

THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

Volume LXXXVII, NO. 39, Issue 4483

\$ 2.00

The First English Language Armenian Weekly in the United States Since 1932



OSCAR ISAAC CHARLOTTE LE BON CHRISTIAN BALE
THE PROMISE
IN THEATERS APRIL 21

Empires fall. Love survives.

'The Promise' Opens Across US and Canada on April 21

LOS ANGELES — For the first time, a big budget, wide-release feature film — complete with A-list, Hollywood celebrities and a renowned, Academy Award-winning director — will depict the Armenian Genocide. This monumental film, "The Promise," will be released in mainstream theaters across the United States and Canada on April 21, marking a major triumph for the Armenian community. Due to the exceptional caliber of the film, it will not be screened privately at community events. Instead, groups are strongly encouraged to go en masse to their local theaters to support the film and help it reach the highest possible box-office sales. For exact dates of the film's international release, please see the end of this release and continue to check social media.



Christian Bale as Chris Myers and Charlotte Le Bon as Ana Khesarian

All Armenians and non-Armenians are urged to support the grassroots efforts leading up to the premiere of the film to ensure its success and encourage the film industry to produce more films about Armenian history. (1) Bring friends and family to the film during its opening weekend. (2) Spread the word about The Promise on social media with the hashtags #KeepThePromise and see PROMISE, page 17

Bipartisan Congressional Group Urges Trump to Affirm Armenian Genocide

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan letter signed by 84 Members of Congress was sent to President Donald Trump urging him to affirm the Armenian Genocide, reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly). Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Representative Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) spearheaded the letter asking the White House to honor the United States' historic leadership in defending human rights and to properly characterize the events of 1915 as a genocide in this year's presidential statement on April 24.

"More than 100 years have passed since the start of the Armenian Genocide and the time is long overdue to acknowledge the atrocities committed against the Armenian people for exactly what they were - genocide,"

—Representative Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ)

The letter to President Trump states: "In leading an honest and accurate American remembrance of this known case of see AFFIRM, page 20

Armenian Assembly, Members of Congress Commemorate Armenian Genocide

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America joined the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, along with the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia, the Artsakh Representation office and the Armenian National Committee of America for the annual commemoration of the Armenian Genocide on Capitol Hill.

see COMMEMORATION, page 10



Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) and Armenian Assembly Board Member Annie Totah

Minorities, Human Rights Discussed at Dink Program

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The third annual Hrant Dink Memorial Peace and Justice Lecture took place on April 5 on the topic of minorities and human rights in Turkey. The panel discussion, sponsored by the Mahindra Humanities Center at Harvard University, featured panelists Ayse Gul Altinay, Gerard Libaridian and Etyen Mahçupyan, with moderator Malika Zeghal.

The three panelists brought very different sensibilities and viewpoints to the discussion.

Altinay, who is a professor of anthropology at Sabancı University, discussed her personal journey growing up knowing nothing about the Armenian Genocide to her later collaboration with Fethiye Çetin on *The Grandchildren: The Hidden Legacy of "Lost" Armenians in Turkey*, which was published in 2014.

Altinay spoke about her early interest in studying the tendency toward militarization in Turkish culture. Her first book, *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender and Education*, had only one reference to the Armenian Genocide. It was a footnote and the phrase itself was put in



From left, Ayse Gul Altinay, Gerard Libaridian, Etyen Mahçupyan and Malika Zeghal

quotation marks. She expressed shame and blamed herself for her lack of curiosity in investigating what the real story was.

In effect, she said, "I was contributing to see TRIBUTE, page 8

NEWS IN BRIEF

Catholicos, President Offer Condolences to Copts in Egypt

YEREVAN — On April 9, Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, sent a letter to Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark and leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria; following the Palm Sunday attack on the St. George's Coptic Church in Tanta, Egypt, and the St. Mark's Coptic Church in Alexandria, Egypt in which many worshippers were killed or wounded.

"At this difficult time, our thoughts and prayers are with the families and with you," said the Pontiff, condemning all acts of terrorism.

President Serzh Sargsyan offered his condolences to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi over the deadly blasts.

