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US Co-Chair Claims New Plan for Artsakh Peace

YEREVAN (ArmRadio) – “An improved version of the previous plans on peaceful settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is put on the negotiation table,” Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group US Co-Chair Richard Hoagland told reporters on March 27 in Yerevan. “There have been different plans during years and the one currently put on the table is the improved and amended version of the previous plans. Is this a copy of the previous plans? No. This one observes new ways, new solutions which can be

acceptable for the conflicting sides,” Hoagland said.

He added that he cannot disclose the details of the plan since Armenia and Azerbaijan have still to work on some specific points.

Hoagland noted that the foreign ministers of the parties are still to meet to prepare the meeting of the presidents. He added that when the presidents meet they can address the issues of non-agreement and reach a win-win situation.

He mentioned that they know very well



Richard Hoagland

where that plan comes from, but they do not call it a “Lavrov plan.”

“We call it conflict settlement plan-proposal, put on the diplomatic table,” said Hoagland.

“We are at the one-year anniversary of the violence that occurred in April last year in Nagorno-Karabakh. The main message is that this anniversary should be marked at negotiating table, it should not be marked on the battlefield,” Hoagland said during Monday’s press conference in Yerevan.

“It’s time to negotiate,” he stressed. “The most important is to have political will at the top leadership on both sides to return to negotiations to find a peaceful solution. It’s up to the leaders and up to their people to decide on how to live in peace and prosperity in the future. There are plans on the table that could be discussed, and it’s time to return to the negotiating table to discuss them.”

Responding to accusations that the Minsk Group often fails to issue targeted statements, Hoagland said “I assure we do know what is going on, but because we are see OSCE, page 3

Sasun Massacres Reexamined by Academic Owen Miller at NAASR

BELMONT, Mass. – Dr. Owen Miller summarized his research on the massacres of Armenians in Sasun in 1894 at a talk at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) on March 16.

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

Miller, an affiliated faculty member this year at Emerson College in Boston, was introduced by Marc Mamigonian, NAASR’s director of academic affairs.

Miller, a graduate of the University of California Santa Cruz, with master’s and doctoral degrees from Columbia University, completed his doctoral dissertation in 2015 on Sasun. He accompanied his talk at NAASR with PowerPoint illustrations and the caveat that his research on Sasun is still ongoing and thus incomplete.

Miller came to his dissertation topic in an unusual manner. He explained that he began studying Ottoman Turkish at Columbia with a textbook written by V. Hovhannes Hagopian, which he found quite good. Becoming curious about Hagopian’s life, Miller did some research and was shocked to learn that Hagopian, a star professor at Anatolia College in Merzifon in the east of the Ottoman Empire, was killed during the Armenian Genocide. This inspired Miller to learn see SASUN, page 11



Dr. Owen Miller speaking at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research



Avo Uvezian: Sinatra Songwriter, Cigar Legend Dies at 91

By G. Clay Whittaker

ORLANDO, Fla. (*Men’s Journal*) – Pianist and songwriter Avo Uvezian passed away on Friday, March 24, at 91, leaving behind over seven decades of musical history, and a legacy of cigars.

He built a name for himself late in life as a jazz pianist who traveled the world playing with many of the greats, writing for one of them. Uvezian had traveled the world already by the time he hit it big. He played for the Shah of Iran, and before that spent a year in Baghdad. His band, the Lebanon boys, toured the Middle East until Uvezian found his way to America to attend Juilliard in the 1960s.

see UVEZIAN, page 8



John ‘Sib’ Hashian, Drummer for Boston, Dies

LYNNFIELD, Mass. (Combined Sources) – Sib Hashian, a former drummer with the rock group Boston, died after collapsing onstage on March 22 while performing during the Legends of Rock Cruise. He was 67.

“It is with deep and profound sadness I share the news of my husband’s, John ‘Sib’ Hashian, sudden death,” said Suzanne Hashian, his wife of 38 years.

Hashian played on Boston’s first two hit records, including their self-titled debut album in 1976 featuring the hit *More Than a Feeling*, and their second album, “Don’t Look Back.”

Hashian owned a record shop and a string of tanning salons.

see HASHIAN, page 8

NEWS IN BRIEF

Schiff, Trott Introduce Resolution to Recognize Armenian Genocide

WASHINGTON – On March 23, US Representatives Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) and Dave Trott (R-Mich.) introduced legislation to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The Resolution recognizes the genocide against the Armenian people from 1915-1923 by the Ottoman Empire, while drawing links to the modern scourge of genocide, including attacks on religious minorities in Iraq and Syria by ISIS.

“Over 100 years ago, the Ottoman Empire undertook a brutal campaign of murder, rape, and displacement against the Armenian people that took the lives of 1.5 million men, women, and children in the first genocide of the 20th century,” said Schiff. “Genocide is not a historic relic - even today hundreds of thousands of religious minorities face existential threat from ISIS in Syria and Iraq. It is therefore all the more pressing that the Congress recognize the historical fact of the Armenian Genocide and stand against modern day genocide and crimes against humanity.”

“After over a hundred years, it is long overdue that the United States government stand in solidarity with the Armenian people to officially recognize the genocide waged against their families a century ago,” said Trott. “I am honored to be able to represent such a vibrant Armenian population in Southeast Michigan and I will continue to fight for them in Congress.”

Schiff and Trott were also joined by the other leaders of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, Representatives Valadao, Bilirakis, Pallone, and Speier in underscoring their support for the recognition of the Armenian genocide.

Patriarchal Locum Tenens Bekjian to Return to Istanbul on April 2

ISTANBUL (Armenpress) – The Locum Tenens of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Archbishop Karekin Bekjian is scheduled to arrive in Istanbul on April 2, Istanbul’s Armenian *Jamanak* daily reports. Earlier Bekjian had said before arriving in Istanbul he would send a letter to Patriarchal General Vicar Archbishop Aram Ateshian and President of Spiritual Council Bishop Sahak Mashalian, whom he appointed as vicar, while he was not in the country.

Jamanak reports Bekjian sent an e-mail to Ateshian and Mashalian informing them of his arrival date and asking them to provide him with appropriate accommodations.

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Tasty Lokum

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

LED Project Brings Outdoor Lighting to Villages

HORBATEGH, Armenia (PanArmenian.net) – Horbategh community of Vayots Dzor province is one of those settlements where attacks by wild animals such as bears and wolves are quite common. The village has 262 inhabitants whose main sources of income are cattle-breeding, bee-keeping, and agriculture. Because of the darkness of the streets in the evening, wild animals enter the village, damage the residents' gardens, fields and beehives, and get into barns and kill sheep, rams and steers.

The outdoor lighting infrastructure was destroyed in Horbategh after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the village lacked enough resources to fix it.

The Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets (FPWC) and VivaCell-MTS have summed up the results of this joint program implemented in the framework of the Alternative Energy Project. An outdoor lighting system, consisting of 65 LED lamps, has been installed in Horbategh community of Vayots Dzor.

Environmentally friendly and energy-efficient systems have been used for the first time. The founder of FPWC Ruben Khachatryan, VivaCell-MTS General Manager Ralph Yirikian, head of Horbategh community Gagik Sandrosyan and community residents attended the launch of the system.

China Mulls Importing Armenian Honey

YEREVAN (Arka) – China is considering the importing of honey from Armenia, the press service of the State Food Safety Service said this week. It said a Chinese delegation of food safety experts has arrived in Armenia to get acquainted on sport with the conditions of production and the quality of Armenian honey and beekeeping products with the prospect of their subsequent imports to China.

During the meeting the head of the State Food Safety Service Ishkhan Karapetyan attached importance to cooperation between the two structures to stimulate exports of various commodity groups.

He also stressed that Armenia has huge potential for exporting not only honey, but also other products, describing its products as safe and competitive in foreign markets. The parties were said to have discussed the procedures for importing and exporting of goods from Armenia.

Anniversary of Ties Between Armenia and Finland Marked

YEREVAN – Foreign Ministers Edward Nalbandian and Timo Soini of Armenia and Finland, respectively, exchanged letters on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Finland.

Nalbandian in his message noted that bilateral relations between the two countries are based on a high level of trust and respect.

Nalbandian stressed that Armenia attaches great importance to the cooperation with Finland. "Throughout the past quarter of a century our partnership has continuously flourished encompassing wide range of spheres of mutual interest," he wrote.

Nalbandian stressed that the two nations are cooperating to contribute to worldwide efforts in addressing the common challenges and threats.

He wrote, "We have explored only a small part of the great potential that exists in our relations, and expresses confidence that with joint efforts the partnership between our countries will further strengthen and expand."

Soini in his message noted that Finland and Armenia enjoy longstanding and friendly relations. He stressed that Finland is willing to further strengthen relations with Armenia. He praised the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union and Armenia. Additionally, he expressed confidence that the new agreement will strengthen the deepening relations between the EU and Armenia even further.

Sargsyan Calls for Closer Armenian-Israeli Ties

By Emil Danielyan

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – President Serzh Sargsyan has expressed readiness to improve Armenia's uneasy relationship with Israel adversely affected by the Jewish state's military ties with Azerbaijan.

Sargsyan noted "centuries-old historical dealings" between the Armenian and Jewish peoples on Thursday, March 23, after receiving

It added that Sargsyan and Yerushalmi discussed "possibilities and prospects for expanding Armenian-Israeli cooperation in various fields."

Relations between Armenia and Israel have been less than cordial ever since the Soviet collapse, reflecting their conflicting geopolitical priorities. Armenia has maintained a warm rapport with Iran to ease its geographic isolation, while Israel has pursued strategic cooperation with Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Karabakh.

Israel's current Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman is a staunch backer of close ties with Baku. According to Azerbaijani media reports, Lieberman reaffirmed last December his strong support for Azerbaijan's "territorial integrity and inviolability of borders" in the Karabakh conflict. He also declared that Azerbaijan "can teach a lesson of multiculturalism and tolerance to most countries in the world."

In February 2016, a left-wing Israeli lawmaker claimed that Lieberman's party has been paid by the Azerbaijani government to promote Baku's political and financial interests in Israel. Lieberman denied the allegations.

In February 2015, the Armenian Foreign Ministry criticized Lieberman, who was Israel's foreign minister at the time, for speaking at a ceremony organized by an Azerbaijani government-linked group in the Israeli city of Acre. The event was dedicated to the 23rd anniversary of the deaths of several hundred Azerbaijani residents of Khojaly, a small town in Nagorno-Karabakh. It was part of the group's efforts to have the international community condemn the 1992 killings as a genocide committed by the Armenians.

Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian did not meet with Lieberman or any other Israeli cabinet member when he visited Israel in March 2015 to attend a concert by the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

Nalbandian again flew to Jerusalem earlier this week to take part in official ceremonies marking the completion of restoration works at the Church of Holy Sepulcher. He held no talks with Israeli leaders.



Israeli Ambassador Eliyahu Yerushalmi (R) hands his credentials to President Serzh Sargsyan in Yerevan, on March 23, 2017.

the credentials of Israel's new Jerusalem-based ambassador to Armenia, Eliyahu Yerushalmi. He said these ties "oblige" the two nations to "intensify and give a new quality to inter-state relations."

"The president attached importance to a certain intensification of [Armenian-Israeli] inter-parliamentary and civic contacts observed of late," Sargsyan's press office said in a statement.

Armenia has been particularly worried about Israel's large-scale arms deals with its arch-foe, Azerbaijan. In 2012, Israeli defense officials confirmed a reported deal to provide the Azerbaijani military with more weapons worth a combined \$1.6 billion. The Azerbaijani army used some of these Israeli-made weapons, notably sophisticated anti-tank rockets, during April 2016 hostilities in Nagorno-

EU Envoy Urges 'Transparent' Probe After Opposition Leader's Arrest

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – A senior European Union diplomat reacted on Friday, March 24 with caution to the controversial arrest of an Armenian opposition figure, Samvel Babayan, urging the authorities in Yerevan to conduct a "transparent" investigation.

Piotr Switalski, the head of the EU Delegation in Yerevan, also stressed the importance of "preventing violence" in Armenia.

Babayan, who is close to the Seyran Ohanian-Raffi Hovannisian-Vartan Oskanian (ORO) opposition alliance, was arrested by the National Security Service (NSS) on March 22 on suspicion of smuggling a shoulder-fired surface-to-air rocket system to Armenia. The NSS has still not commented on the purpose of the alleged weapons acquisition denied by Babayan.

Babayan was not formally charged as of Friday evening. The ORO leaders, among them former Defense Minister Ohanian, have condemned his arrest as politically motivated and linked it with the upcoming parliamentary elections.

"We believe that all disputes, all complaints, all conflicts should be settled in courts and should be settled peacefully," Switalski said, commenting on the high-profile case. "Therefore, for the European Union, the question of preventing violence is very important. We believe that the primary responsibility for preventing violence and reacting to possible disturbance of public peace lies with the law-enforcement authorities."

"Therefore, all these procedures

should be very transparent," Switalski went on. "If there is a suspicion that something wrong is being prepared or happening, we believe that the law-enforcement agencies should act in full transparency so that the population, the voters have the confidence that it is not done for political purposes, that it is not done to intimidate other voters but it is done in accordance with the rule of law."

Ohanian insisted late on Thursday that Babayan's arrest is aimed at weakening his bloc ahead of the April 2 elections. "I want to declare that we will fight for his rights till the end and won't let these authorities achieve their goals with fabricated activities," he warned.

Another ORO leader, Raffi Hovannisian, described Babayan, who is a retired army general, as a political prisoner. "Samvel Babayan is in jail because he supports our alliance," he told journalists.

Hovannisian also said that the elections will result in a "constitutional revolution" in Armenia. The authorities will face "resistance" if they rig the

vote, he said.

Switalski sounded more optimistic about the conduct of the elections. "The European Union is working on the basis of a positive scenario," said the EU envoy. "We want very much these elections to mark a new quality in democratic practices in Armenia and



Samvel Babayan

we are preparing our support activities on the basis that these elections will open a new chapter."

He again indicated that Yerevan should expect more EU aid if the polls meet democratic standards.

Earlier this year, the EU provided Armenia with over \$7 million in funding for the purchase of special electronic equipment designed to prevent some forms of electoral fraud.



ARMENIA

Russian-Armenian Tycoons Set Up Investment Fund for Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – In a further show of support for Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan, more than three dozen Russian businesspeople of Armenian descent launched over the weekend a multimillion-dollar investment fund which they said will finance various business projects in Armenia.

Karapetyan described the creation of the fund called the Investors Club of Armenia as an economic “breakthrough” for the country as he announced it at a special ceremony in Yerevan. He said it will not only attract “healthy and long-term investments” into the Armenian economy but also help to create a “new corporate culture.”

“I expect that it will make a qualitative

boost Russian investments in Armenia. This, coupled with the joint statement by the Russian-Armenian business leaders, was construed by some commentators in Armenia as an expression of Moscow’s support for the Armenian premier.

The current prime minister lived and worked in Russia from 2011 to 2016, holding senior executive positions in local subsidiaries of the Gazprom gas monopoly. He was appointed as prime minister in September and has since repeatedly vowed to embark on far-reaching economic reforms.

“We said it in Moscow and we have come here to again say that we support the Armenian government and its programs that will ensure

\$3.2 billion in funding for around 350 nationwide investment projects to be implemented in the coming years. At least \$830 million of that money will likely be invested this year, according to him. Armenia’s entire Gross Domestic Product is equivalent to roughly \$11 billion.

Karen Karapetyan implied on Saturday that he expects the newly established Investors Club of Armenia to provide a large part of that money. “We anticipate that with the entry of the club there will also be other investments apart of the \$3.2 billion,” he said.

A separate statement by the Armenian government said the Russian-Armenian fund will invest in new and existing Armenian firms and also buy commercial estate. It did not specify the amount of those investments, saying only that they will be channeled into the energy, mining, manufacturing and tourism sectors.

The statement also said that the fund will be managed by a Russian company, Fora-Capital.

Samvel Karapetyan said the fund has already chosen “investment projects submitted to us.” “They mainly relate to the energy sector,” he said without elaborating.

Samvel Karapetyan’s Tashir Group conglomerate has purchased Armenia’s national electric utility and largest thermal power plant from a state-run Russian energy giant in 2015. Among his other major assets in Armenia is a shopping mall in Yerevan. Tashir is expected to open another sprawling trade center in the Armenian capital later this year.

According to *Forbes* magazine, Samvel Karapetyan’s personal fortune is currently worth \$3.5 billion, meaning that he is most probably the richest ethnic Armenian in the world.



Armenia - Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan (R) and Russian-Armenian businessman Samvel Karapetyan announce the creation of a Russian-Armenian investment fund in Yerevan, March 25.

change in our business environment and business atmosphere,” he said, sitting next to Samvel Karapetyan (no relation), an Armenian-born billionaire entrepreneur and the driving force behind the initiative.

The tycoon and the other founders of the fund issued a joint statement when Karen Karapetyan paid an official visit to Moscow in late January. They voiced “full support” for “profound reforms” planned by Karapetyan’s cabinet and expressed readiness to “participate in business projects with the Armenian government.”

Prime Minister Karapetyan said during that trip that Russia’s government pledged to help

our country’s prosperity,” Samvel Karapetyan said at a joint news conference with the premier.

Armenians, the tycoon went on, should expect many pleasant “surprises” from their prime minister. “It’s been just a few months since he started [working as prime minister] but even I am surprised by such a combative mood of Karen Karapetyan,” he said. “We are going to defend and support him, and I am sure that very soon goals will be scored every day.”

