does not recognize the will of the individual, is against the basis of the European Human Rights Convention as applied by the ECHR.

Seeing what will happen, on Nov. 24, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras announced that he would issue a new law: Whoever wishes will from now on indicate in his or her will that he or she chooses civil law for the distribution of his or her inheritance, or will indicate that he or she chooses Islamic law, retaining the right to change this statement at any time. Wills made up to the present day will also become valid.

Greek Education Minister Kostas Gavroglu suggested that those wishing to live by Sharia law would have to opt-in.

At the moment, some members of the minority oppose the long-delayed and at the same time so modern initiative by Tsipras. In this way, they ingratiate the muftis to them, as well as Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Consulate-General of Komotini. Moreover, they will be highly esteemed in this introverted Muslim community. But their first aim is to support the "we defend Lausanne and minority rights" argument.

Talking about the muftis, the elected (but not officially recognized) mufti of Komotini, Ibrahim erif, objected to the judgments of Islamic law, which granted the legacy to the brothers of the wife, and demanded that the inheritance be shared according to the civil law. Everyone knows that in the minority.

Millet, one of the newspapers published in Western Thrace, wrote: "Tsipras admits it: the rape of minority rights begins." According to the news, "one of the leading lawyers in the minority", Ercan Ahmet said: "What good news does Tsipras give? Already minority individuals can choose between Islamic law and civil law." This "leading lawyer" probably has not heard of the decision of the Greek Court of Cassation.

Ihan Ahmet, a member of parliament from Rodopi, said: "It is not possible to unilaterally remove Islamic law by the government's decision." However, no right is to be

removed, but on the contrary, there is an additional right: the right to choose.

But what is even more interesting is that Salih's lawyer, Ayhan Sakir, who opened the case and won in the Court of Cassation, said: "It is contrary to Lausanne to issue a law without the consent of the minority." He became a lawyer, but he has not heard of the above, namely international law.

Maybe it was not his interest. In Western Thrace, they explain, his mother and aunt were the sisters of the deceased husband of Salih. In other words, if Islamic law is applied, they will take a share of the heritage, but if the will is applied, they will not.

Of course, what disturbs him most is that the new law that Tsipras has prepared will be retroactive.

The second and main lesson Greece has given today to Turkey is, if I have to repeat it:

Any exception to contemporary law, for which mankind has struggled for ages, can be introduced only to the benefit of a minority. This "positive right" is called democracy. If these rights are granted to the majority, then it is called a "parallel law" and a state with multiple legal systems is a nightmare.

Christian Greece has granted the Muslim minority in Western Thrace the right to choose. However, in Turkey, "mufti marriage" was not recognized as a choice because, if there was such a choice, who would opt for the civil law in a country where 99 percent of the population is Muslim?

Besides, AKP rule, based on the argument of this "large majority," will move forward, and is already moving on:

First, there will be a change of the working hours on Fridays in accordance with the prayer times. Then, Friday will become a holiday instead of Sunday. Already, "Black Friday" in the shopping malls has been criticized because Friday was called "black."

Then divorce in court will be replaced by a simple "I divorce you" statement for which the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs has already issued a fatwa.

Of course, in the meantime, while the ban on non-Muslim minorities marrying in their places of worship, applied at the end of 1925, continues in Turkey, the first official mufti marriage was witnessed personally by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Last-minute news: The Supreme Council of Religious Affairs Office declared that a husband can divorce his wife by phone, fax, letter, SMS and internet.

This news is very important, because the Religious Affairs Office, in the end of this fatwa has as references Ibn Kudame (1147-1223) and Ibn Abidin (1784-1846) and so we learn that the telephone, fax and internet had been invented during that era and, of course, by Muslims.

(<https://ahvalnews.com/greece-turkey/turkey-should-take-lesson-greece>)



Erdogan's New Year's Resolutions

ERDOGAN, from page 1

Echoing Erdogan's expressed desire for winning friends, Çavusoglu pledged that if Germany took one step in the direction of Turkey, his country would take two steps towards Germany.

Tea Time in Goslar

That said, the two top diplomats prepared to make their way to Europe, for high-level meetings with their counterparts in Germany and France. Foreign Minister Çavusoglu travelled to Goslar on January 6, the hometown of his German colleague Sigmar Gabriel. It was a return visit, as Gabriel had been his guest in Antalya last November. Prior to the meeting, Gabriel's spokeswoman said he would take up the "whole gamut" of issues, and "not least the difficult issues." The reference was to the remaining 8 Germans being held hostage as political prisoners in Turkish jails, the most prominent of whom is journalist Deniz Yücel. Though glad that several others had been released, the spokeswoman said, Germany wanted bilateral relations to return to "sail in normal waters."