"The Republic of Armenia strongly condemns these inhumane acts and reaffirms its solidarity to fight against international terrorism. At this difficult time for Egypt I express my deepest condolences to you," Sargsyan wrote.

Lapshin Appeals Extended Incarceration

BAKU (Armenpress) — Russian-Israeli logger Alexander Lapshin has appealed the decision of Baku Nasimi District Court on prolonging his incarceration for another three months, Lapshin's lawyer told the Azerbaijani Trend agency.

The decision on April 7 prolonged the incarceration of Lapshin, who was detained in Belarus on December 16, 2016 for a further three months.

Lapshin faces up to five years' imprisonment in Azerbaijan, under charges of "public calls against the state" and "unauthorized crossing of borders" for visiting Artsakh.

Lapshin was extradited from Belarus to Azerbaijan on February 7. He has been placed in an isolation cell.

Genocide Museum Site Sold for \$57 Million

WASHINGTON — The former National Bank of Washington building, which for many years had been the proposed site of a museum dedicated to the Armenian Genocide, was sold last week by the Cafesjian Family Foundation for \$57 million to Lincoln Property Co.

The building will be turned into a glittering office building.

The partners plan to start work on the trophy office development in the fourth quarter of 2017, Lincoln Property said in a release. The new building, to be branded as 699 Fourteenth, is slated for completion in the fourth quarter of 2019.

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A Few Good Men

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News From Armenia

Youth Orchestra to Tour Poland

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – On April 11 the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia was scheduled to perform within the framework of the Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival in Poland.

Headed by conductor Sergey Smbatyan the Youth Orchestra will present Symphonic Images by Ghazaros Sarian, Concerto-Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra by Aram Khachaturian (soloist - Narek Hakhnazaryan on cello), Scheherazade by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (soloist Jaroslaw Nadrzycki on violin).

The concert devoted to the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Poland and the 650th anniversary of Armenian community in Poland will take place at Warsaw Philharmonic Concert Hall.

The Youth Orchestra presented the same program on April 12 in Lublin.

Mongolian Ambassador Presents Credentials

YEREVAN – Ambassador of Mongolia to Armenia (residence in Moscow) Banzragch Delgermaa presented her credentials to President Serzh Sargsyan this week. Delgermaa underscored that she was proud to be Mongolia's first ambassador to Armenia.

Sargsyan congratulated Delgermaa on her appointment, noting that Armenia attaches great importance to the development of the relations with the countries of the Asian region and expressed hope for closer Armenian-Mongolian interstate relations.

Delgermaa thanked the president and assured him that during her tenure she would do her best to re-establish the traditionally good relations between Armenia and Mongolia and to find new avenues for the development of cooperation in the mutually beneficial trade, economic, humanitarian, and other areas.

The two countries established diplomatic relations 25 years ago.

EU Gives Large Grant for Civil Society Cultivation

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – This week, the European Union (EU) Ambassador to Armenia Piotr Switalski announced the release of a 1.5 million euro grant aimed at reinforcing civil society in Armenia and to provide Civil Society Organizations with alternative sources of financing. At the same time the EU is looking for innovative projects that will make Armenia healthier, safer, cleaner and more sustainable.

He noted: “We believe that the engagement of citizens is key in achieving social and behavioral changes related to our shared values. For this reason, the EU will also support, under this call, information campaigns run by Civil Society Organization that aim at increasing public accountability while increasing the engagement of citizens.”

The call for proposals has objectives to finance a number of Civil Society Organizations aimed at increasing the role of civil society, promoting cooperation between EU and Armenia.

Flight between Armenia, Lebanon Established

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – Armenia Airline has officially launched direct flights between Yerevan and Beirut. Representatives of both countries say the event is of landmark importance for the development of bilateral relations.

The inaugural flight was carried out on April 10 with 80 passengers on board, 90 passengers arrived in Yerevan on the return flight.

“The airline will operate flights once a week, and will increase the number to four in summer,” said Robert Oganessian, director general of Armenia Airline.

The demand for the flight is high, considering that there are more than 150,000 Armenians in Lebanon.

The plane was welcomed in Beirut by Lebanon's Tourism Minister Avedis Guidanian and Armenia's Ambassador to Lebanon Samvel Mktchyan.