Campaigning for the ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) for the upcoming parliamentary elections, Karen Karapetyan regularly states that his government has all but secured

Ambassador of Armenia Holds Meetings with Republican Congressmen

WASHINGTON – On March 22 Ambassador of Armenia to the US Grigor Hovhanissian held meetings at the Congress with Republican Congressmen, co-chairs of The Congressional Armenian Caucus Representatives David Valadao (R-Calif.) and David Trott (R-Michigan), as well as Rep. Douglas Lamborn (R-Kansas).

Ambassador expressed gratitude to the Congressmen for continuously focusing on Armenia-related issues and for promoting Armenian interests in the Congress. Ambassador and the representatives exchanged views on the current agenda of US-Armenia relations, discussed a number of regional issues, including the protection of Christian minorities in the Middle East and Armenia’s role in receiving refugees from the region.

The ambassador and the congressmen touched upon the process of recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide and



Ambassador Grigor Hovhanissian with Rep. David Trott (R-Michigan)

other genocides.

The three Republicans assured the ambassador that they will continue their efforts towards strengthening of the US-Armenia relations.



Ambassador Grigor Hovhanissian with Rep. Douglas Lamborn (R-Kansas)

US Co-Chair Claims New Plan for Artsakh Peace

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mediators, we have to keep a little degree of distance so that we don’t overtly offend one side or the other side. When that happens, the possibility for discussion and mediation gets closed down. We cannot allow those doors to close. We have to keep the doors open. We’ll always note when there is an issue that needs to be called attention to, but we have to be a little careful of what we say in public, even though we know what’s really happening behind those closed doors.”

Speaking about the perspectives of organizing a high-level meeting, the U.S. Co-Chair said “we’re always working to find the right conditions to bring together the Foreign Ministers or even the Presidents. There is a process going on now. The two Foreign Ministers have been meeting in Moscow separately, and we hope that in the near future the two will be able to meet in Moscow to prepare the ground for the Presidents to meet.”

“Our job tight now as co-chairs is to talk to all the players,” he continued. He disclosed the plans of the co-chairs is to visit Nagorno-Karabakh to meet authorities in Stepanakert.

“We cannot allow violence to be the solution to this long-standing issue. Violence is not an answer. Violence destroys families, violence harms economies, so we have to look for the most positive solution, and our job as co-chairs is to continue to work together to encourage the negotiation process to continue,” he said.

“As co-chairs we try to find the most common ground for moving forward. We are facilitators. We ourselves cannot solve the issue. We can help create the conditions so that the leaders involved can make the final decision that will benefit all the people in the region,” Hoagland said.

He said that although there is a new administration in Washington, the U.S. policy remains unchanged. “We are fully committed to the Minsk Group, to the co-chairmanship process, to working quietly with all parties to find a solution that leads to peace.”

“The negotiation process has slowed down very dramatically, that’s why we say it’s time for the parties to return to the negotiating table and think how to move forward. What we want to do is to create the conditions that people feel ready and comfortable to talk again. War is the worst possible solution. What everyone needs is a solution that brings peace and prosperity to all people involved. It’s possible to find win-win situations,” Hoagland stated.

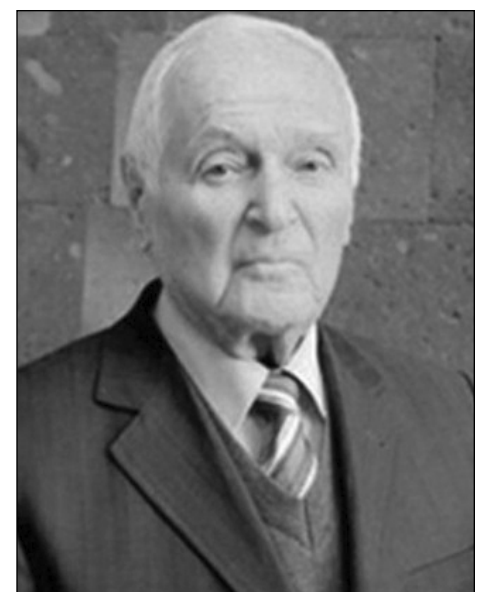
Academician Vladimir Barkhudaryan Passes Away

YEREVAN – Armenian historian and academician at the National Academy of Sciences Vladimir Barkhudaryan passed away on March 24. He was a recipient of the Honored Worker of Science award of the Republic of Armenia,

Barkhudaryan was born on September 22, 1927, at Aghkyorpi village of the Georgian Marneuli (Borchalu) district. He graduated from the Yerevan State University Department of History in 1950. From 1955 to 1958 he worked as a researcher at the State Museum of History of Armenia. From 1958 to 1990 Barkhudaryan was a researcher at the Institute of History at the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, serving different offices throughout his professional activity.

Barkhudaryan’s scholarly activity covered topics such as Armenian diaspora communities, historiography and Armenia-Russian relations.

Barkhudaryan’s requiem service was held on March 25 in Surb Hovhannes Church in Yerevan’s Kond district, and his funeral on March 26 at the National Academy of Sciences.



Academician Vladimir Barkhudaryan



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Armenian Soldier Killed By Azerbaijani Troops

STEPANAKERT (Armenpress) – Defense Army serviceman Artak Rafayelyan, 20, was fatally injured by an Azeri sniper on March 28 at about 1 p.m. on the contact line.

The press service of the Defense Department of the Republic of Artsakh, has launched an investigation to clarify details.

“The Defense Ministry of the Republic of Artsakh shares the grief of the loss and extends condolences to the family members, relatives and co-servicemen of the killed soldier,” the ministry’s statement noted.

Russia, Iran to Expand Cooperation in Central Asia and Transcaucasia

MOSCOW (News.am) – Russia and Iran are ready to expand cooperation in Central Asia and the Caucasus, reads the joint announcement the two leaders, adopted based on the results of the talks, reported RIA Novosti.

“The parties expressed readiness to expand cooperation in political, economic and other areas in Central Asia and the Caucasus and are willing to cooperate multilaterally, with other countries of the region, to strengthen peace and stability,” the document reads.

Russia has confirmed its support for Iran’s application for the status in SCO and said, that they tend to consider the request as soon as possible.

German Official Accuses Turkey of ‘Intolerable’ Spying

BERLING (AFP) – A German state minister on Tuesday, March 28, accused Turkey of “unacceptable” spying on alleged followers of exiled preacher Fethullah Gulen, whom President Recep Tayyip Erdogan blames for a failed coup attempt last year.

“It is notable with what intensity and ruthlessness the people living abroad are being investigated,” said Boris Pistorius, interior minister of the northern German state of Lower Saxony.

“It’s intolerable and unacceptable,” he said.

Ankara had asked Berlin to help spy on about 300 alleged Gulen supporters, Pistorius said, adding that the list was handed to Germany’s spy service, which turned it over to state governments.

But Pistorius’s state decided instead to inform the more than 10 targets, including a school and at least two companies, fearing people could suffer “retaliation” if they travelled to Turkey while unaware they were on a watch list.

Turkish authorities were acting with “something close to paranoia,” he said, adding that “all Gulen supporters are assumed to be terrorists and enemies of the state even though there is not the tiniest scrap of evidence.”

“Until today, we have no evidence whatsoever that Gulen supporters have violated any rules in any way.”

Armenian Community of China Organizes Chess Championship

BEIJING – From March 12 to 24, the Armenian Community of China organized its first Online Chess Championship. Armenians from different cities, as Nanjing, Hong Kong, Xian, Dalian, Beijing and Shanghai, participated in this event.

Albert Voskanyan (Hong Kong) won first place, Ruben Galstyan (Dalian) second and Rosa Babayan (Beijing) third.

Mher Sahakyan, president of the Armenian community of China, said “using modern technologies, it was possible to organize the first ever online chess championship of the Armenian community of China. Thus, many Armenians who are living thousands of kilometers away from each other were united with this intellectual game. We Armenians have a special attitude towards chess, and this can be used as a unifying factor as well.”



Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan in Ashgabat visited the mausoleum of the first President of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Niyazov in Ghipchak village.

Armenia’s Prime Minister Visits Turkmenistan

ASHGHABAT, Turkmenistan (Armenpress) – Prime Minister of Armenia Karen Karapetyan has arrived in Turkmenistan on an official visit. Karapetyan was received by President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow in the Presidential Palace. The President of Turkmenistan welcomed the Armenian governmental delegation in Ashgabat and mentioned that during the recent years the Armenian-Turkmen mutual relations are distinguished with progress and added that such official mutual visits contribute to the development of relations in different directions. Berdimuhamedow underscored that Turkmenistan is interested in and highlights the further development of cooperation with Armenia aimed at realization of mutually beneficial projects and programs in various fields.

“Our peoples have historically warm relations and ties. I am sure your official visit can best contribute to the further development of our brotherly relations in various sectors of the economy – energy, transportation, agriculture, mechanical engineering, industry. We have great potential for partnership and we are ready to discuss your proposals and ideas,” the president of Turkmenistan said. The President asked to convey his warm greetings to Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan.

Karapetyan thanked the president of Turkmenistan for the warm reception and in his turn conveyed the greetings of President Sargsyan. Karapetyan praised the level of Armenian-Turkmen bilateral relations and mentioned that it doesn’t comply with the cooperation in the economy sphere. “The purpose of

the visit is to comprehensively discuss various issues and projects of economic cooperation, which will enable to boost economic partnership, increase volumes of trade turnover by using the existing potential,” Karapetyan said, expressing conviction that the friendship of the two peoples is a good foundation for further development of Armenia-Turkmenistan cooperation.

The sides discussed various economic issues. Karapetyan and Berdimuhamedow expressed conviction that economic cooperation can boost the growth in bilateral trade turnover. Berdimuhamedow expressed his support for the realization of mutually beneficial projects which are discussed between the two countries. The sides agreed to continue the discussions in April in Yerevan, on a level of working groups.

Lukashenko’s Belarus Unwilling to Quarrel with Armenia or Azerbaijan

MINSK (Public Radio of Armenia) – Belarus and Armenia are close peoples, and will remain so, Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko said this week when he met with Armenia’s permanent representative to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Ambassador Armen Khachatryan on the occasion of the completion of his diplomatic mission in Belarus.

Lukashenko emphasized that Belarus and Armenia have absolutely identical positions on all issues on their international agenda. “We understand the policy that is pursued by the current leadership of Armenia and was pursued by the previous leadership,” the head of state continued.

The president also remarked: “There are issues of concern for Armenians and Belarusians. For example, Nagorno-Karabakh. I will openly say that it is not our issue, not my issue. We have nothing to do there. There are conflicting parties that must handle the issue. We have a unequivocal position: Armenia and Azerbaijan should sit at the negotiating table and solve this problem without any strong or weak mediators. If they want to use someone as a guarantor, they must make this decision together. It is the right time to solve this issue today.”

The president also spoke about the extradition of blogger Alexander Lapshin. “Does Armenia have anything to do with it? Armenia has never told me anything about Lapshin. Only one country, Azerbaijan, put him on the

wanted list. When he was apprehended here I thought why it happened right here. He could have gone anywhere else. Belarus would not have been involved in it. But he was. Interpol caught knew about it. We had to report it and we did it as a law-abiding people. What did we have to do with him? We had to extradite him to the country which had put him on the wanted list. Moreover, I will say it in public for the first time: no one wanted to take him back. They started to play this card later. He is the citizen of three countries, and none of them needed him. They just wanted to get rid of this prob-

lem. Therefore, there are always subtexts in all issues which will be always used to someone’s advantage.”

He added, “You should know the main thing: we have been close people and will remain so. Armenia may have a different attitude to Azerbaijan, but Azerbaijan is also a close state and close people for us. We lived in one country some time ago. Why should we quarrel with Azerbaijan or Armenia? Perhaps, we will be useful for Azerbaijan and Armenia someday. Not as mediators. Therefore, I do not want to interfere. This position derives from the wisdom of the Belarusian and Armenian peoples.”

EU Visa-Free Travel for Georgian Citizens

TBILISI (Public Radio of Armenia) – Georgian nationals may travel without a visa to Europe’s vast borderless Schengen area from March 28.

Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili was among government officials who attended a two-hour-long gala concert on Europe Square on March 27 marking the end of two days of celebrations.

Starting on March 28, Georgian nationals may visit Europe’s vast borderless Schengen area for up to 90 days in any 180-day period. Also Georgian passport holders living in the breakaway regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia qualify for the visa waiver system.

Customs personnel have been given special instruction to give advice about procedures and check people’s documents, the interior minister said at a special briefing.

Although negotiations started as far back as 2013 with a so-called visa liberalization action plan (VLAP), it took until March of this year for Georgia finally to sign the agreement. The document was published in the EU journal on March 8.



INTERNATIONAL

Panic Spreads in Iraq, Syria as Record Numbers Of Civilians Are Reported Killed in US Strikes

By Loveday Morris and Liz Sly

MOSUL, Iraq (*Washington Post*) – A sharp rise in the number of civilians reported killed in US-led airstrikes in Iraq and Syria is spreading panic, deepening mistrust and triggering accusations that the United States and its partners may be acting with an unprecedented disregard for lives of noncombatants.

The escalation comes as local ground forces backed by air support from a US-led coalition close in on the Islamic State's two main urban bastions – Raqqa in Syria and Mosul in Iraq.

In front-line neighborhoods in western Mosul, families described cowering in basements for weeks as bombs rained down around them and the Islamic State battled from their rooftops. Across the border in Raqqa, residents desperately trying to flee before an offensive begins are being blocked by the militants, who frequently use civilians as human shields.

Throughout his election campaign, President Trump pledged to target Islamic State militants more aggressively, criticizing the US air campaign for being too “gentle” and asking for a reassessment of battlefield rules. The United States has denied there has been any shift and defended the conduct of its campaign.

But figures compiled by monitoring organizations and interviews with residents paint an increasingly bloody picture, with the number of casualties in March already surpassing records for a single month.

The worst alleged attack was in Mosul, where rescue teams are still digging out bodies after what residents describe as a hellish onslaught in the Mosul al-Jadida neighborhood during the battle to retake it two weeks ago. Iraqi officials and residents say as many as 200 died in US-led strikes, with more than 100 bodies recovered from a single building.

The wooden carts that residents use to carry vegetables and other wares in the once busy market area instead ferried out cadavers recovered from the rubble last week.

The US-led coalition, which has acknowledged carrying out a strike against militants in the area, says it is investigating the reports.

“If we did it, and I’d say there’s at least a fair chance that we did, it was an unintentional accident of war,” said Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend, the top US commander for Iraq and Syria, speaking at the Pentagon.

Amnesty International on Tuesday said the coalition was not taking sufficient precautions to prevent civilian deaths in Mosul, in a “flagrant violation” of international humanitarian law.

It was just one of numerous incidents across Iraq and Syria in recent weeks that have raised concerns that the United States has flouted rules requiring it to protect civilians. In both countries, politicians and activists say the high numbers of deaths are spreading alarm among civilians and sowing distrust of the US-backed campaign advancing toward their homes.

“People used to feel safe when the American planes were in the sky, because they knew they didn’t hit civilians,” said Hussam Essa, a founder of Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently, which monitors violence in Raqqa province. “They were only afraid of the Russian and regime planes. But now they are very afraid of the American airstrikes.”

American planes are “targeting everywhere,” he said.

According to the UK-based organization Airwars, which tracks allegations of civilian deaths in airstrikes, out of 1,257 claims of deaths in US-led coalition airstrikes this month, a record 337 have been assessed as being “fair,” meaning that there is a reasonable level of public reporting of the alleged incident from two or more generally credible sources and that strikes have been confirmed in the vicinity on the day in question.

“The scale of the destruction is huge, and we are reeling from the number of alleged cases, not just in Mosul but in Raqqa, too,” said Chris Woods, the director of Airwars. “Casualty numbers from western Mosul are absolutely shocking. In Syria it’s a car here, a family there. It

happens every day.”

The group has stopped monitoring Russian strikes in Syria, in order to focus on accusations linked to the US-led coalition, saying its organization is overwhelmed. In the first two months of the year, US strikes were responsible for more civilian casualties than Russian strikes for the first time since Russia intervened in Syria’s civil war in 2015, according to Airwars figures. Russian strikes are now climbing again as a partial cease-fire collapses.

Woods said the intensification began during the Obama administration but escalated under Trump. In December, the US-led coalition dele-

because of concern for his family.

Among the bigger incidents was a strike last week on a school sheltering displaced people in the town of Mansoura outside Raqqa that killed at least 30 people, according to monitoring groups. An attack on a mosque in western Aleppo that the US military said was aimed at known al-Qaeda operatives also appears to have killed dozens of people attending prayers, according to witness accounts and monitoring groups.

Townsend said the initial indications were that the school strike was “clean” and did not kill civilians.

desperate to escape, but the Islamic State has erected checkpoints to prevent people from fleeing. “People don’t know what to do,” he said.

In Iraq, too, civilians are trapped as Iraqi forces push into the most densely packed areas of Mosul, including the Old City, where an estimated 400,000 people are trapped in old structures on narrow streets.

The United Nations said that at least 307 civilians have been killed and 273 wounded in western Mosul since Feb. 17, warning Iraqi security forces and the coalition to avoid falling into the Islamic State’s “trap” as the group deliberately puts civilians in danger.