The German foreign minister went all out to make his guest feel welcome. Instead of meeting in a formal setting, he received him in his home, and served Turkish tea out of Turkish tea pots in his winter garden. Photos of the event showed a Turkish foreign minister beaming like a child on a birthday, delighted with what "my friend Sigmar" had prepared for him. Later, they took a walk through the old city, where they visited the Kaiserpfalz, an imperial palace complex from the 11th century. In the historic Reichsaal, where a statement for the press had been planned, they took a few questions as well, which was interpreted as a sign of easing tensions. Çavusoglu entered his name in the golden guest book.

The tone was markedly different from that of recent months. Gabriel praised Turkey for the contribution its guest workers had made to Germany's post-war reconstruction, as well as Turkey's role in current efforts to help Syrian refugees. Press accounts noted that he spoke of "respect" and relating to each other as equals. At the same time, he said the two were "not

always of the same opinion" and had differences. Çavusoglu wanted to put differing views in parentheses, but Gabriel made clear this was not possible.

Deep Discord

The differences are numerous and they are serious. At the top of the list of concerns in Berlin is the continuing imprisonment of German citizens, who have been jailed in Turkey for political reasons. Yücel, correspondent for *Die Welt*, has been in detention for more than 10 months, until recently in solitary confinement, while no charges have yet been formally presented. The Turkish constitutional court is however expected to rule on a complaint presented by Yücel regarding his conditions in prison.

In addition, German government leaders had been treated to verbal abuse by both Erdogan and his foreign minister, after Germany had refused requests that they appear at campaign events for the controversial presidential referendum in Turkey. Both the government and Chancellor Angela Merkel personally were accused of using "Nazi methods." In response to continuing arrests of their citizens in Turkey in the context of expanding authoritarian rule, and this sort of mud-slinging, the German government effected a foreign policy shift. While Gabriel advised Germans tourists to display special caution in their travel, financial institutions cut off precious assistance to projects in Turkey. The negative economic impact was immediate and enduring. Most sensitive perhaps was that German weapons deliveries to the NATO member country had been suspended as well.

As promised, all these "difficult" issues

were addressed, over tea presumably. The Turkish foreign minister made clear the desire for resumption of arms supplies. Press reports had mooted this would depend on Yücel's release, but Gabriel reportedly made clear there would be no simple quid pro quo, whereby arms would be exported in exchange for Yücel's freedom. "I have in no way linked the two things," he said. The two sides would have to solve their multiple problems together. In the next breath, he said that in the following days, the Berlin government was scheduled to examine in detail the delivery of equipment for protection against mines, for Turkish soldiers engaged in the fight



Sigmar Gabriel pours tea for Mevlut Çavusoglu (Imago/photothek/F. Gaertner)

against IS.

Considerable political pressure had been building up on the Berlin government to maintain a principled position. Vice-chairman of the Free Democratic Party (FDP) Alexander Lambsdorff had called for Çavusoglu "to bring the German hostages with him in his plane to Germany." Green Party leader Cem Özdemir also demanded Yücel's release saying, "Until that happens, there can be no normalization."

Whatever words were exchanged in Gabriel's winter garden, there must indeed have been some give and take, and presumably a good deal of giving on the part of the guest from Turkey. Following the tête-à-tête, clear signs emerged of relaxing tensions. Gabriel said one wanted to suggest to the Economics Ministry that it reconvene the bilateral economic commission after Germany had suspended its meetings in 2016. Gabriel noted that the strategic dialogue at the Foreign Ministry level could also be resumed, indicating this had been agreed upon by the government.

Lunch in Paris

Almost in parallel to the foreign ministers' meeting on German soil, French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed Erdogan in Paris on January 5. It was the first such visit since the failed coup attempt in 2016, and similar pressure had been building in France for the president to adopt a hard line, especially regarding the repression of human rights activists and journalists. In his first New Year's address as president, Macron announced to the press that he would demand the release of such prisoners, on the occasion of Erdogan's scheduled visit to the capital.

For his part, the Turkish leader had made his bid for normalizing relations with France in an opinion piece in *Le Figaro*. The excellent relations between the two countries, he wrote, had started centuries ago, with the letter by King François I to Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent in the early 16th century. But perhaps Erdogan was viewing France and its new president more as representatives of the European Union, and hoped that in his capacity as self-proclaimed EU reformer, Macron would be sympathetic to Turkey's bid for membership. Erdogan wrote that it was due to France's "rational policy" towards Turkey that "Europe remains a great hope" for him. At the airport in Istanbul before takeoff, he had told reporters, "France is a country whose views and positions on regional

and global challenges coincide with ours to a great extent."