Marguerite Barankitse's stamp

Armenia's New Stamp Features Marguerite Barankitse

YEREVAN – A new international postage stamp will be issued in May by Haypost, Armenia's national postal operator, in cooperation with the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, and it will feature the image of Marguerite Barankitse, the inaugural Aurora Prize laureate. The release of the stamp underwent the mandated approval process by the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technologies of the Republic of Armenia. The release and First day of issue ceremony will be part of the 2017 Aurora Prize special events.

The Aurora stamp is also a fundraising stamp. Attached to the first-class stamp, valued at 350 Armenian drams, is a donation coupon for 150 drams. Together, the 500 drams are equal to approximately US \$1. Haypost will transfer the 150-dram donation value to the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. This enables anyone to donate easily to the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative.

“We founded the Aurora Initiative specifically in appreciation of those who risked offering help to Armenian genocide survivors, and we wanted to express that gratitude by continuing to do good, by empowering modern-day saviors so that they, too, can offer life and hope to those in urgent need of basic humanitarian aid. That is our way of saying these victims are now saviors. This goes beyond just remembering

and actually puts gratitude in action. Each Aurora project, including the Maggy stamp and the accompanying donation opportunity, are ways of broadening the Aurora community, expressing gratitude and continuing the cycle of giving,” said Aurora Humanitarian Initiative co-founder Ruben Vardanyan.

“Haypost takes seriously its privileged position to transform the use of stamps into an opportunity to share the Armenian culture and history and important messages about the world. Having Aurora's Maggy on an Armenian postage stamp is a very special way of telling the world that Armenians embrace our common humanity. A stamp takes that message around the globe,” said Juan Pablo Gechidjian, Managing Director of HayPost Trust Management B.V.

Barankitse, the founder of Maison Shalom and REMA hospital, received the Aurora Prize for the exceptional impact of her actions on preserving lives during the years of civil war in Burundi. To date, she has saved 30 thousand children and offered them shelter and care.

“It is humbling for me to get such a recognition but it is also a great encouragement that love will always prevail over hate and evil. I believe it will raise awareness of what the Aurora Prize stands for: awakening humanity

to recognize women and men who have made an exceptional impact in advancing humanitarian causes,” said Marguerite Barankitse.

The illustrator is Alla Mingyalova, a member of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative team. It will be issued with circulation of 40,000 copies.

Marguerite Barankitse will be in Armenia to attend the second annual Aurora Prize events and the issuing of the stamp will take place during her stay.

The 2017 Aurora Prize finalists will be announced on April 24, 2017, the annual day of remembrance for victims of the Armenian Genocide. One of these finalists will then be named as the 2017 Aurora Prize Laureate at a special ceremony on May 28, 2017, in Yerevan, Armenia. During the month between April 24 and May 28, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative will organize a program of global activities to profile the inspirational stories of the 2017 finalists, as well as broader humanitarian endeavors.

The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative is represented by three organizations – Aurora Humanitarian Initiative Foundation, Inc. (New York, USA), the 100 Lives Foundation (Geneva, Switzerland) and the IDEa Foundation (Yerevan, Armenia).

Further information is available at www.auroraprize.com

EU Expects 'Deep Reforms' in Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The European Union stands ready to help Armenia's government implement significant reforms following this month's parliamentary elections, a senior EU diplomat said on Monday.

Piotr Switalski, the head of the EU Delegation in Yerevan, declined to comment on the official results of the April 2 elections that gave victory to the ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK).

“I was hoping that during the election campaign I will hear interesting ideas on how to reform the education system in Armenia,” Switalski told news conference. “I didn't. But it's never too late.”

“Now I am hearing from all sides that Armenia is entering a period of deep and comprehensive reforms. The country's economy and governance need to undergo serious reforms. We are ready to assist Armenians in conducting deep reforms,” he said. The reforms should include a tougher fight against corruption, added the diplomat.

The EU cautiously praised last week the conduct of the Armenian elections, while echoing the findings of around 300 European monitors deployed in the country. The OSCE-led monitoring mission reported “credible information about vote-buying” and voter intimidation.