With a large amount of artillery and ordnance being fired into the city, though, it is hard to ascertain which deaths the coalition is responsible for, Woods said. Iraqi commanders,



An elderly man sits speaking incoherently amid the rubble of a building in the Mosul al-Jadida neighborhood of Mosul, Iraq, on March 24. (Alice Martins for The Washington Post)

gated approval to battlefield commanders in Mosul, speeding up the responsiveness of strikes after a tough battle for the eastern part of the city. The coalition says strikes are subject to the same scrutiny.

“The death of innocent civilians in war is a terrible tragedy that weighs heavily on all of us,” said Col. Joseph Scrocca, a spokesman for the US military in Baghdad, adding that the United States works within the laws of armed conflict. “We set the highest standards for protecting civilians and our dedication, diligence and discipline in prosecuting our combat operations, while protecting civilians, is without precedence in the history of warfare.”

The escalation of US strikes around the city of Raqqa ramped up in February as the United States intensified efforts to train and equip a Syrian force in preparation for an offensive against the city, expected to begin in the coming months.

In March, the tempo increased further, with more sites being targeted that have no obvious military value, according to a Syrian living in Turkey who is from Raqqa and is in regular contact with his family and friends who are still there. “They are hitting everything that isn’t a small house,” including the barges that ferry passengers across the river dividing the city now that the bridges have been disabled, he said, speaking on the condition of anonymity

A wave of continued attacks in the past week in the small town of Tabqa has added to a record toll of 101 civilians killed by US strikes from the beginning of the month to March 21, Essa said. He provided the names of 41 people alleged to have been killed in a three-day period last week in strikes that hit a bakery, a carwash, a slaughterhouse and other targets.

In Iraq and Syria, residents and activists say there has also been a discernible shift in the kinds of targets being hit – with infrastructure such as hospitals and schools coming under fire. The US-led coalition contends that militants are increasingly using such protected buildings as bases for attack, knowing that there are restrictions on bombing them under US rules of engagement.

Tabqa is a crucial step on the path to Raqqa, and it is the current focus of the battle. Reports that the Tabqa dam have also been hit by airstrikes during the fighting have further contributed to the sense of panic after the Islamic State issued a warning on Sunday that the dam could burst.

Townsend said the United States had not been targeting the Tabqa dam and had been using “non-cratering” munitions in that area to protect the site.

Downstream from the dam, residents are terrified by the intensified bombing and of the risk of a dam breach, the Syrian said. His family is

who call in airstrikes from the US-led coalition, say it’s difficult for them to know whether civilians are in houses when many are stuck inside for weeks at a time and it is not possible to see them through drone surveillance.

Lt. Gen. Abdul Ghani al-Asadi, commander of Iraq’s counterterrorism units, said the troops are instead relying on tips from those fleeing as to which houses have civilians inside.

Still, Mosul Eye, a monitoring group in the city, said it had warned Iraqi forces that civilians were trapped in homes in Mosul al-Jadida days before the US strike there and sent coordinates.

Amnesty International said that because the government has told residents to stay in their homes, the US-led coalition should have known that strikes would be likely to result in significant numbers of civilian casualties.

For civilians, many of whom are trapped, the situation is dire.

Nour Mohammed’s family of 23 people hid in a basement in western Mosul for nearly two weeks as explosions rang out around them.

Islamic State militants forced the family to keep the front door open so that they could move in and out of the building freely and fend off the advancing Iraqi forces from the roof.

“We were terrified every time we’d hear the sound of an airplane that they’d bomb us all,” she said as she fled the city last week.

Community News

End of Transition: Armenia 25 Years On, Now What?

LOS ANGELES – Twenty-five years after the Soviet collapse, citizens of Armenia, as well as observers and scholars are asking “Now What?” In an effort to better understand the past quarter century, and to look for ways forward, the USC Institute of Armenian Studies is presenting a two-city conference titled, “The End of Transition: Shifting Focus a Quarter Century After the Soviet Collapse.”

To be held at the University of Southern California (USC), on Sunday, April 9 and Monday, April 10, the conference brings together notable names in media, government, academia and the arts to explore regionalisms of Armenia, demographic changes, transitions in social and economic policy, the development of formal and informal political and social institutions, bottom-up social change and civil society formation. In foreign and regional relations, speakers will look at the transition from the Soviet sphere to attempts at other alliances, and the evolution of Armenia’s bilateral relations with its immediate neighbors. The conference will continue in Yerevan, Armenia on May 23-24.

“Armenia, like all the Soviet successor states, has undergone its own unique transition process. The transition concept presupposed a fairly linear trajectory from authoritarianism to democratization, from the Soviet world to the European world, from a controlled economy to a free market. This was everyone’s assumption. Where else could a new country possibly go, we thought? Yet, we’ve all seen that Armenia’s path towards democracy and a market economy has been non-direct, non-linear, inconsistent, at best. This conference will unpack those assumptions and demonstrate what really happened,” explained Salpi Ghazarian, director of the USC Institute of Armenian Studies.

On the afternoon of Sunday, April 9, Prof. Robert English of the USC School of International Relations will open the program with a conversation with Ambassador Jack Matlock, the last US envoy to the USSR. They will be followed by a talk by Amberin Zaman, a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars in Washington DC. Until recently, she was the Turkey correspondent for the *Economist*. Zaman will describe the evolution of the Turkey-Russia-West triangle over this quarter century. Hans Gutbrod, a Georgia-based Caucasus analyst with a PhD in International Relations from the London School of Economics, will address civil society and attitudinal evolution since the Soviet collapse, in the three Caucasus republics. Gutbrod currently runs Transparify, an initiative to increase the transparency of policy research and advocacy. Another major figure in the study of countries in transition is Prof. Daron Acemoglu, of MIT, whose book *Why Nations Fail* analyzes the role of institutional development in democratization and economic success. Finally, Khachig Tölölyan will talk about the Diaspora-Armenia relationship – how it evolved over these years and how the perceptions of that relationship changed the relationship itself. The Sunday afternoon program will last from 2:00 to 5:00 pm, with livestreaming beginning at 2:30 pm.

On Monday, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., 18 scholars will present their research on the transition period. They will be divided among three panels – global and regional processes; governance
see TRANSITION, page 9



The children get instruction.

Debi Arach Children’s Center Launches Vocational Training

SAN FRANCISCO and GYUMRI – On February 1, the Debi Arach Children’s Center launched the new Vocational Training Center with the commencement of classes in computer programming, 3-D printing and robotics. With the goal of helping children from Gyumri’s most economically challenged families, the program aims to provide students with the skills they need to secure employment in Armenia’s growing technology-sector job market, hopefully bringing them and their families out of poverty. The Vocational Training Center is made possible through a generous grant from the Assarian Family Foundation (MI-USA).

The program’s curriculum was developed by the Union of Information Technology Enterprises (UITE) and is part of a nationwide effort to promote early high tech education and encourage young people to embrace careers in technology. Classes in software and hardware, and computer and mobile device repair will also begin in the coming months. An additional accelerated curriculum for young adults especially military veterans is also planned. All classes are offered free of charge.

“I am pleased to support the vocational training program at the Debi Arach Children’s Center because I believe that we have to give people an opportunity to develop marketable skills so they can work and earn a living wage,” said Dr. Gary Assarian, on behalf of the Assarian Family Foundation. “I look forward to working with the Paros Foundation on this important effort.”

“The Debi Arach Children’s Center itself was the historic 100th project of the Paros Foundation’s 100 for 100 Projects for Prosperity, which commemorated the centennial of the Armenian Genocide by implementing 100 special projects throughout Armenia. These projects were sponsored by hundreds of families from the Diaspora,” said Peter Abajian, executive director.

Debi Arach, which in Armenian means “moving forward,” helps socially vulnerable children through a holistic approach providing them both humanitarian and educational support. The center provides counseling and group therapy with a psychologist on staff, homework help and college entrance exam tutoring for all subjects. Additionally, the children are served a nutritious meal each day.

see GYUMRI, page 7



Children thank the Assarian family.

Second Genealogy Conference Held in Michigan

By Amanda Berger

DEARBORN, Mich. – The second annual Armenian Genealogy Conference was held at the University of Michigan–Dearborn on March 18 with related events being held at all the Detroit Armenian community centers throughout the weekend. The conference was sponsored by the Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan–Dearborn and co-sponsored by the Cultural Society of Armenians from Istanbul, the Nor Keghi Association, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research. Over 250 people from 18 different states attended the conference.

The conference began Friday night with an opening reception where 150 people with Armenian ancestry gathered at St. Sarkis



Nareg Kevorkian

Lillian Arakelian Fellowship Hall to connect with each other and to enjoy a traditional Armenian buffet, in which each item was identified by its historic origins. Der Hrant Kevorkian, pastor of St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church, extended a warm welcome to the guests who were seated at tables that mapped the geography of Historic Armenia with each table being designated a particular province. This gave conference attendees the opportunity to connect with others whose ancestors hailed from the same regions of Historic Armenia. Whether Keghetsis, Everegtsis, Adanatsis or Kharpertsis, compatriots made their way for group pictures taken according to regional roots.

The Saturday conference opened with introductory remarks and a welcome by George Aghjayan and Ani Boghikian Kasparian of the organizing committee as well as by Dr. Ara Sanjian, the director of the U of M–Dearborn, Armenian Research Center. The morning sessions touched on genealogy 101 (Tracy Keeney), the hidden Armenians of Turkey (George Aghjayan) and the history of the Palu region (Vahe Tachjian). In the afternoon, participants went into four consecutive break-out sessions on various themes including the
see GENEALOGY, page 7



COMMUNITY NEWS

A Sold-Out Crowd Attends AMAA's Child and Orphan Care Luncheon at Beverly Hills Hotel

BEVERLY HILLS – On March 11, the Beverly Hills Hotel was the setting of Armenian Missionary Association of America's (AMAA) Child and Orphan Care luncheon. The luncheon co-chairs, Sandy Bedrosian, Caroline Tufenkian and Ani Zakari, worked to make every aspect of the luncheon enjoyable for the more than 500 guests and supporters who attended. Erika MacArthur delivered a moving devotional and prayer and Joyce Stein thanked everyone for their commitment and support of the needy children in Armenia and Karabakh.

The flowers, donated by Zareh David Ghoukasian of David Z Design, were breathtaking. The silent auction featured many items to select from, designer bags, jewelry, and much more, including two diamond pieces donated by Kazanjian Jewelers in Beverly Hills. There were many opportunities to help the needy children by sponsoring a child, or by purchasing a Bible for them to read. This effort was coordinated by

Maro Yacoubian and Tina Segel who organized the child sponsorship table. Many children were sponsored at the luncheon.

Segel produced the video showing the Tovmassian children, who are Syrian refugees sponsored by the AMAA. Zaven Khanjian, executive director/CEO of the association, also discussed the video and explained the immediate need to help Syrian refugees who are struggling. Through the AMAA, many children and their families have received the help they need to survive in a time of crisis.

Before the fashion show, there was a special gymnastics performance by Anahit Cholakyan. The children's fashion show and dance performance was coordinated and introduced by Betty Balian. This year, once again, the fashion show was sponsored and produced by Bloomingdale's Sherman Oaks. Aleen Oruncakci, who coordinated all the models and the fittings for the fashion show.



A scene from the children's fashion show



AMAA's LA Area Child and Orphan Care Committee

The finance and reservations chair, Sandra Kalemkarian, works every year to efficiently close out the auction. "We are grateful for the generous donations we received this year," she said.

The guests left the event with a goody bag with many products from Jessica Vartoughian of Jessica Cosmetics. On their way out, the guests had a candy table to choose delicious candies from—all donated by Caroline Tufenkian and Ani Zakari.

In closing, Lori Muncherian and Arsine Phillips, the West Coast co-chairs of the AMAA's Child and Orphan Care Committee, thanked the chairs, the entire committee and all the donors for their continued support of this event for the children in Armenia. "We are trying to help change a child's life and give hope for a better future one child at a time," they explained.



Zaven Khanjian, AMAA Executive Director/CEO, left, and Tina Segel

Debi Arach Children's Center Launches Vocational Training

GYUMRI, from page 6

Furthermore, the Center addresses a very important hygienic need by providing the children with supervised bathing facilities via the on-staff nurse. The goal is to help hundreds of children develop a vision for a successful future and to give them the skills they need to reach these goals.

Formally launched in 2006, The Paros Foundation has earned a reputation as the "go to" organization to oversee small and medium-sized project implementation in Armenia. Beginning with our support for seven exemplary local non-government organizations working with children, people with disabilities and the arts, the foundation works to help build a sustainable and vibrant homeland while improving living conditions for its most vulnerable populations. To facilitate volunteerism, the Paros Foundation launched its SERVICE Armenia program in 2013. This Armenia-based service program for teens and young adults provides participants an opportunity to travel to and experience all that Armenia has to offer while helping make a difference. Donations to The Paros Foundation, a 501(c) 3 organization, are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. The foundation underwrites 100 percent of administrative costs, thus allowing all donor contributions to be allocated directly to the projects.

Second Genealogy Conference Held in Michigan

GENEALOGY, from page 6

Armenian Immigration Project (Mark Arslan), genealogy and social media (Tracy Keeney), DNA testing (Janet Achoukian Andreopoulos), Armenian/Ottoman records (George Aghjayan), success stories (Jen Langley), and sources in Armenian research centers (Ani Boghikian Kasparian). Speakers shared "success stories" of genealogical discovery and encouraged those in attendance to start putting together the puzzle pieces of their own family history.

In her presentation on Saturday morning, Tracy Keeney, creator of the Armenian Genealogy Facebook page, encouraged conference attendees to become more involved in tracing their family lines, whether it is through genealogy websites, newspapers and national archives, or Google, stating, "You never know what you're going to find and where you're going to find it." Keeney emphasized the importance of connecting with living relatives. "You're not going to find this all on ancestry.com," she said, "There's so much more to genealogy than names and dates."

Saturday evening, the banquet participants enjoyed the culturally rich program with traditional songs and dances of historic Armenia. Harry Kezelian III, accompanied by Dickran Callan, sang songs from various regions, explaining the occasion of when they used to be sung, while playing the oud. The Hamazkayin Arax Dance group of Detroit, led by Nayiri Karapetian, performed dances from Vasbouragan, Shirag, Kessab, and

Sepastia. They invited the guests to join them in an effort to reintroduce some of the original steps.

Sunday, people had an opportunity to attend mass at the local Armenian churches in the morning. At 12:30 everyone was shuttled to St. John's

with artifacts from their ancestral towns and villages. The tour was followed by the farewell reception with a warm welcome by the Very Rev. Aren Jebejian, pastor of St. John's Armenian Apostolic Church. Guests enjoyed more Armenian pastries and more time with newly discovered family and



Tracy Keeney during her presentation

Armenian Apostolic church for a tour of the Alex and Marie Manoogian Museum. As everyone was gathered in the art gallery, Lucy Ardash, the director of the museum, highlighted some of the special artifacts from the collection. With docents in each of the six galleries of the museum, the guests went through at their own pace, identifying

friends. Participants thanked the organizers, George Aghjayan, Janet Achoukian Andreopoulos, Mark Arslan, Luc Baronian, Ani Boghikian Kasparian, Tracy Keeney, Jen Langley, Marc Mamigonian and Shoghig Shahinian for a worthwhile conference and left with great anticipation for next year's conference.



OBITUARIES

Armen John Esserian, Inventor of First Bar Code

LINCOLN, Mass. — Armen John Esserian, formerly of Cambridge and Lexington, died on March 20 with his family by his side. He was 89.

He was the father of John A. Esserian and his wife Jennifer; Pamela Esserian; Melanie Jandl and her husband James. He also leaves grandchildren John and Robert Esserian and Samantha and Jillian Jandl. He was the brother of Gloria Kapalis, Helen Esserian, and the late Madeleine Koshgarian. He also leaves many nieces, nephews, cousins. He was predeceased by long-time companion Marie Burch.

Esserian was born July 15, 1928 to Arika and Jack in Watertown. His formative interests included cartography, classical music, fine art and Middle East history. In his senior honor's year at Watertown High, Armen authored *La Mer*, a compilation of oceanic poetry paired with charming marine-themed sketches. This hard-covered treasure of creativity was inspired by Debussy's symphony, *La Mer*. He received a full ROTC scholarship to attend Massachusetts

Institute of Technology.

Impeccably timed, his graduating class of 1950, was the final eligible year of acceptance for WWII recruits. Armen's path to becoming an engineer was afoot. While studying Economics and Engineering, Esserian was also passionate about his aviation training. He often stopped by the family restaurant, Queens Lunch, before commuting by streetcar to classes in Cambridge. When the government no longer needed young servicemen after WWII, Esserian's aviation dreams were replaced with another vision. After graduating from MIT, his career path led to the Star Market Supermarket chain. Amidst the food industry, Armen also known as John, applied his state-of-the-art insights. In 1957, he posted a letter to himself (MIT Library Archives) outlining a vision that would revolutionize the grocery industry forever.

This historic letter included a block diagram of a computerized check-out System using a handheld "scanner" and pricing via data codes.