The other issues on the agenda were regional conflicts (Palestine/Israel in the wake of Trump's recognition of Jerusalem), Syria, and the fight against terrorism.

Following lunch at the Élysée Palace, the two presidents held a press conference, which was full of surprises. First, Erdogan had been welcomed in Paris by protesters, not only Amnesty International (which had taken out an ad in the daily *Libération* demanding action to defend human rights), but also the women's rights group Femen, who had greeted him at the Élysée in topless attire, handing out menus featuring "minced human rights" and "boiled journalists."

In the meeting with the reporters, Macron

announced he had indeed addressed these issues with his guest and had protested arrests of teachers, students, journalists and so forth.

"Our democracies must be strong standing up to terrorism," he stated. "But at the same time, our democracies must completely protect the rule of law." He said he had presented a list of jailed journalists, drawn up by the organization, Reporters sans frontières. Erdogan's response was to go on the offensive, accusing the press of nurturing terrorists. "Terror doesn't form by itself. Terror and terrorists have gardeners." And to explain, he added, "These gardeners are those people regarded as thinkers. They water terror with their columns in the newspapers." He warned, "And one day you find, these people show up as terrorists in front of you."

It did not end there. After a French journalist asked him about reports in 2015 in *Çumhuriyet* that Turkey had smuggled weapons to Islamist terrorists in Syria, he lashed out, "When you ask your questions, be careful on this point. And do not speak with the words of another. And I want you to know," he concluded, "you do not have someone in front of you who would easily swallow this." The reporter answered that he was speaking as a journalist.

Worse than the altercation with a reporter, during which he was visibly out of control, there was the cold shower Macron had prepared: Erdogan's highest hopes of progress on the EU front were dashed, and announced to the press. "It is clear," said Macron, "that recent developments and choices in Turkey do not permit any progress in the process of accession to the European Union." He would be lying, he said, if he were to claim otherwise. What he proposed instead was "perhaps a form of cooperation, a sort of partnership," which may have recalled Merkel's offer years ago of a "privileged partnership" rather than full membership.

Erdogan was livid and, again, this was visible. "One cannot permanently implore," he said, "and wait to be finally included." He said his country had "unfortunately taken the first step in 1963. And it has now been 54 years that Turkey has been waiting in the ante-chamber of the EU." Quite convincingly, he stated, "This is exhausting us. Maybe this will force us to take a decision."

Conclusion: it was not the best way to begin a new year. Sometimes resolutions don't work out quite as they are planned.

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What Is America's Mission Now?

IRAN, from page 18

When does the Magnitsky Act get applied to Turkey?

What the world too often sees is an America that berates its adversaries for sins against our "values," while giving allies a general absolution if they follow our lead.

A day has not gone by in 18 months that we have not read or heard of elite outrage over the Kremlin attack on "our democracy," with the hacking of the DNC and John Podesta emails.

How many even recall the revelation in 2015 that China hacked the personnel files of millions of US government employees, past, present and prospective?

While China persecutes Christians, Russia supports a restoration of Christianity after 70 years of Leninist rule.

In Putin's Russia, the Communist Party is running a candidate against him. In China, the Communist Party exercises an absolute monopoly of political power and nobody runs against Xi Jinping.

China's annexation of the Paracel and Spratly Islands and the entire South China Sea is meekly protested, while Russia is endlessly castigated for its bloodless retrieval of a Crimean peninsula that was recognized as Russian territory under the Romanovs.

China, with several times Russia's economy and 10 times her population, is far the greater challenger to America's standing as lone superpower. Why, then, this tilt toward China?

Ad Feedback

Among the reasons US foreign policy lacks consistency and moral clarity is that we Americans no longer agree on what our vital interests are, who our real adversaries are, what our values are, or what a good and Godly country looks like.

Was JFK's America a better country than Obama's America?

World War II and the Cold War gave us moral clarity. If you stood against Hitler, even if you were a moral monster like Joseph Stalin, we partnered with you.

From Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech in 1946 to the end of the Cold War, if you stood with us against the "Evil Empire" of Reagan's depiction, even if you were a dictator like Gen. Pinochet or the Shah, you were welcome in the camp of the saints.

But now that a worldwide conversion to democracy is no longer America's mission in the world, what exactly is our mission?

"Great Britain has lost an empire," said Dean Acheson in 1962, "but not yet found a role."

Something of the same may fairly be said of us today.

(Patrick J. Buchanan is the author of a new book, *Nixon's White House Wars: The Battles That Made and Broke a President and Divided America Forever*. This commentary originally appeared in cnsnews.com.)