“The election result nevertheless reflects the overall will of the Armenian people,” a spokesperson for Federica Mogherini, the EU foreign policy chief, said in an April 4 statement.

The statement insisted that electronic equipment installed in Armenia's polling stations prevented other, more serious irregularities such as multiple voting. The EU allocated more than \$7 million for the purchase of that equipment earlier this year.

Mogherini's office also said the EU will work closely with Armenia's “democratically elected new parliament and government” in an effort to “strengthen our political dialogue and continue our support to economic and social reform.” It cited the EU-Armenia

Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) which was initiated in Yerevan two weeks before the elections.

Echoing a statement by President Serzh Sargsyan, Switalski said the agreement is likely to be signed in November. Armenia and the EU will also finalize two other cooperation agreements this summer, added the envoy.

The CEPA is a less ambitious alternative to an Association Agreement negotiated by Armenian and EU officials in the summer of 2013. Sargsyan scuttled that deal with his unexpected decision in September 2013 to make Armenia part of the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

Switalski addressed the press as he announced the release of 1.5 million euros (\$1.6) in fresh EU grants to Armenian non-governmental organizations. He said the recipients of the funding will monitor the government to gauge the efficiency of its use of economic aid provided by the EU.



ARMENIA

New Yazidi Temple in Yerevan to Open This Year

YEREVAN (AFP) – A gleaming white structure topped with seven domes, set to be the world's biggest Yazidi temple, is being built in a tiny village in Armenia.

Long persecuted, most recently by Islamic jihadists in Iraq, the Kurdish-speaking, religious minority hopes the new temple will prove a symbol of strength as it tries to preserve its unique blend of faiths.

Yazidis, adherents of an ancient religion rooted in Zoroastrianism, number around 35,000 in Armenia today but currently have just one tiny temple in the Caucasus country.

The new edifice, called Quba Mere Diwane, is being constructed in Aknalich, a village 35 kilometers (22 miles) from, thanks to funding by a wealthy Moscow-based Yazidi businessman Mirza Sloyan, who was born nearby.

Aknalich is home to 150 Yazidis, as well as the existing temple, built in 2012 which only holds up to 30 people.

Created from granite and marble, the new 25-metre-high (82-foot) structure will include a large prayer hall, religious school and museum. Its seven domes represent seven angels revered by the Yazidis.

Of the world's 1.5 million Yazidis, the largest community is in Iraq where they have long been one of the country's most vulnerable minorities. Persecution by Saddam Hussein forced thousands of families to flee.

In August 2014, Yazidis were brutally targeted by Islamic State jihadists when their bastion Sinjar in northwestern Iraq was seized. They suffered crimes which the United Nations has described as genocide.

"We suffered terrible losses in Sinjar and are extremely depressed, but this temple gives us a glimmer of hope for revival," said Sheikh Hasan Hasanya, the spiritual leader of the Armenian Yazidis.

"If we can build such a splendid temple, that means Yazidis withstood, they didn't give up," he told AFP by telephone.

The country's largest minority group, Yazidis are well integrated into Armenian society, enjoy freedom of religious belief, and publish Yazidi-language newspapers and textbooks.

But widespread poverty and unemployment have sent a wave of migrants to Europe, Russia and the United States in search of work.

"I hope that the new temple will motivate my children – who are living in Europe – to come back to Aknalich, remind them that they are Yazidis," said local resident Misha Davrshyan.

Yazidis worship one God, who, they believe, created the world and entrusted it to seven Holy Beings, the most important of which is



A worshipper at the small Yazidi temple in Yerevan

Melek Taus, or Peacock Angel.

Their unique beliefs – which over time integrated elements of Judaism, Christianity and Islam – have often been misconstrued as satanic.

Orthodox Muslims consider the peacock a demon figure and refer to Yazidis as devil-worshippers.

Fearing assimilation, Yazidis discourage marriage outside the community and even across their caste system, and strictly follow traditional customs – some refrain from eating lettuce

or wearing the color blue.

"We have no state and, as a vulnerable minority, we risk imminent assimilation if we stop protecting our traditions," said Hasanyan.

He said he hoped that the new temple, expected to open this year, "will become a major spiritual center for Yazidi pilgrims from all over the world."