In 1960, as president of his new company, "Character Recognition" or Charecogn, Inc., he designed a black and white circular Sunburst to encode data. Charecogn, Inc. developed cutting-edge technology that created a "scanner" device that read the sunburst codes which held numerous US Patents. In August 1970, Charecogn, Inc. demonstrated the ease of bar code scanning to the USDA, which originally used this technology in the New England dairy industry. The USDA press release of this 1970 demo stated "Charecogn Systems, Inc. is the first firm to develop a working trial model." The event was covered by NBC, ABC, BBC, the *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post*. He was deluged for demo requests of his invention from Paris to the Pentagon. In 1999 John attended The Smithsonian Museum of Washington, DC where an exhibit detailing the invention of the product identification code and highlighting John's contributions specifically was unveiled. Funeral services were at Saint James



Armenian Church, Watertown, on Friday, March 24. Interment was at Mount Auburn Cemetery.

Arrangements were made by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home.

Avo Uvezian: Sinatra Songwriter, Cigar Legend Dies

UVEZIAN, from page 1

By then the accomplished pianist, who had been born in Lebanon in 1926, spoke a dozen languages, including Farsi, French, Turkish, and English. He once told *Cigar Journal*, "I usually count in Armenian in my head," in 2015. "I find the best language to swear in is Turkish, and when dreaming of pretty women, French is the best language."

But it was in the 1960s, and in English, that he finally got to write some melodies of his own. It was probably tough, trying to make the transition from performer to songwriter in his late thirties, but he had some good material. The first song to make it big was an enchanting melody, a tune called *Broken Guitar*. And, boy, did it make it big.

Uvezian was living in New York, but a friend knew a singer from New Jersey who was looking for new standards. The man's name was Frank Sinatra. In 1966 Uvezian played *Broken Guitars* for Sinatra, who fell in love with the melody, but convinced Avo to throw out the title and the lyrics. He wrote new ones, and gave it a new title. He called it *Strangers in the Night*.

Uvezian won't be remembered as the composer. Bert Kaempfert is credited with the melody, while many argue the documentation supports Uvezian.

Following *Strangers in the Night* making it

big, Uvezian started over in Puerto Rico, filling the hot nights' air with music. In the 1980s, he went to Switzerland to have his daughter Christened, and enjoyed his first cigar.

Uvezian was immediately smitten with the smoke, but balked at the price and vowed to make his own brand of quality products. He went in search of someone to make them, and found Davidoff legend Hendrik Kelner in the Dominican Republic. Many of the first cigars sold out of a box atop Avo's piano, but their popularity exploded. One-hundred thousand in the first year, 750,000 in the first three. Davidoff ended up buying the distribution rights outright in 1995 for \$10 million.

He continued to represent the brand though, going on multi-city, international tours to celebrate every year when a limited edition "birthday" cigar came out.

Uvezian's health had deteriorated in recent years. A car accident added to a growing list of reasons not to travel. Still, he'd managed a few appearances, each with at least a few minutes reserved to play for his guests. He turned 91 just three days ago, and the last "birthday" cigar was released this month.

He is survived by his wife Nivia, daughter Karyn, sons Jeffrey, Robert, and Ronny, and a legacy of rooms where smoke and music filled the air.

John 'Sib' Hashian, Drummer for Boston, Dies

HASHIAN, from page 1

Hashian's sudden passing prompted an outpouring of social media tributes among the classic rock community — and one particularly poignant post from actor Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, who called Hashian his "second dad."

"Don't know why things have to happen the way they do sometimes," wrote Johnson in an Instagram post sharing a photo of himself alongside Hashian and members of the family they've shared throughout Johnson's long relationship with Hashian's daughter Lauren. Lamenting the departures of loved ones who leave "suddenly without having a chance to say goodbye," Johnson waxed philosophical, musing that "perhaps the lesson here is the reminder to live our lives as full and as present as we possibly can, because we just never know what's around the corner."

Aerosmith bassist Tom Hamilton — an artist, like Hashian, with strong roots in the Boston musical community — shared his sorrow, praising the deceased as a "really good guy and fine drummer as well." Ex-Foreigner singer Lou Gramm, who'd been booked on the cruise, shared his own condolences, sending "thoughts & prayers" to his

family.

Hashian's ex-bandmate Barry Goudreau expressed his own grief with fans and followers, writing, "Sib was in a million, never to be replaced. He will be greatly missed." Fellow former Boston vet Michael Sweet served with the group well after Hashian left the lineup, and although Sweet admitted he'd never gotten the opportunity to perform with him, he sent his own well wishes to Hashian's survivors, praising his "incredible contribution to my musical journey and to the history of rock and roll."

"He was a legend, and I don't think there's a day that goes by today that I don't hear his drumming on the radio," said car magnate Ernie Boch, a longtime friend who played alongside Hashian for several years, beginning in 2004, in the band Ernie and the Automatics. "I listen to classic rock all the time, and if you listen to classic rock, you hear Sibby Hashian play every day."

Hashian is survived by his wife, Suzanne; a son, Adam; two daughters, the songwriter Aja Hashian and the singer-songwriter Lauren Hashian; and Lauren's daughter with the actor Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Jasmine Johnson.

Donations

Arax Balakian donated \$100 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

Nairi Berberian donated \$20 to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* in memory of the 18th anniversary of the passing of Hampartzum Berberian; the second anniversary of the death of Jean Fattal and Yervant Bahadrian.

Read News in Armenian at:



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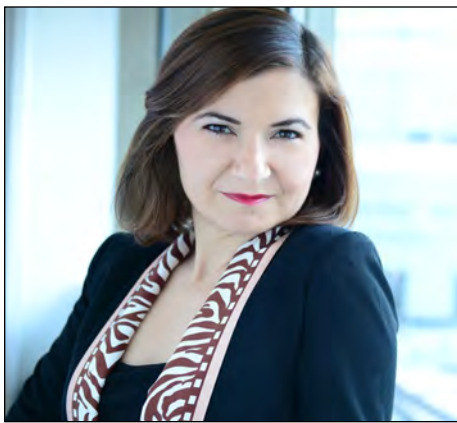


COMMUNITY NEWS

Bilgin Ayata to Discuss Constitutional Referendum And Political Transformation in Turkey at NAASR

BELMONT, Mass. – Dr. Bilgin Ayata, assistant professor in political sociology, University of Basel, will give a lecture titled “Quo Vadis Turkey? The Constitutional Referendum and Political Transformation in Turkey,” on Thursday, April 6, at 7:30 p.m., at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) Center, 395 Concord Ave. The lecture is presented as part of the NAASR/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues.

On April 16, Turkish citizens will vote at home and abroad on the constitutional referendum that entails fundamental changes for Turkey’s political system. In this talk, Ayata will analyze what is at stake for state and society on the eve of this referendum and explore future scenarios for the aftermath of the referendum both for domestic and foreign relations, with a focus on Turkish prospects for peace and reconciliation with Armenians and Kurds.



Prof. Bilgin Ayata

Since summer 2015, the deterioration of democracy has accelerated at full speed in Turkey. Curfews were first declared in the wake of military operations against Kurds, during which thousands of Kurdish civilians were displaced and their homes destroyed. Since last year, a nationwide state of emergency has been declared after a coup attempt in July 2016. The Turkish government has intensified the suppression of media, opposition, and civil society, while it has sacked over 100,000 state employees. Opposition leaders and members of parliament are in prison, along with journalists, elected mayors, and intellectuals. Tensions have increased with the European Union, whose Parliament has called to suspend accession talks until democratic rights are restored.

Ayata obtained her PhD in Political Science at Johns Hopkins University, and her MA degree from York University (Toronto, Canada). Her research interests center on transformation processes spurred by forced migration, conflict, protest movements, contestations of memory, and postcolonial interventions. Her regional expertise includes the Middle East and Europe, in particular Turkey, the Kurdish regions, and postcolonial Germany. She has published on transnational activism of diasporas, the politics of displacement, foreign policy, genocide denial, and memory regimes. She has received research grants and fellowships by the MacArthur Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service, Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, FU Berlin, Johns Hopkins University, and York University. She appears frequently in international media on topics relating to Turkey-EU relations, Turkish foreign Policy, Kurdish politics, refugees, and migration policies in Germany.



Meeting of the ADL Supreme Council: seated, from left, Dr. Arshavir Gundjian (Montreal), Hagop Avedikian (Yerevan), Vartan Nazerian (Los Angeles), Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian (London), Edmond Y. Azadian (Detroit); standing, from left, Kevork Marashlian (Washington, D.C.), Hagop Vartivarian (New Jersey), Khoren Kalinian (Cairo, Egypt), Daniel Yousefian (Buenos Aires, Argentina)

ADL Supreme Council Meets in New Jersey

ENGLEWOOD, N.J. – The Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) Supreme Council held a regular meeting on the weekend of March 24 to 26 in New Jersey with the participation of members from various far-flung corners of the world. Political party structural issues as well as achievements and plans were discussed. Progress in reorganizing the party, and in the field of the press and news media, was reviewed.

At its meeting, the Council created committees tasked with the formation of youth structures in the diaspora and Armenia. Plans were developed to create party structures and information agencies within newly formed communities, along with disseminating already existing party organs.

The ADL Supreme Council is the highest body in the party, to which all party districts are subject. Its decisions and plans will soon be published. The Supreme Council members visiting from various countries had the opportunity to participate in several events in the New York area and visited Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) on March 26 at St. Vartan Cathedral.



Meeting of ADL Supreme Council members with Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) on March 26 at St. Vartan Cathedral: from left, Hagop Vartivarian, Daniel Yousefian, Hagop Avedikian, Archbishop Barsamian, Edmond Y. Azadian, Vartan Nazerian, Kevork Marashlian



Representatives David K. Muradian, Jr.,
Jonathan Hecht, John J. Lawn,
James R. Miceli, & David M. Rogers
and Senator William N. Brownsberger
Invite you to attend the

102nd Anniversary Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide

Friday, April 21, 2017 at 10:30 am
House of Representatives Chamber

Guest Speaker
Maura Healey

to be followed by a reception at the Grand Staircase
For more information, contact Taylor McCarthy in
Rep. Muradian’s office
at 617-722-2240 or at taylor.mccarthy@mahouse.gov

Logo by Jirair Hovsepian

End of Transition: Armenia 25 Years On, Now What?

TRANSITION, from page 6
and economic transitions; civil society and social change. Specific topics include how memory impacts relations with Turkey; the Karabakh conflict, how it evolved during and after the war years, and how war changes demographics; the diminishing importance of Armenia to US foreign policy; power, institutions and values; the demographics of transition; factors of democratic transition; transformation of informal economic institutions; good governance; comparative trust in the three republics of the Caucasus; migration patterns; the transition from egalitarian poverty to unequal wealth; and artistic transitions.

Speakers include Gregory Aftandilian of Northeastern University; Serouj Aprahamian of

York University; Dr. Karena Avedissian, Fellow of the USC Institute of Armenian Studies; Dr. Laurence Broers of Chatham House; Dr. Khatchik Der Ghougassian from Argentina; Phil Gamaghelyan of George Mason University; Dr. Arman Grigoryan of LeHigh University; Garik Hayrapetyan of the United Nations Yerevan office; Eric Nazarian, filmmaker; Dr. Anna Ohanyan of Stonehill College; Emil Sanamyan, editor of the USC Institute of Armenian Studies Focus on Karabakh; Social anthropologist Nona Shahnazaryan; and Karine Torosyan, of the International School of Economics in Georgia.

The event is free and open to the public. Reservations are not required. Lunch will be served midday and refreshments will be available throughout both days.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian EyeCare Project Receives Highest Rating from Charity Navigator

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif. – The Armenian EyeCare Project (AECPP) has been named a Four-Star Charity – the highest rating possible – by Charity Navigator, the largest charity watchdog agency in the country.

Charity Navigator evaluates charities and rates them on their financial health, accountability and transparency to demonstrate how effectively a charity spends donor dollars; how well it has sustained its programs over time; and its level of commitment to good governance practices and transparency with information.

Awarded a total of four out of four stars, the AECPP was given an overall score of 97.5 out of a possible 100, receiving a perfect score of 100 in accountability and transparency and a score of 96.4 in finances. The AECPP is the only Armenian organization that holds a perfect Charity Navigator four-star rating.

“It truly is an honor to be evaluated by an independent group like Charity Navigator, with no ties to the AECPP, and come out on top,” said AECPP Founder Dr. Roger Ohanesian. “It assures our donors that their money is safe and going to the right place – Armenia.”

In addition to rating charities, Charity Navigator also breaks down the finances of organizations and shows donors how money in the organization is typically spent. The EyeCare Project spends 81.3 percent of its total income on the project’s several programs and services in Armenia; 10 percent on fundraising efforts; and 8.5 percent on administrative costs.

To keep program costs as low as possible, Ohanesian, and all other AECPP physicians, donate their time and expenses – travel and lodging – to the project. The generosity of these physicians enables more patients to receive care.

By making this information available, Charity Navigator enables donors to make an informed decision on where to donate. Charity Navigator’s analysis of the EyeCare Project assures donors that their generous



support enables the Project to accomplish its mission in Armenia: to eliminate preventable blindness and to provide access to eye care for every Armenian in need.

For more in depth information on nonprofit organizations visit CharityNavigator.org and do a search for a specific charity.

The three major charity watchdog organizations – and top sources of nonprofit information – are Charity Navigator, BBB Wise Giving Alliance and GuideStar. More website visitors than all other charity rating groups combined, Charity Navigator is the largest charity watchdog in America.

(left) AECPP Ratings Graphic. (Right) Group of patients outside the AECPP Mobile Eye Hospital



Join us for the first ever Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston
Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide

A PRAYER SERVICE FOR THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

An Ecumenical Commemoration of the
Saints and Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide

Remembrance, Witness and Resurrection

HOSTED BY

His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston

SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 2017
2:00 PM

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral of New England
514 Parker Street, Boston, Massachusetts

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)

His Eminence Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan
Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church

Armenian Catholic Eparchy of the United States and Canada
Armenian Evangelical Union of North America



MAHINDRA HUMANITIES CENTER HARVARD



SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, April 5, 2017 - 6:00pm

Fong Auditorium, Boylston Hall, Harvard University

The Mahindra Humanities Center at Harvard presents

The Hrant Dink Memorial Peace and Justice Lecture

Minorities and Human Rights in Turkey

Participants:

Ayse Gül Altınay

Professor of Anthropology, Sabancı University

Gerard Libaridian

Alex Manoogian Chair in Modern Armenian History, University of Michigan (retired)

Etiyen Mahçupyan

Journalist

Malika Zeghal

Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor in Contemporary Islamic Thought and Life, Harvard

Free and open to the public. Seating is limited.



Sasun Massacres Reexamined by Academic Owen Miller

SASUN, from page 1

more about the Genocide, and in turn got him interested in the autonomous mountainous region of Sasun south of the city of Mus (Moush). Sasun was under the rule of Kurdish feudal lords in the first part of the 19th century, but central Ottoman forces came to conquer its small principalities.

Miller, who often made connections to pertinent events elsewhere in the world during his talk, pointed out that the Ottomans bought modern rifles and other weaponry from the US and Europe to gain an advantage over local feudal forces. He said that the Ottoman efforts were similar to the conquest of the Mayan uplands in the 1850s, or French campaigns in the mountainous areas of North Africa. The same technology was used for dominance throughout the world.

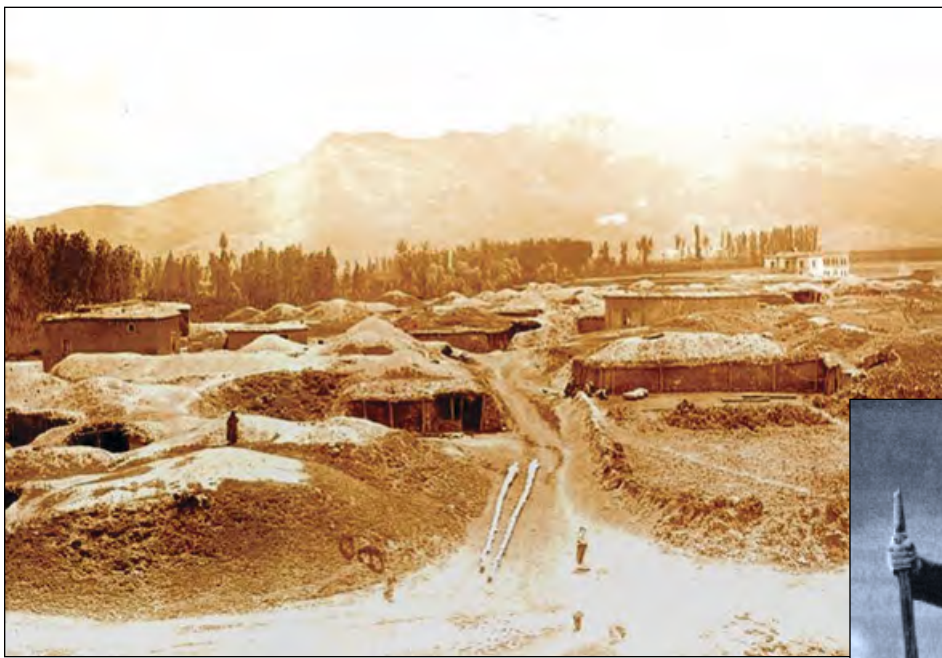
In the 19th century while the Ottomans were pushing out Armenians during a series of wars,

conditions in the eastern provinces.

During the same time period, Owen related, Mihran Damadian, educated abroad, and from a wealthy Catholic family in Constantinople, was appointed as principal of the Nersisian Central School in Mus in 1884, and saw great impoverishment among the peasantry. He began supporting organizing for self-defense against local warlords.

Meanwhile medical student Hampartzum Boyajian, together with Dr. Jelalian, helped organize one of the first branches of the Hnchagian Party in the capital city. Perhaps it is not a coincidence, Miller ruminated, that the first incarnation of the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) party was formed the same year at the same institution as the Hnchagian branch by medical students for political reasons.

Damadian, back in Constantinople, became a central figure in organizing the 1890 Kum



A typical Armenian village in the Sasun and Moush area (photo courtesy Owen Miller)

large numbers of Muslims were also being expelled from the Russian Empire and settled as a counterweight to Ottoman Armenians and other peoples seen as unreliable by the government. These immigrants clashed with their new neighbors.

Miller traced the upsurge in Armenian nationalist sentiment in the 19th century through key turning points. One of these was the 1889 kidnapping and rape of a 14-year-old Armenian girl, Gulizar, by a Kurdish warlord



Gulizar, whose kidnapping and rape by Kurdish warlord Musa Bey inspired a movement of protest (photo courtesy Owen Miller)

named Musa Bey who enjoyed the backing of the Ottoman state. This led to a local protest movement in Moush, and radicalized Armenians in the Ottoman capital, especially after a sham state trial. Even Europeans paid attention to the trial.

Young students in Constantinople formed a branch of the Hnchagian Party and organized further protests in Constantinople focusing on

Kapu demonstration demanding more attention to the Armenians of the countryside, and opposing the Armenian patriarch's perceived indifference to their suffering. This demonstration led to a wave of arrests. Damadian escaped to Athens, as did Boyajian. The arrests radicalized Armenians because many were arrested on flimsy pretexts, often for the purpose of personal enrichment by local Ottoman officials.

Back in the Sasun area, Owen related, Hasan Tahsin Pasha, governor-general of Bitlis province, was encouraging pastoralist groups to defeat local power holders so that he in turn could increase his own power. Tahsin sent a series of increasingly panicked reports to the central Ottoman government that large numbers of Armenians armed with Martini rifles were in the mountains ready to cause problems. The central government panicked in its turn. The sultan ordered local forces to destroy the "bandits" and leave a legacy of terror.

Consequently, 12 battalions of Ottoman soldiers murdered and plundered the Sasun Armenians over the course of three weeks, from August to September 1894. The orders were carried out by Ottoman Fourth Army commander Zeki Pasha, the brother-in-law of the sultan, though the cavalry military commander Edhem Pasha, in Moush, refused to obey these same orders.

Zeki Pasha went to Sasun after the murders and wrote a report which was a cover-up. Miller found that this became the official state version of the events, and was repeated in a large number of Ottoman documents. It even ended up in the *New York Times* and various European newspapers, probably on the take from the Ottoman government.

Miller observed that American missionaries in the area began to collect local information about what happened. In their reports, they presented a much more complex situation, and these reports also reached Western



The city of Moush with the mountains of Sasun in the background (photo: Vartan A. Hampikian, Library of Congress)

newspapers.

Most Western journalists were denied entry to the region, but two enterprising correspondents managed to get first-hand information.

with Armenian populations (and Kurds in Dersim) and varied societal structures.

He concluded with a comparison of the cover-up of the My Lai massacre by American soldiers with that of the Sasun massacres of Armenians. In 1968 Charlie Company murdered 400 women and children, and military commander Col. Oran Henderson, like Zeki Pasha, tried to send Charlie Company to the wilderness so its members would not tell their stories, just as Zeki Pasha restricted his soldiers to their barracks for the same reason.

This attempt at controlling historical narrative is a common one. Miller remarked at the end of his talk that it was important to understand that archives reflect

the views of those in power, but unfortunately Ottomanists today still have not figured this out.

After his formal presentation, Miller answered questions from the audience. When asked about the varied estimates of the numbers of Armenian dead in the Sasun massacre, he declared that the lack of accurate demographic information was a problem, but under the circumstances he found Garo Sassuni's figure of one to two thousand killed to be the most credible estimate. In response to another question, Miller critiqued Justin McCarthy's recent book, *Sasun: The History of an 1890s Armenian Revolt*, as "a very problematic piece of scholarship." He found it to be essentially a reworking of the Zeki Pasha report, replete with factual errors.



Hnchagian revolutionary Hampartzum Boyajian ("Medzn Murad")



Hnchagian revolutionary Mihran Damadian

Dr. Emil Dillon of the *Daily Telegraph*, pretending to be a Cossack, managed to smuggle himself into the area. *Daily News*

reporter, Frank Scudamore, was another who wrote influential reports.

Miller stated that despite the value of their accounts, Ottoman studies today continues to accept the same kind of framing that the Ottoman state entertained about journalists, that they are untrustworthy individuals, just like the Christian missionaries.

Miller mentioned briefly Zeytun and Dersim as two other autonomous mountainous regions



The mountains of Sasun (photo courtesy Owen Miller)

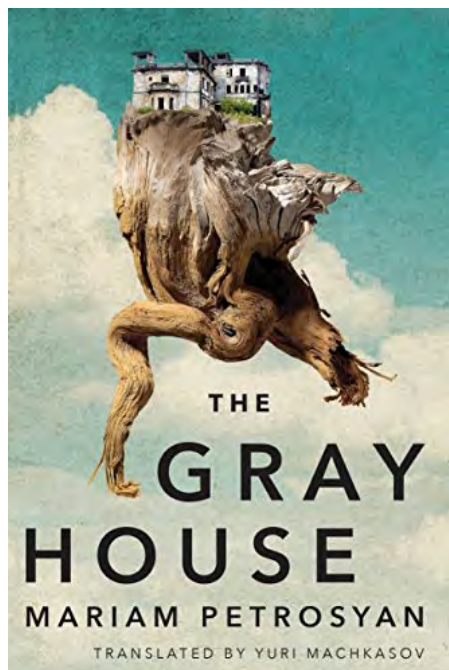
Arts & Living

BOOKS

Russian-Language Fantasy Novel Translated into English

YEREVAN – Mariam Petrosyan's novel, *The Gray House*, will be released in the US by Amazon Crossing on April 25. The *Gray House* is a tale of how what others understand as liabilities can be leveraged into strengths.

Bound to wheelchairs and dependent on prosthetic limbs, the physically disabled students living in *The Gray House* are overlooked by the Outsides. Not that it matters to anyone living in the House, a hulking old structure that its residents know is alive. From the corridors and crawl spaces to the classrooms and dorms, the House is full of



tribes, tinctures, scared teachers, and laws—all seen and understood through a prismatic array of teenagers' eyes.

But student deaths and mounting pressure from the Outsides put the time-defying order of the House in danger. As the tribe leaders struggle to maintain power, they defer to the awesome power of the House, attempting to make it through days and nights that pass in ways that clocks and watches cannot record.



Mariam Petrosyan

Petrosyan was born in 1969 in Yerevan, Armenia. She is a granddaughter of a renowned Armenian artist Martiros Saryan (1880-1972).

In 1989 she graduated with a degree in applied arts and worked in the animation department of Armenfilm movie studio. In 1992 she moved to Moscow to work at Soyuzmultfilm studio, then returned to Yerevan in 1995.

The Gray House is Petrosyan's debut novel. After working on it for 18 years, she published it in Russia in 2009, and it became an instant bestseller, winning several of the year's top literary awards, including the Russian Prize for the best book by a Russian author living abroad. The book has been translated into French, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Czech, Hungarian, and Lithuanian.

Petrosyan is married to Armenian artist Artashes Stamboltsyan. They live in Yerevan and have two children.



Liberty Orchards in Cashmere, Wash., which was founded by two Armenian immigrants, still makes Aplets & Cotlets, a variation of Turkish delight that includes apples, apricots and walnuts.

How Two Armenian Immigrants Made Turkish Delight an American Hit

CASHMERE, Wash. (NPR) – In 1921, an ad in *The Seattle Times* touted a brand new candy called “Aplets,” a new confection made “from the finest Washington apples and honey and walnuts.” A few years later, Aplets were joined by “Cotlets,” a similar candy made from an apricot base. In most of the world, “Aplets & Cotlets” were

By Tove K. Danovitch

based on a treat called lokum, a word derived from Arabic, but the British and Americans know it as “Turkish delight.”

The origins of Turkish delight are a bit mysterious. According to *Sweets: A History of Candy*, it was “invented by Arab apothecaries some time around the ninth century.” But *Sherbet and Spice: The Complete Story of Turkish Sweets and Desserts* alleges that it was invented by Ottoman palace confectioners in the 18th century. Versions of the candy are made in the Middle East, Russia, the Balkans and Greece. Though there are variations, the delights are usually made from a sweetener, cornflower starch, flavoring (usually rose or orange blossom water) and sometimes nuts.

The English originally called it “lumps of delight,” a name that was wisely changed by the time C.S. Lewis thought to make it the candy that tempted young Edmund Pevensie to betray his siblings in *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. If Americans have heard of Turkish delight, it's likely because this book, published in 1950, made the mysterious confection seem like the most delicious candy in the world.

Aplets came to America thanks to two Armenian immigrants – Armen Tertsagian and Mark Balaban – who bought an orchard in Cashmere, Wash., and had to find something to do with their excess fruit. Greg Taylor, president of Liberty Orchards – the company that makes Aplets & Cotlets – is the grandson of both founders. (The unmarried sister of one of the men “got sent over to be the wife of my grandfather,” he explains.)

The men met at a YMCA, where Taylor says they were likely “the only Armenian guys within 100 miles.” Together, they started a restaurant, which failed, and then a yogurt business, which also failed. But their fruit business has carried on for almost 100 years – even though the orchards were sold long ago, when the

COURTESY OF LIBERTY ORCHARDS CO., INC.

Aram Khachaturian International Competition Announces First-Ever Vocal Competition

NEW YORK and YEREVAN – The Aram Khachaturian International Competition announces its first-ever vocal competition will take place in Yerevan, Armenia from June 4-16, 2017. Under the patronage of the First Lady of the Republic of Armenia Rita Sargsyan, the competition is open to young singers between the ages of 18-35 years of age (all voice types), regardless of citizenship or nationality. The deadline for application materials is April 25, 2017. Materials should be emailed to: info@akhic.am. Prizes include \$10,000 and concert engagements (first prize); \$5000 (second prize); and \$3000 (third prize). A downloadable application form can also be found at <http://www.akhic.am/>.

Serving as chairman for this year's jury is world-renowned conductor Constantine Orbelian. Orbelian has led concerts and recordings with some of the world's greatest singers including Renée Fleming, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Sumi Jo, Jonas Kaufmann, Marcelo Alvarez, and Lawrence Brownlee. He is also the Artistic Director of the State Academic Opera and Ballet Theater in Yerevan, Armenia, Music Director of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra and the Philharmonia of Russia, and the Kaunas City Symphony in Lithuania. Other distinguished members of this year's panel are internationally-acclaimed soprano and winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and four consecutive Juno Awards, Isabel Bayrakdarian; sought-after vocal coach, and former Artistic Administrator of La Scala and Chief Executive and Artistic Director of the Welsh National Opera (WNO) John Fisher; Executive Director of Askonas Holt, Mark Hildrew; director of Manhattan School of Music's Senior Opera Theater, Opera Hispanica, and Juilliard faculty member Jorge Parodi; former President Emeritus, Van Cliburn Competition, General Director of the 2011 Tchaikovsky competition; and former artistic administrator for the San Francisco and Metropolitan Operas, Richard Rodzinski; Deputy Artistic Director of Arena di Verona and clarinetist, Giampiero Sobrino; baritone and soloist with the Yerevan Opera Theater, and winner First Prize and Gold Medal at the First International Pavel Lisitsian Baritone Competition, Gevorg Hakobyan; and stage director and former General Director of the Latvian National Opera, Andrejs Žagars.

Now in its 13th year, the Aram Khachaturian International Competition has been held in Yerevan, Armenia each June since 2003, when it was added to the events celebrating the composer's centennial. In 2014, the Competition was added to the World Federation of Music Competitions, the only Armenian competition awarded such an honor.

Participants must provide jury with a link to an online video consisting of two arias of his/her choice from the classical or romantic period, the minimum duration should be 10 minutes. The arias must be performed in the original key and language. Only videos made after June 6, 2014 are accepted. Videos should be taken by one fixed camera without any interruption during one piece. Participants must provide a list of compositions, including the date and duration of each video.

The Aram Khachaturian International Competition has aimed at identifying talented young musicians since 2003 when it launched as part of the centennial celebrations for the beloved Armenian composer. Held each June in Yerevan, the original three categories consisted of piano, violin, and cello. In 2016, a conducting category was added by a unanimous vote of all the members of the World Federation of International Music Competitions. The year 2017 marks its first-ever vocal competition. In 2014, the Competition was added to the World Federation of Music Competitions, becoming

see COMPETITION, page 13



Armenian immigrants Mark Balaban and Armen Tertsagian launched two businesses that failed, but their Liberty Orchards venture – and its Aplets & Cotlets – remains prosperous.

see LOKUM, page 13



ARTS & LIVING

Armenia Fund USA Raises \$50,000 for the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra

PARAMUS, N.J. — Armenia Fund USA, thanks to supporters, has raised \$50,000 for new instruments for the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra (ANPO). With these funds ANPO can begin the extensive process of fixing the instruments in need of repair and replacing the ones that are in extremely poor quality. As a result, The Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra can continue to strive within the classical music concert scene.

For the last 90 years, ANPO has been the face of classical music in Armenia. The orchestra is committed to promoting cultural and musical awareness. They feature works of Armenian and international composers. ANPO regularly tours the world, performing classical and operatic music as well as national and contemporary music. However, during the last 30 years, the condition of their musical instruments has significantly deteriorated thus making it hard for the musicians to show their highest artistic endeavors.



Front cover of the Holiday CD by the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra

According to current international standards, most of ANPO's instruments are outdated and in extremely poor condition. The ones that are affected the most are the wind, brass and percussion instruments. Some of these instruments are cracked, thus forcing the musicians to seek temporary repair solutions which can dramatically change the quality of the performance.

"In order for ANPO to be able to continue representing Armenian classical music on the international concert scene and to continue artistic activities as Ambassador of Armenian music they need to repair and maintain existing instruments as well as buy new instruments," states Karen Hakobyan, Armenia Fund USA's Cultural Program Advisor.

When this information was brought to Executive Director Lisa Stepanian's attention, a decision was made to do something different for their annual Christmas Mailer. This year a Holiday CD by the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra was added to each mailer. The CD and letter brought awareness to the Armenian Community about the problems that ANPO had with their instruments. The Christmas mailer was extremely successful and donations are still being received to help the orchestra's cause.

How Two Armenian Immigrants Made Turkish Delight an American Hit

LOKUM, from page 12

owners realized that producing Aplets from farm-raised apples didn't offer the quality control needed to make a shelf-stable lokum.

The business partners had grown up eating lokum and wanted to be the first to produce it commercially in the United States. Thanks in part to the inclusion of Washington apples, Aplets became a popular gift for tourists, and got an extra publicity boost through sales at the

we make Turkish delight and let's not be afraid to say it," Taylor says. "Some of the older Armenians weren't happy that we'd done that."

When asked if he thought the original founders would be proud to see their candy still in stores, Taylor became thoughtful. "I think they'd be proud that the company has lasted this long and that the business is still in the family. But it's conceivable that they'd think, 'Why didn't they do more?'" Taylor explains



Promotional art from Liberty Orchards in the 1920s helped make Aplets & Cotlets a favorite gift among tourists to Washington state.

1962 Seattle World's Fair. "It's still our best-selling product," Taylor says, largely because of its popularity in the Pacific Northwest. But Aplets & Cotlets, just like more traditional versions of Turkish delight, can be an acquired taste. Many people find it overly sweet and aren't used to eating desserts with floral flavors.

One of the few changes Liberty Orchards has made to the confection was to decrease the amount of rose flavor. "We got too many negative comments about the flowery taste," Taylor says. Another change was to add pectin to the candies to make it less stringy than original Turkish delight, which can easily be pulled apart like taffy but also gives it a much longer shelf-life.

The company's marketing is a little different, too. Because of historic animosity between Armenians and Turks, Aplets & Cotlets downplayed its association with "Turkish delight" for many years. "At some point we decided, heck,

that most of the company's innovation occurred in the first and second generations, and he sees himself as being "less entrepreneurial."

Despite his misgivings, fans have filled Liberty Orchards' social media with memories of the candy — which evidently still tastes as good as it did decades ago. One man writes about how he used to buy the candy with the money he made from his newspaper route 40 years ago. A woman mentions that her grandmother used to keep the candies at home and "each time I eat one, I have wonderful memories of the time I spent with this special lady." Sadly, for another family it was their dog who enjoyed the treats after breaking into the boxes they'd purchased for holiday gifts.

For now, Aplets & Cotlets remains a regional secret. Yet it exemplifies the very best of American food culture — immigrants who refashioned their childhood treats by using the foods of their new home.

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Aram Khachaturian International Competition Announces First-Ever Vocal Competition

COMPETITION, from page 12

the only Armenian competition awarded such an honor. The 60th General Assembly of the World Federation of International Music Competitions was held in Armenia gathering more than 115 delegates from 6 continents.

Participants for the competition come from all around the world and include representatives from the CIS countries, US, Canada, Mexico, France, Germany Spain, Belgium, the UK, China and others.

Organized by the Ministry of Culture, "Aram Khachaturian-competition" Cultural Foundation, and Yerevan Komitas State Conservatory, the competition is under the patronage of the First Lady of the Republic of Armenia Rita Sargsyan, who serves as the honorary president of the Board of Trustees of the competition. The Board of Trustees is com-

prised of many well-known figures including Professor Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, Professor Reinhart von Gutzeit, Pavel Kogan, Elizbieta Penderecki, Professor Alexander Sokolov, Professor Alexander Tchaikovsky, rk Zilberquit, and others. In 2008, during a regular meeting of the Board of Trustees a new President, Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, composer, and RA honored artist Professor Armen Smbatyan was elected.

Past competition jury members have included such illustrious musicians and artists as Grigori Zhislin (UK), Jan Ter-Merkeryan (France), Zahar Bron (Germany), Vladimir Landsman (Canada), Jasper Perrot (UK), Rustem Ayrudinov (UK), Chun Pan (China), Boris Kushnir (Austria), Harald Herzl (Austria), Sergey Kravchenko (Russia), Lucy Ishkhanian (USA), Alexander Sokolov (Russia), Svetlana Navasardian (Armenia), and others.



ARTS & LIVING

Capitol Hill Viewing of “The Promise” Draws Capacity Congressional Audience

WASHINGTON – A special Capitol Hill viewing on March 23 of “The Promise” – the Armenian Genocide-era epic starring Christian Bale set for nationwide release on April 21st – drew a capacity crowd of Members of Congress, senior Congressional aides, coalition partners, and a broad cross-section of the Washington, DC foreign policy community, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

The viewing, hosted by Survival Pictures, Open Road Films, the Congressional Armenian Caucus and the ANCA, featured introductions by legislators and a question and answer session with Oscar Award winning director Terry George and producer Eric Esrailian. Among the Members of Congress participating in the program included Congressional Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Jackie Speier (D-CA), David Trott (R-CA), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), House Democratic Caucus Chairman Joe Crowley (D-NY), and Representatives Judy Chu (D-CA), Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), and Paul Tonko (D-NY). Elected officials were joined by Republic of Armenia Ambassador Grigor Hovhannissian, Republic of Artsakh Representative to the U.S. Robert Avetisyan, and former U.S. Ambassadors to Armenia John Evans and Michael Lemmon. “The Promise is pushing America to a

tipping point – the watershed moment at which U.S. leaders finally, and fully, reject the shameful veto that Turkey has, for far too long, exercised against honest American condemnation and commemoration of the Armenian Genocide,” said Aram Hamparian, Executive Director of the ANCA.

“We want to offer our special thanks to the Armenian Caucus for co-hosting tonight’s program, and for their leadership in introducing bipartisan legislation that aims to apply the lessons of the Armenian Genocide in preventing future atrocities, for collecting signatures on a Congressional letter asking the President to properly commemorate this crime, and, of course, for hosting the annual Capitol Hill observance this April 5th.”

Complete coverage of the event, including the Congressional remarks and the question and answer session with Director Terry George and Producer Eric Esrailian to follow.

Terry George and Eric Esrailian are taking part in a two day series of Congressional meetings to discuss their film, support Armenian Genocide recognition, and explore ways that the arts and advocacy community can contribute to ending the worldwide cycle of genocide.



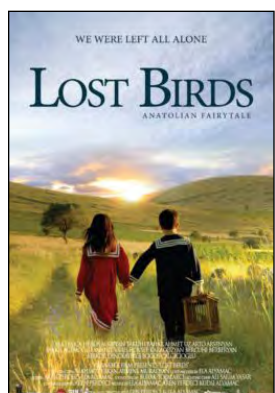
From left: Aram Hamparian, Dr. Eric Esrailian and Terry George

CineCulture and Armenian Studies Program to Feature Fresno Premiere of ‘Lost Birds’

FRESNO – The CineCulture Series and the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Fresno, are sponsoring a special screening of the film “Lost Birds” at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, April 7, in the Leon and Pete Peters Educational Auditorium, on the Fresno State campus.

Directors Ela Alyamac and Arda Perdecı will be flying to Fresno from Turkey to be the discussants at the screening of their movie.

Set against the backdrop of the First World War in a small Armenian village in Ottoman Anatolia, Lost Birds is a historical fairy tale told through the eyes of a young brother and sister left behind in the 1915 Armenian genocide.



Lost Birds is the first film made in Turkey to depict the Armenian Genocide of 1915. It was brought to the screen by the five years of work, persistence, and courage of filmmakers Aren Perdecı and Ela Alyamac, who share writing and directing credits. Lost Birds handles the task of telling a very dramatic story in a fairy tale narrative and this leads the audience to feel something magical yet so real at the same time.

Bedo and Maryam’s happy home life is torn apart when their grandfather is apprehended and taken away by soldiers. Now, forbidden to go outside by their mother, one morning, the two children sneak away to play in their secret cave. But, when they return, they find their home and the entire village empty. Together, with the wounded bird they have been nursing back to health, the children embark on a perilous journey to find their mother.

Admission is free and the event is open to the public. Free parking is available at any of the adjacent Fresno State parking lots (near the corner of Shaw and Woodrow Avenues).

For more information about the presentation visit www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies.

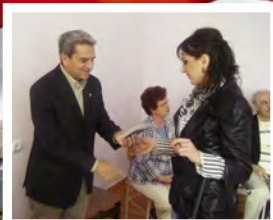


Sponsor A Teacher

In Armenia and Karabagh

17th Anniversary

Since its inception in 2001, TCA’s Sponsor a Teacher program has raised over \$607,000 and reached out to 6,027 teachers and school workers in Armenia & Karabagh.



✂

Yes, I want to sponsor teachers in Armenia and Karabagh to continue helping them to educate the children, our future leaders. I would like to have the teacher’s name and address.

\$200 \$400 \$600 Other \$ _____

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Address _____

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Make check payable to: Takayan Cultural Association – Memo: Sponsor a Teacher
Mail your check with this form to:

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5326 Valverde, Houston, TX 77056
Your donation is Tax Deductible.



ARTS & LIVING

Tickets Now Available for 'ArmComedy' Benefit Events in Boston, Los Angeles and San Francisco

BOSTON – Tickets are now available for the “ArmComedy” performances in Boston, Los Angeles and San Francisco hosted by the Armenia Tree Project (ATP) and Armenian Assembly of America.

Political satirists Narek Margaryan and Sergey Sargsyan, co-creators, co-writers and co-hosts of “ArmComedy,” will perform for the first time in the United States at Winchester Town Hall in the Boston area on Friday, April 28; at Stars on Brand in Glendale on Thursday, May 4; and in the San Francisco Bay area at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts on Saturday, May 6. The shows will be in English.

“ArmComedy” is the first satiric news show in Armenia. It has been dubbed as Armenia’s

on “ArmComedy.” Margaryan and Sargsyan originally reached out to Conan to request his infamous giant bobble head. During the episode, they took Conan on a journey through every essential Armenian experience, including barbecuing outdoors and playing backgammon.

Margaryan and Sargsyan write all their own material and have won awards for their work, such as the Yerevan Press Club Award for Reporting on the Elections through Satire, the Young Lawyers Association’s Best Reporting on Corruption Award and the ArmNet Award for Website with Best Content.

Margaryan is a comedian, screenwriter and passionate ice cream aficionado. In 2009, he co-created “ArmComedy,” giving a fresh, funny and controversial interpretation of current social and political developments. He holds a PhD in English and for several years lectured at the Yerevan State Brusov Linguistic University.

Sergey is a writer, comedian and co-creator of ArmComedy. His previous experience includes seven years of USAID-funded development projects such as elections administration with International Foundation for Electoral Systems, political parties programs with National Democratic Institute and USAID’s Anti-Corruption Project. Sargsyan holds a PhD in philology and currently lectures a course on public relations titled “Shaping Public Opinion in the Age of New Media” at the American University of Armenia.

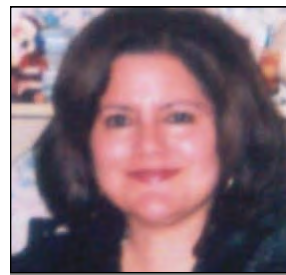
Tickets to the Boston show are available at www.armeniatree.org/armcomedy, Glendale tickets are available at www.itsmyseat.com/armcomedy and tickets to the Bay Area show are available at www.armeniatree.org/mvcpa.



Representatives of the Armenian Assembly and Armenia Tree Project with Conan O’Brien during his 2015 visit to Armenia; pictured left to right are Armenian Assembly of America Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian, Armenian Assembly Regional Director Arpi Vartanian, late night TV host Conan O’Brien and Armenian Assembly President and ATP Founder Carolyn Mugar

version of The Daily Show, featuring sharp political humor and wit. The show has entertained fans around the world, with almost 600 episodes since 2009. “ArmComedy” is an unconventional – sometimes bold – and always entertaining interpretation of current events.

During his visit to Armenia in 2015 with his assistant Sona Movsesian, comedian and late night show host Conan O’Brien guest-starred



Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

Lamb and Mint Meatball Soup

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 pounds ground lamb (ground turkey may be substituted for lamb)
8 cups low sodium chicken, beef or vegetable broth
1 medium onion, minced
1/2 green bell pepper, minced
1/2 cup fine bulgur
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1/4 cup each fresh mint and parsley, chopped
1 teaspoon sea or Kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon each black pepper and ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon allspice
Dash of cayenne pepper and paprika
Flour
1 cup low sodium tomato sauce
Juice of one lemon
Crushed dried mint
Chopped fresh parsley and green onions (garnish)

PREPARATION:

In a large bowl, mix together the lamb, onions, bell pepper, bulgur, garlic, tomato paste, mint, parsley, salt, pepper, cumin, allspice and cayenne pepper and paprika until well combined.

Wet hands and form into small meatballs (about the size of a quarter); coat with flour and set aside on a tray.

Bring the broth to a full boil in a large pot, add the tomato sauce and lemon juice, and then drop in the meatballs one at a time. Add a teaspoon or two of crushed dried mint to the broth, if desired.

Stir and cook meatballs for 10-12 minutes or until meatballs rise to the top of the broth. Serve the meatballs with the broth garnished with parsley and green onions. Top with a spoonful of yogurt or ricotta cheese, if desired.

Note: One cup of any small pasta may be added to the broth when cooking the meatballs. You can also add a handful of fresh chopped spinach or kale, if desired.

Serves 4-6.

*Christine’s recipes have been published in the Fresno Bee Newspaper, Sunset and Cooking Light Magazines and thearmeniankitchen.com.

Go to: <http://www.myrecipes.com/search/site/Datian> or <http://www.thearmeniankitchen.com/>
<<http://www.myrecipes.com/search/site/Datian>>

Armenian Language in the Digital Age: The Projects Funded

LISBON – The Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation launched an open call for proposals in 2016 pertaining to information technologies and the Armenian language. More specifically, it sought to fund three types of projects: to create a Western Armenian National Corpus (WANC), along with a universal Armenian spellchecker; to develop various digital and interactive resources for teaching purposes, specifically in the diasporan context; and to generate online content by encouraging literary production in both Western and Eastern Armenian.

In total 17 proposals from 13 entities were submitted and reviewed by an expert selection committee comprised of three members from the Armenian Communities Department and two independent experts from the Instituto Superior Técnico in Lisbon. The submitted initiatives were evaluated on multiple levels: technology, content, budget and human resources.

The selection process was demanding given the high quality of the proposals received. The expert committee had to make some difficult decisions. Unfortunately, only a handful of projects could be supported. The Armenian Communities Department would like to thank all the individuals and organizations who submitted projects.

Below are the four initiatives selected by the expert committee which are being funded by the Armenian Communities Department.

A. Spell-checker and Western Armenian Text Corpus - Support is being provided for the development of a universal Armenian spellchecking programme, in both Western and Eastern Armenian, which will work with all major com-

puter programmes and mobile apps. A Western Armenian text corpus will also be developed, modelled after current state-of-the-art corpora. Submitted jointly by HySpell and Nayiri.com.

B. Parastan.fr - A free online bilingual thematic dictionary (French-Western Armenian) designed to provide up-to-date lexical information on all domains. Support is being provided to include more words, expressions, a morphological engine and the possibility to filter the lexicon according to language level. Submitted by INALCO.

C. Calfa.fr - A free online digital Armenian platform focusing on classical Armenian. Support is being provided to increase the lexical database, create new features such as an automatic translator and, importantly, to develop an OCR specialized for Armenian manuscripts. Submitted by Chahan Vidal-Gorène (Association pour l’Arménien Classique).

D. “Young Mash project” - A graphic novel to be written with the input of young Armenians from around the world. Support is being provided for the creation and publication of an online serialized participative graphic novel which will recount the fictional youthful adventures of Mesrop Mashots, the inventor of the Armenian Alphabet in the 5th century AD. Submitted by Tumo Center for Creative Technologies.

The implementation of these projects started in late 2016. The current IT initiatives are in addition to the other language and technology related projects supported by the Armenian Communities Department during the past several years.

Saturday, June 3, 2017
at 8:00 PM
Symphony Hall, Boston

Friends of Armenian
Culture Society presents

66th Annual Armenian Night at the Pops

Featuring

the Boston debut of soprano **HASMIK TOROSYAN**
with **BOSTON POPS ORCHESTRA - KEITH LOCKHART, conductor**
plus....the spectacular **CIRQUE DE LA SYMPHONIE**

For tickets and more information, please visit facsboston.org





ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

CALIFORNIA

MAY 27 — Broadway in LA ... Armenian International Women's Association-L.A. Affiliate present an Evening with Andrea Martin hosted by Seth Rudetsky, at El Portal Theater, North Hollywood; one-night comedy show honoring AIWA's 25 plus years. 7:00 pm. Reception and Armenian tapas; 8:30 p.m. Performance, followed by Dessert and coffee with the stars. Tickets: \$150; sponsorships available. For info and reservations call (909)-625-3413 or (310) 472-2454.

APRIL 6 — "Conversations," with Terry George, Eric Esrailian and Stephen D. Smith on the movie "The Promise," 7:30 p.m., Director Terry George has represented the horror and humanity of genocide in films such as Hotel Rwanda and The Promise, his most recent feature about the Armenian Genocide. Producer and physician Esrailian and Smith, executive director of the Shoah Foundation, join George to discuss the challenges and politics of representing real-world atrocities within the constraints of the film medium. Moderated by journalist and filmmaker Carla Garapedian. Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles, Billy Wilder Theater. Early arrival is recommended. Free.

CONNECTICUT

APRIL 22 — Connecticut Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. Connecticut State Capitol, House Chamber. 11:00 a.m. Keynote speaker will be The Hon. John Marshall Evans, former U.S. Ambassador to Armenia. Reception in the Hall of Flags, following the commemoration.

FLORIDA

JANUARY 20-28, 2018 —Armenian Heritage Cruise XXI 2018, 8 night Caribbean Cruise aboard Royal Caribbean's Freedom of The Seas. Fort Lauderdale to: Labadee-Private beach Island / Puerto Rico / St. Kitts / St. Maarten. Cabin Rates from \$919 based on Double Occupancy, including Port Charges and ACAA registration fee. Government taxes of \$108.36 are additional. Armenian Entertainment, Armenian Cultural Presentations, Armenian Festival Day, Tavlou & Belote Tournaments and much more. Call TRAVELGROUP INTERNATIONAL @1- 561-447-0750 or 1-866-447-0750 Ext. 108. Ask for Kellie.

MASSACHUSETTS

APRIL 2 — Annual Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture, Sunday, 8 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Armenian Heritage Park's Abstract Sculpture, split rhomboid dodecahedron, is being reconfigured on April 2 (rain date: April 23) annually, in celebration of the immigrant experience, the Abstract Sculpture is reconfigured, symbolic of all who pulled away from their country of origin and came to these Massachusetts shores, establishing themselves in new and different ways. A crane lifts and pulls apart the two halves of the split rhomboid dodecahedron, made of steel and aluminum, to create a new sculptural shape.

APRIL 2 — The Armenian Museum of America Concert: April in Paris: Music for Cello and Piano by French and Armenian Composers, Sunday, 2 p.m. Featuring Kate Kayaian, cello, accompanied by Stephen Porter, piano Co-sponsored by the Composer's Union of Armenia. Funded by the Dadourian Foundation. Concert open to the public.

APRIL 4 — "Save the Tomb" Campaign Fundraising Reception. His Eminence Abp. Khajag Barsamian, Primate, presiding. 7 p.m. Sheraton Commander Hotel — 16 Garden St., Cambridge MA. Please RSVP at 617.923.8860 or info@stthagop.com. For full details about the Fundraising campaign to benefit the renovation of Christ's Tomb in Jerusalem, organized by the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, please visit www.savethetomb.org.

APRIL 5 — Annual Hrant Dink Memorial Peace and Justice Lecture at Harvard University. Presented by the Mahindra Humanities Center, Fong Auditorium, Boylston Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge. 6 p.m. "Minorities and Human Rights in Turkey," a discussion with Ayse Gul Altinay, professor of Anthropology, Sabanci University, Istanbul; Gerard Libaridian, Alex Manoogian Chari in Modern Armenian History, University of Michigan (retired); Etiyen Mahcupyan, journalist (Istanbul) and Malika Zeghal, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor in Contemporary Islamic Thought and Life (Harvard). Free and open to the public. Seating is limited.

APRIL 6 — "Changing the Conversation: One Woman at a Time," at Framingham State University, Forum, McCarthy Center, 5 p.m. Turkish Armenian Women's Alliance (TAWA), a grassroots effort to bring together a group of Armenian and Turkish Women in Boston to tackle the subject of the Armenian Genocide. Gonca Sonmez-Poole will screen videotaped interviews with TAWA participants as their "difficult dialogue" was taking place. For further info, contact Kaan Agartan at kagartan@framingham.edu

APRIL 15 — The Armenian Museum of America Film Screening: "The Destruction of Memory," co-sponsored by the Armenian Museum of America and the Harvard University Semitic Museum. 2 p.m. Film screening will be followed by a panel discussion with film director Tim Slade, Andras Riedlmayer of Harvard University, and Joseph Greene, deputy director and curator of the Semitic Museum. This is a free Museum event.

APRIL 17 — Monday, 7 p.m.; Panel discussion on Lighting, Climate Change and Other Exciting Scientific Challenges featuring Prof. Ashot Chilingarian, Director of the Yerevan Physics Institute and its Cosmic Ray Division (CRD), two experts from MIT, two from UNH and one from the CRD. To be held at MIT, 70 Memorial Drive, Building E51, Room 315. For more information contact Alisa Stepanian at asteanian@aol.com or 617-501-1215. Admission is free."

APRIL 20 — Thursday, 10 a.m., in front of the Peabody City Hall located at 24 Lowell St., a flag-raising ceremony will be held to commemorate the Armenian Genocide. Led by Mayor Edward A. Bettencourt and the family of late Mayor Peter Torigian. After the Armenian and American National Anthems, the ceremony will continue inside. The keynote speaker will be Ann Goolkasian O'Donnell. Her memoir, *Holding the Armenian Genocide Up to the Light*, appears in the spring issue of *American Ancestors Magazine*. Prayers will be led by Rev. Khachatur Kesablyn of Saints Vartanantz Armenian Apostolic Church of Chelmsford. All are invited.

APRIL 21 — Annual Armenian Genocide Commemoration at the Massachusetts State House at 10:30 a.m. Keynote speaker, musical program, reception to follow. Free transportation will be available from Watertown.

APRIL 22 — A Prayer Service for the Armenian Community. An Ecumenical Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, hosted by His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios and the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston. With the participation of His Eminence Abp. Khajag Barsamian — Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), His Eminence Abp. Oshagan Choloyan - Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Armenian Catholic Eparchy of the United States and Canada, and the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America. 2 p.m. Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral of New England. 514 Parker Street, Boston.

APRIL 22 — Annual Procession and Raising of the Armenian Flag at Lowell City Hall in commemoration of the 102nd anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Procession to be led by the Lowell Armenian-American Veterans Honor Guard. Participants should meet at the

corner of Merrimack and John Streets in Lowell at 9:30 a.m. Sponsored by the Armenian National Committee, Merrimack Valley (ANCMV) with the participation of all area Armenian Churches and Organizations.

APRIL 23 — 102nd Armenian Genocide Commemoration. Hosted by the Massachusetts Armenian Genocide Commemoration Committee. The program will focus on four pillars; Art, Service, Science, and Commerce. Open to the public. Armenian Heritage Park on the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy at 3 p.m. Guests will include Middlesex County Peter Koutoujian, editor and publisher Judith Saryan, and more. Performances by Sayat Nova Dance Company and violinist Sammy Andonian.

APRIL 23 — Former U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, John M. Evans, Author of *Truth Held Hostage*, will speak at Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 12:15 p.m., Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. For Feast of the Holy Martyrs of the Armenian Genocide, Holy Trinity Church is honored to have former Ambassador Evans whose ethics and principles enabled him to voice the words "Armenian Genocide." His book, *Truth Held Hostage*, is being hailed as the most important work about the Armenian Genocide by a U.S. diplomat since Ambassador Morgenthau's story in 1918. All welcome to attend. Complimentary light luncheon will be served. For further information, contact the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632.

APRIL 28 — ArmComedy benefit featuring the comedy duo of Narek Margaryan and Sergey Sargsyan, Winchester City Hall, 71 Mount Vernon St., Winchester, Co-hosted by Armenia Tree Project and Armenian Assembly of America. Reception 7 p.m., Showtime 8 p.m. Tickets are available online at www.ArmeniaTree.org/ArmComedy. First-ever U.S. performances in Boston (April 28), Glendale (May 4) and San Francisco (May 6).

APRIL 30 — The Armenian Museum of America Concert: Spring of Music Featuring Narine Ojakhyan, soprano; Thomas Shahbaghyan, violin; Levon Markosyan, cello; and Prof. Gregory Chavardian, piano Program of Armenian and Classical Music and Songs. Sunday, 2 p.m., co-sponsored by the Composer's Union of Armenia. Funded by the Dadourian Foundation. Open to the public.

APRIL 30 — Lunch with Boston Celtics' Legend M.L. Carr, 12:15 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 12:15 p.m., Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Sunday. The second in a series of events celebrating books and courage and legends, Boston Celtics' Legend M.L. Carr who will share his inspiring life story. All welcome to attend. For further information, contact the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632.

MAY 4 — Book presentation by Nora Nercessian of The City of Orphans, on Gyumri Near East Relief orphanage after WWI. Sponsored by the Daughters of Vartan, Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Tekeyan Cultural Association, Armenian International Women's Association and National Association for Armenian Studies and Research. 7 p.m. Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Complimentary admission.

MAY 6 — Celebrate Public Art! Park's Abstract Sculpture & Labyrinth during ArtWeek Boston. Join us on Saturday, 1:00 p.m. World Labyrinth Day: Walk as One in Peace & Harmony. At 12:45 pm, introduction to walking a labyrinth. 1:30 pm Reception to View the Abstract Sculpture. 2017 Configuration. Remarks: Jared Bowen WGBH Executive Arts Editor and Host, Open Studio. Tea & Desserts hosted by MEM Tea Imports & Eastern Lamejun Bakers

MAY 13 — Mother's Day Dance Featuring Tigran Asatryan & Band! To be held on Saturday, Hosted by The Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe ACYOA. Proceeds to benefit brand new Family & Life Center, 1280 Boston Rd, Haverhill, \$100 - VIP with Meet & Greet at 7

continued on next page

TIMES SQUARE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE COMMEMORATION | SUNDAY APRIL 23, 2pm



ARTS & LIVING

An Evening with Armenia's Most Celebrated Musicians Raises Funds for COAF



Armen Hyusunts (saxophone), Artyom Manukyan (cello), Vahagn Hayrapetyan (piano) and Joshua Davis (bass) starting off the evening (Victoria Arakelian photo)



Crowd pulling out their phones to share a once in a lifetime experience (Victoria Arakelian photo)

NEW YORK — Having played all over the world seven talented musicians came together on March 15 at Subrosa after one of the biggest snowstorms in the city's history to raise funds for Children of Armenia Fund (COAF). These musicians included the Jivan Gasparyan (duduk), Armen Hyusunts (saxophone), Artyom Manukyan (cello), Vahagn Hayrapetyan (piano), Vardan Ovsepian (piano), Joshua Davis (bass) and Karen Kocharyan (drums). Despite the freezing temperatures, the ambiance inside Subrosa was electric and energy was high as the musicians improvised between classical pieces, alternative, and Armenian eclectic music. All the proceeds from the event went to COAF programs which aimed at improving education, health and social well-being of Armenian children.



Karen Kocharyan's drum kit (Victoria Arakelian photo)



Armen Hyusunts (saxophone), Artyom Manukyan (cello), Vahagn Hayrapetyan (piano) and Joshua Davis (bass) starting off the evening (Victoria Arakelian photo)

from previous page

p.m., \$75 - General Mezze & Cash Bar, \$40, Students Under 24 - Standing Room. For reservations, please contact HyePointeACYOA@gmail.com or call Mike at 617-240-8266

MAY 15 — St. James Armenian Church of Watertown 18th Annual Open Golf Tournament. Monday, Oakley Country Club, Watertown. Register early.

MAY 19-20 — Armenian Memorial Church Fair, Friday 5-8 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m., kebab dinners served Friday and Saturday (starting at 11:30 am). For info: Armenian Memorial Church, 32 Bigelow Ave., Watertown 617-923-0498

MAY 25 — The Armenian Museum of America, Concert: John Hodian and Epiphany 3, Featuring new blends of Armenian music from touring family trio, John Hodian, Bet Williams and Jack Hodian. Thursday, at 8 p.m. The group will perform music blending ancient and modern cultures and musical styles. Funded by the Dadourian Foundation. Concert open to the public.

JUNE 9 — Let's Party! At the KITCHEN, Boston Food Market — Benefit for the Park's Care in partnership with the Trustees of Reservations, Boston Food Market, with chefs presenting signature dishes we love and the generosity of so many, all coming together at the KITCHEN to support the Armenian Heritage Park's Endowed Fund for Year Round Care. 7-10 p.m. Advance reservations required. Space is limited. To receive the e-invite, please email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

JUNE 17 — Society of Istanbul Armenian's of Boston will Honor Rev. Arakel Aljalian as the Father of the Year. Saturday, 6 p.m. Dinner at St. James Armenian Church Hall, Watertown. Donation \$50. For Tickets call Krikor Shaboian at 617-489-0346.

JUNE 19 — The Gregory Hintlian Memorial Golf Tournament sponsored by Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, at the Marlborough Country Club, 200 Concord Road, Marlborough. Monday. 9:30 a.m., registration; 11 a.m., "Shot Gun." All are invited for a day of

golf or just for dinner and a social evening. Details to follow. For further information, contact the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632.

NEW JERSEY

NOVEMBER 18 — Save the date. Gala banquet celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Tekeyan Cultural Association. At the Terrace at Biagios. Details will be forthcoming.

NEW YORK

APRIL 8 — The Near East Foundation will host the official Film Premiere of "They Shall Not Perish: The Story of Near East Relief." The film, produced by NEF Board Member Shant Mardirossian and award-winning producer, writer, and director George Billard, details the historic events that led to the Armenian Genocide and the consequent rescue that provided assistance to hundreds of thousands of displaced men, women, and children. The documentary makes extensive use of never-before-seen footage of orphans who were in Near East Relief's care. There will be an afternoon and evening showing, both followed by a panel discussion with notable documentary contributors. www.theyshallnotperish.com. The Times Center, 242 41st St. New York

APRIL 21 - Staged reading of DAYBREAK at Pan Asian Repertory Theatre, 520 8th Ave. betw. 36th & 37th Sts., New York, 3rd Floor, Bruce Mitchell Room, 7:30 PM. Armenian-American playwright Joyce Van Dyke's play about the repercussions of the Armenian genocide on two women friends (formerly titled DEPORTED / A DREAM PLAY), directed by Zoya Kachadurian. Free admission, limited seating. RSVP to info@panasianrep.org, or call 212-868-4030

MAY 21 — A classical concert dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Tekeyan Cultural Association. "The Armenian Spirit" at Alliance Francaise in New York City at 3pm. With Ani Kavafian, violin, Ani Kalayjian, cello and

Orion Weiss, piano.

JUNE 29 — The Freeport Memorial Library will have a lecture on the history of the Armenians, Thursday at 2 p.m. by Dr. Ronald Brown, professor of history and ethnic studies at Touro College and world religions at the Unification Theological Seminary in New York City. Free to the public. The library is located at 144 W Merrick Rd, Freeport, NY 11520, phone (516) 379-3274.

RHODE ISLAND

APRIL 22 — The Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Committee along with the Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence, will show the film, "Alter Ego" or "The Silence of a Priest." 6:30 p.m. The movie is in Armenian with English subtitles. Producer Vigen Chaldanian from Armenia, will be present. Free admission and refreshments will be served following the movie. The public is cordially invited to attend.

APRIL 23 — North Burial Ground, Providence. On the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the Dedication of the Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Monument, and the 102nd commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, the clergy and choirs from the Armenian Evangelical Church, Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church and Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church, will be present and well as federal, state and local officials to be part of the days program. 12:45 p.m. Guest speaker is Marc A. Mamigonian, NAASR's director of Academic Affairs. All are welcome to come and remember or Holy Martyrs and survivors of the 1915 Armenian Genocide.

APRIL 30 — Performance of the play "Women of Ararat" by Judith Boyajian Strang-Waldau based on her family's survival of the Armenian Genocide, at the Scottish Rite Auditorium, 2115 Broad St., Cranston. Sunday, 3 p.m. For tickets contact Dorothy Martiesian, 401-749-0269 or Naomi Thovmasian Marsh, 401-942-3886. Proceeds to benefit three Armenia-based organization helping women.

COMMENTARY

A 'Promise' Delivered

By Edmond Y. Azadian

While discussing the Armenian Genocide with a close associate of Kirk Kerkorian a few years before the magnate's death, I was told that he is not a person who deals with the past; instead, he is a man of the future. I was saddened to hear that comment, because I knew that only someone like Kerkorian could deliver our message to the world in a monumental way. It turned out, however, that the storm inherited from his ancestors was fermenting in his brain and eventually he was planning to bring a project to fruition about the subject.

The movie "The Promise" seems to be that message delivered into the future by Kerkorian posthumously.

While there is an overwhelming deluge of documents, films and scholarly books on the Jewish Holocaust, Armenians have to struggle for a sliver of news about the Genocide to catch world attention.

One reason, of course, is the fact that Hitler is not alive to deny the grisly crimes he committed against the Jewish people and the other is that the Jews did due diligence to get the message out to the world. The German state freely acknowledges its sins and has actively atoned for it since its defeat at the end of World War II.

In the Armenian case, Talaat Pasha may be dead, but his legacy is still alive in Turkey. The blow that he dealt to the Armenians was so devastating that they were not able to arise for 50 years after the Genocide to fully put into perspective what had happened to them and to tell their story to the world.

According to the Genocide scholar Taner Akçam, the Kemalists who came together to build the modern Republic of Turkey were the same Ittihadists that had organized and carried out the plan of genocide. Therefore, while enjoying the loot left behind by the deportations and mass murder, they realized it was an existential cause to deny the Genocide.

Even in the 1930s, when Turkey had not yet attained its international clout, the government was able to ban the movie version

ernment dreaded through commemorations.

As well, Pope Francis's visit to Armenia and his pronouncement recognizing the events for what they were at the Vatican were muted in the world press, not necessarily because of neglect but certainly by design.

The parallel context that the Turks have been weaving is revealed vividly when the movie "The Promise" is released next month, simultaneously with a Turkish-funded movie called "The Ottoman Lieutenant." In the latter film, within the context of a palpable romance, a subtle Turkish narrative is promoted in which yes, Armenians were slaughtered but because there was an insurrection in Van. No one will be sitting in the movie theaters to explain to the viewers that the insurrection was a result of the Genocide, not the cause, and that it was triggered by a need for self-defense.

The Turks realize that they cannot cover up the truth, because the documents are so overwhelming. But it is to their advantage to turn the issue into a controversy, planting a seed of doubt, to promote the presumption that there is "another side of the story." That is the intent of the "Lieutenant."

It is an enigma why Kerkorian did not produce the movie in his lifetime. Perhaps he was working behind the scenes to line up support. Even his towering munificence manifested in untraditional way while he was alive.

The achievement of this film is also a sad commentary about an oft-asked question: Why is it that "The Promise," the Dilijan International College, Tumo Center and IDEa Project are all achieved by visionary individuals and not by traditional organizations? The answer is that the framework of diasporan organizations is outmoded and they are not able to conceptualize such projects, let alone to achieve them. That is why they are being bypassed.

"The Promise," with a stellar cast and helmed by Terry George who directed "Hotel Rwanda," opens nationwide on April 21. Armenians in general and friends of truth and justice around the world are urged to support this movie. All proceeds from the box office are going to charity, to help Armenian causes around the

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based on Franz Werfel's book, *Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, that was going to be made in Hollywood, because Turkish leaders realized the propaganda value of the venture. Already, the novel itself had stirred so much awareness in the world public opinion since its publication in Austria. And ever since then, they have been vigilant about preventing any documentary or artistic representation of the Armenian Genocide in its proper context.

The 1978 movie "Midnight Express," helmed by British filmmaker Robert Parker, had nothing to do with the Genocide or for that matter with Armenians, but it brought unfavorable international attention on modern Turkey's medieval judicial system with horrifying jails and jailers.

Even today the issue of the Armenian Genocide has moved out of its historic venue into the public domain where the truth is tortured and denialism continues with a vengeance.

The fanfare around the anniversary of the Gallipoli defeat in 2015 was an effort to soften the blow of intense publicity regarding the centennial of the Armenian Genocide the Turkish gov-

world.

Survival Pictures, the studio releasing "The Promise," realized Kerkorian's dream in a monumental way, having no shortage of resources and in the process people heretofore unknown have become true heroes.

Dr. Eric Esrailian, previously a relatively unknown public figure in the Armenian community, has helped guide the film through its successful completion, with a true Armenian heart and a broad world view, and epic connections to Hollywood and beyond.

"The Promise' means so much personally," Esrailian has said. "The promise was from us to complete the film. The promise is for us to never forget and the promise is for us also a vow to do something so that it never happens again."

This message evolves from the specific to resonate universal truths.

It may well apply to the message of the movie delivered from the beyond to living humanity by Kerkorian himself.



COMMENTARY

Patriarchal Election Déjà vu in Turkey

The election process of a new Armenian Patriarch in Turkey faces the customary state-imposed restrictions, administrative hurdles and arbitrary treatment of the Armenian community. In recent weeks, the situation has been exacerbated by personality clashes and ambi-

By Hratch Tchilingirian

tions of the high ranking clergymen at the Patriarchate, who have turned a problem into a divisive major crisis.

The 556-year-old Patriarchate is one of the four Hierarchical Sees of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The problem facing the Armenian community started in July 2008 when the 52-year-old serving Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan was officially diagnosed with an incurable illness. By then he had been in a vegetative state for some time at the Surp Pirgic Hospital and remains so ever since.

In 2010 Archbishop Aram Ateshian was appointed Patriarchal Vicar with the consent of the Turkish government. This temporary arrangement until the election of a new patriarch turned into an indefinite status quo. The continued uncertainty without a clear sight of elections caused controversies and division within the community.

Under pressure and protests, in order to clear the path to organizing new elections, in October 2016 Patriarch Mesrob was officially declared “retired” by the Patriarchate’s Religious Council.

Archbishop Aram, who was supposed to head the election process, by seeking the government’s permission as a first step, continued to drag on the uncertain situation, which had left the community without a functioning patriarch for almost nine years.

In February of this year, the tensions and internal disagreements, both among the clergy and the laity, reached to a boiling point. Bishop Sahak Mashalian, the chairman of the Patriarchate’s Religious Council, resigned by publishing a fiery letter. He blamed Archbishop Ateshian and certain lay leaders of the Armenian community for the deepening stagnation of the Patriarchate and the community in general.

The highly explosive situation created by Mashalian’s resignation was defused through the mediation of the Catholicos of All Armenians who invited the three bishops of the Patriarchate to Echmiadzin for consultations and to jointly seek solution to the crisis.

Within days after their return from Echmiadzin, on 15 March, Archbishop Karekin Bekdjian – the most senior bishop of the Patriarchate and the serving Primate of the Armenian Church in Germany – was elected Locum Tenens (deghabah) by 2/3 votes of the Religious Council. According to the agreement reached in Echmidazin and in accordance to the rules and traditions of the Armenian Church, Archbishop Ateshian was to step down as Patriarchal Vicar immediately after Bekdjian’s election.

However, within minutes of the election of the Locum Tenens, Ateshian produced a letter from the Istanbul Governor’s Office which declared that the election was “not legally possible” and Ateshian remains to be recognized as the official Patriarchal Vicar by the government.

Many in the community, including two Armenian MPs in the Turkish parliament, consider the Istanbul Governor’s Office letter crude meddling and lacking any legal and procedural basis. Archbishop Ateshian and his small circle of supporters insist that without the government’s consent no election is valid. This has created a stalemate and tensions are high on all sides.

The Turkish government’s meddling in the process of election of the 85th Patriarch of Istanbul and All Turkey is inevitable, as in the past, but not decisive. The community has the ultimate say as it did nearly 20 years ago.

The last four patriarchal elections in 1950, 1961, 1990 and 1998 were carried out by official directives issued by successive Turkish governments. Since 1923, the government has used state discretion rather than church bylaws as the basis of patriarchal election. All four elections were fraught with government interference, procedural burdens imposed on the community and torturous recognition.

In 1998, the Turkish state refused to approve an election date for some five months, depriving the Armenian community the freedom and inherent right to vote for a new church leader.

Government interference in the election is not only about setting procedures.

During the last election almost 20 years ago, the Armenian community was informed through informal channels that between the two eligible candidates the Turkish state preferred the 72-year-old Archbishop Shahan Sivajian over the charismatic and US-educated Archbishop Mesrob Mutafyan, who was 42 years old at the time.

After the death of Patriarch Karekin Kazanjian (1990-1998), 45 representatives from 38 districts in Turkey had met at the Armenian Patriarchate in March 1998 and elected a 21-member Electoral Committee responsible for organizing the elections. One of the main tasks of such a committee is to negotiate with the Istanbul Governor’s Office for the state required permission to hold church elections.

On April 28, 1998, the Istanbul Governor’s Office ordered a halt to the plans without explanations until further notice. Nevertheless, the community went ahead with the election of a Locum Tenens (deghabah).

An old script is being staged with new actors today.

Similar to the scenario played out on March 15, in August 1998 Archbishop Mesrob Mutafyan was duly elected Locum Tenens, but the government refused to recognize him, arguing that under Turkish law the eldest and most senior cleric – Archbishop Sivajian at the time – must fill the interim post until a successor is elected.

Media outlets were used to put pressure on the community. The rightwing Turkish media launched a slander campaign against Mutafyan, accusing him of anti-Turkish activities. In one case, Mutafyan filed and won a lawsuit for libel against Turkiye newspaper.

The Patriarchate protested the state’s orders to no avail. On the contrary, the government responded with two more memos declaring Sivajian the only recognized interim leader and warning that any resistance to this decision would be prosecuted under the law.

After months of state interference and delays, the Governor of Istanbul – having received the mandatory approval of the Council of Ministers – permitted the 60,000-strong Armenian community in Turkey to proceed with the election on October 14, 1997.

The General Assembly of the Armenian Church Community – made of 10 clergymen and 79 lay delegates representing 15,811 church members – elected Archbishop Mesrob Mutafyan as the 84th Patriarch of Istanbul and All of Turkey. The other candidate, Archbishop Sivajian, whose candidacy was supported by Turkish authorities, received 15 votes.

It is not a secret that the government maintains strict restrictions on the Armenian Church’s activities, as it does on all Christian churches in Turkey. After the coup in 1960, the government dismantled the Armenian Community Central Council, the highest lay body in Turkey, which worked for the interests of the community alongside the Patriarchate. In December 1997, the government ordered the Patriarchate to disband its council of lay advisors and forbade lay delegates from participating in the election for a new Catholicos in Echmiadzin in 1995. The list of restrictions is long and far reaching. In 1971, the state ordered the closure of the Holy Cross Armenian Seminary, which deprived the Patriarchate of training future priests and church workers.

For 94 years since the founding of the Turkish Republic, the state has persistently curtailed, tightly controlled and closely monitored all the significant rights of the Armenian community that are essential to the viability of their collective life. More than any other area, elections and administration of churches and charities have been most torturous and energy-sapping for the declining Armenian community in Turkey.

The election of the 85th Patriarch of Armenians in Turkey will, no doubt, be held true to precedents established by the state. But, in the end, as in previous elections, the Armenian community shall have the final word as to who will lead the historic See of the Patriarchate of Constantinople – or per Turkish state’s sanctioned title, the “Patriarchate of Istanbul and All Turkey.”

(For a deeper study of Armenians in Turkey, see Hratch Tchilingirian’s “The Other Citizens.” in Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies, Vol. 25, 2016: 123-155. He is an Associate Faculty member at the, Oriental Institute Oxford University.)

Turkey Against Everyone Else

By Miran P. Sarkissian

ASIDE from the continuing challenges in the Aegean Sea and Cyprus, the new “Sultan” of Ankara seems to now be positioning himself against the whole world in his effort to create the national paroxysm necessary for him to win the April 16th referendum. This at a point in time when all polls (if they are to be believed) show that the result may be very much on the balance. This situation has led the Council of Europe to issue a warning for the first time ever that, if the constitutional changes proposed by the referendum are approved, then Turkey will descend to ‘an autocratic and personal cult regime’ which will result to the basic question whether this country can still maintain its status as a candidate for membership in the European Union.

All signs indicate, however, that Recep Tayyip Erdogan has already discounted that possibility now, throwing his weight in favor of Turkey’s development as a regional Islamic superpower. That was the reason he did not hesitate to openly clash, throwing serious accusations, not only against Germany, which he accused of Nazi practices (obviously disregarding his very own governing methods), but also against Austria and last week Holland, countries which refused to allow Turkish ministers conduct pre-referendum speeches and gatherings for the Turkish communities on their soil. The problem, however, is that these countries, due to the critical role played by Turkey in the refugee situation, refuse to come to an altogether direct opposition with Turkey in order to avoid uncontrollable refugee crossings into their countries, events already resulting in the growth of extreme rightist and ethnocentric political parties. Ankara knows this and that is why she feels strong, believing that Turkey will, in the end, impose her views with threats.

On the other side of the Atlantic from Europe, however, there are widening differences between Turkey and the USA, although at the beginning it looked like Erdogan and Trump would reach some kind of an agreement. The basic reason for this difference between the two is again the Kurdish question as the Turks deny participation of Syrian Kurds (considering them terrorists) in the retaking of Rakka and the jihadists. The US, on the other side, insist on the Kurdish participation due to their superior fighting capabilities in the rough terrain of the region. What Turkey is afraid of is that if the Kurds are allowed to act freely, then they will be successful in attaining a large autonomous area and have it under their control being situated in the southern borders of Turkey. In addition, another wound was rendered to the Turks when they also lost the services of their most ardent supporter in General Flynn who is currently under investigation for not having disclosed his role as a foreign lobbyist for Turkey and the 500,000 dollars he had received from the Turkish government, through a Turkish businessman, to actually promote Turkish interests in Washington.

And the dance continues!

(Miran P. Sarkissian is a global consultant in Detroit, Brussels and Athens.)

Azerbaijan’s Lost Transparency

Can a petrostate with a rent-seeking elite ever reform itself – or at least clean up its business practices?

That the answer could be “yes” was the idea that drove the founders of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in 2003. The initiative is a voluntary coalition of countries with energy- and mineral-extraction industries that pledge to make their transactions and sources of wealth transparent. The project took off and won support from international financing organizations, and at the start of 2017, the EITI had 51 implementing member countries.

As of March 9, it has one less. Azerbaijan, the Caspian petrostate on the eastern edge of Europe, announced it was quitting EITI after being suspended from the organization. The announcement came just as the groundwork was being completed for an expanded network of three pipelines scheduled to take Azerbaijani gas to

European markets by 2020.

The EITI’s diagram of how an oil state should manage its revenues responsibly is a triangle with three sides: companies, governments, and civil society. At its March meeting in Bogotá, Colombia, the EITI declared that the Azerbaijani government was being suspended “because the country lacks an enabling environment for civil society.”

The Azerbaijanis probably miscalculated. They had already been downgraded from a full member of the EITI to candidate status in 2015, but they might have assumed that once a country is inside a respectable international organization, no one will kick it out—as has been the case for Azerbaijan and several other states in the Council of Europe. The government passed legislation in January 2017 making NGO registration easier. But it has not restored freedoms to civil society, having silenced or exiled almost all independent NGOs, media organizations, and critics of the government in the last few years.

see TRANSPARENCY, page 20



Struggle for Genocide Monument in Switzerland Seems at an End

By **Fatih Gökhan Diler**

GENEVA, Switzerland (*Agos*) – A Swiss court on March 22 dismissed the last objections concerning an Armenian Genocide monument that is planned to be built there. This ruling can be appealed until April 19. Approved by Geneva City Council in 2008, the project has changed location two times and been postponed due to the pressure from the Turkish Foreign Ministry and Turkish organizations in Switzerland.

The final location was determined as Trembley Park in Geneva. The court dismissed the objection of the locals on the ground that they reside in a place far away from the park.

Legal representative of the objecting party Yves Nidegger is a deputy from the Democratic Union of the Center. He also worked as the legal adviser to the Federation of Turkish Associations of Western Switzerland and represented Federation of Turkish Associations of Western Switzerland in *Perinçek v. Switzerland* case in the European Court of Human Rights.

The art project, titled “Streetlights of Memory,” will honor the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide, had gotten the necessary permissions from the city council in 2008. Since then, the project has been

causing tension between Turkey and Switzerland.

There are two main issues concerning the monument that disturbed Turkey. First of all, it is designed to commemorate the victims of the Armenian Genocide, though it is not a “genocide monument” per se. The second concern is about the location, which is very close to the United Nations center in Geneva. This symbolic location disturbed Turkey. In this regard, the pressure from Turkey has gradually increased. Speaking to *Agos* back in 2014, Stefan Kristensen, coordinator of the project said, “At first, led by Celal Bayar, the eponymous grandson of the infamous Celal Bayar, Turkish organizations in Switzerland began to apply pressure against the project.” Then, Turkey started to use its political and economic leverages in its negotiations with Switzerland. As a result, Didier Burkhalter, Foreign Minister and President of the Swiss Confederation, sent a letter to the Geneva Canton recommending that the authority “refuses to grant a building permit”.



A rendering of the project

Though the letter was a “recommendation”, a new location for the monument was sought. The final location was determined as the northern part of Trembley Park in Saint-Antoine.

Designed by Parisian Armenian artist Melik Ohanian, “Streetlights of Memory” consists of nine streetlights in a single place. The audience starts to read from the below. Some streetlights have more than one posts.

New Armenian Ambassador Presents Credentials to Argentine President

BUEOS AIRES (Agencia Prensa Armenia) – The new Armenian ambassador to Argentina, Ester Mkrtumyan, presented today her credentials to President Mauricio Macri at Casa Rosada. Later, Mkrtumyan deposited a wreath in the monument to General Jose de San Martin at a ceremony attended by Chancellor Susana Malcorra and representatives of the institutions of the Armenian com-

munity in Argentina.

“In general terms, the work of the Embassy must continue in the sense of strengthening the mutual cooperation developed in the past. That is to say, in the political sphere, everything we have achieved so far must continue in the same way,” said Mkrtumyan to Prensa Armenia. “We want to carry out projects in the area of agriculture, because Argentina is a country that has great potential and would open a wide field for cooperation with Armenia.”

Mkrtumyan was named to the post in February, after working as a consul at the Armenian Embassy there.

Azerbaijan’s Lost Transparency

TRANSPARENCY, from page 19

In January, the EITI issue was raised by someone with a very personal stake in its outcome, political prisoner Ilgar Mammadov. Mammadov is the head of REAL, a pro-Western political party. He was arrested on dubious charges in 2013 a few months ahead of the last presidential election and is now serving a seven-year jail sentence. His January public letter, in which he called himself “an inmate of the Southern Gas Corridor,” a reference to the trio of pipelines from the Caspian to Europe, called on international investors to make their financing of Azerbaijani energy projects contingent on human rights.

Azerbaijan’s rulers could have ordered the freeing of Mammadov – as demanded by the European Court of Human Rights – and taken other steps to win compliance with the EITI and a cleaner image. That the country’s leaders did not do so shows how they perceive the current domestic and international environment.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev appears to believe total political control is the answer to burgeoning socioeconomic discontent in the form of a falling currency and rising prices. In February, the president announced that his wife, Mehriban Aliyeva, whose Pashayev family constitutes the most powerful network in the country, was becoming the country’s first vice president – a move that eliminated any lingering illusions that the country was an electoral democracy rather than a family dynasty.

In this context, shutting down all public debate evidently appeared more attractive to Baku than EITI membership. The Azerbaijani government seems to believe it can avoid getting hurt by EITI suspension. This is chiefly because almost all of the international financing for its first two gas pipeline projects – expansion of the South Caucasus Pipeline and of the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline in Turkey – is almost complete. The Greece-Italy Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) project also looks fairly secure, as long as a deal is made to guarantee the future of some ancient olive groves in southern Italy.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which is one of the funders of TAP, had warned in 2016 that “the EITI is a bellwether mark that we look at very closely.” But according to a source I spoke to, the sum the bank is contributing to the pipeline is relatively small compared with the overall price tag of more than \$40 billion for Azerbaijan’s Southern Gas Corridor, and the EBRD is equivocal about whether to suspend its funding.

Instead, the financing is more likely to be postponed or reduced.

Azerbaijan’s EITI suspension hurts mainly the country’s international brand and image as a reliable place to invest. Here, too, the calculation in Baku may be that Azerbaijan can weather this storm and that the international context has changed in its favor since the election of U.S. President Donald Trump, who has also done business in Azerbaijan.

Amid all the confusing foreign policy signals from the Trump administration, one message has been sent out loud and clear: strong support for big oil, beginning with the appointment of a career oilman, Rex Tillerson, as US secretary of state.

In February, the Trump administration repealed the hard-won Cardin-Lugar amendment, which required oil, gas, and mining companies to disclose payments above \$100,000 to foreign governments – essentially preventing energy companies from doing dubious business with foreign petro-elites. It is a heavy blow to the effort of building an international culture of transparency, as envisaged by the EITI. The Azerbaijanis will have noted this US move with approval and may believe that in this new context, the reputational damage they suffer from pulling out of the EITI will not be so severe.

At the moment, some of the unhappiest figures in this episode are Azerbaijani civil society activists who had lobbied for their government to make reforms, only to see it duck the issue by leaving the EITI altogether. Gubad Ibadoglu, a leading civil-society expert who had worked for many years to get Azerbaijan to live up to its EITI commitments, told me, “Unfortunately, Azerbaijan took a path in solving this problem by totally avoiding it.”

If this is to change, it will be primarily up to the EU, which will have a formal energy relationship with Azerbaijan when it starts to import gas from the country in 2020. There is an unresolved debate in Brussels as to whether to treat Azerbaijan as an autocracy that is a purely commercial partner—a Saudi Arabia on the Caspian—or to take seriously Baku’s membership of European organizations and use normative instruments to nudge it toward allowing some freedoms. An Azerbaijan that has shed the commitments to transparency it made in the EITI is a more difficult and unpredictable partner for Europe.

(Thomas de Waal De Waal is a senior fellow with Carnegie Europe, specializing in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region. This analysis originally was published in CarnegieEurope.eu)



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