"There is an old Yazidi prayer asking God to give peace and happiness first to the world's other nations and then to our tormented people," he said.

School Chiefs Sue Civic Group Over Pre-Election Scandal

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The directors of 30 public schools and kindergartens have sued an Armenian civil society group that tricked them into confessing that they told their staffs and children's parents to vote for the ruling Republican Party (HHK) in this month's parliamentary elections.

They are seeking a formal apology and a total of 60 million drams (\$124,000) in damages for the scandalous revelations which they say compromised their "honor and dignity."

The Union of Informed Citizens (UIC) revealed late last month that its activists posing as HHK representatives telephoned 136 schools and kindergarten chiefs across Armenia. It said 114 of them admitted drawing up lists of children's parents as well as schoolteachers and kindergarten staff who pledged support for the HHK in the April 2 polls.

The UIC said the lists were submitted to local government bodies or HHK campaign offices. It also publicized audio of those phone conversations.

Armenian opposition forces portrayed the revelations as further proof of their allegations of HHK foul play in the parliamentary race. Some of them demanded that the Central Election Commission (CEC) seek a court ruling that would disqualify the HHK from the race. The CEC rejected those demands.

The HHK admitted that many school principals are campaigning for its election victory. But it claimed that they are doing so "beyond their work hours and work duties."

An HHK deputy chairman, Armen Ashotian, approved of the lawsuit when he spoke to RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am) on Tuesday.

Harutiun Harutiunian, a lawyer representing the plaintiffs, claimed that the UIC revelations amounted to defamation of character. "My clients unequivocally assert that they did not abuse administrative resources," he said.

Daniel Ioannisian, an UIC activist, countered that his civic group accused the ruling party, rather than the principals, of such abuses. "Let the Republican Party sue us and say that it didn't abuse administrative resources," he said. "In that case, we would have something to discuss."

"We didn't say that the principals are abusing administrative resources," Ioannisian said. "We only presented facts and evaluated the whole thing."

The activist also claimed that the legal action was orchestrated by the HHK leadership in retaliation against the embarrassing revelations. It is aimed at restricting freedom of expression in Armenia, he said.

In a preliminary report released on April 3, European election observers mentioned the UIC recordings in the context of "credible reports of pressure and intimidation on voters, especially on private and public sector employees."

Culture Ministry Launches Contest to Rent Ancient Caves to Boost Tourism

YEREVAN – Armenia's Ministry of Culture has announced plans to lease four caves and one group of caves with a view of developing tourism.

The Ministry has announced a competition and is seeking contenders to rent the caves for five years with a possibility of 20-year extension.

The competition is open to all, including foreign legal entities and businessmen. Bidders can apply for renting one or all of the following five caves.

Magelan's Cave is one of the largest caves in Armenia and is situated in Vayots Dzor Province, 105 kilometers south of Yerevan. The cave has a unique underground ecosystem, rich biodiversity, many layers of paleontological and archeological artifacts. It is a unique shelter for bat species included in the Red Book of Animals of the Republic of

Armenia and the Red List of The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Trchuneri (Birds') Cave is situated in Areni, Vayots Dzor Province, 105 km away from Yerevan. Based on the results of radiocarbon examination, samples taken from these layers are traced back to late 5th- early 4th millennia BC. A more recent excavation uncovered evidence of wine production from the Chalcolithic period, which is one of the earliest known sites for wine fermentation in the world (4th millennium BC). The earliest known footwear (6000 years old) has also been found here.

Archi or Bear's Cave is located in Arpi, Vayots Dzor Province, 123 km south of Yerevan. It is the biggest cave in Armenia and is the main shelter for Rhinolophus Euryale, which is inscribed in the Red Book of Animals

of the Republic of Armenia.

The Cave of Mozrov is located in Vayots Dzor province in Arpi community, 126 km south of Yerevan. Featuring stalactites, stalagmites, flowstones and crystals in its extensive chambers, from time to time the cave becomes a shelter for the Rhinolophus euryale and Myotis mystacinus.

Stone doors cave is located in Aghdzk in Aragatsotn Province, 33 kilometers away from Yerevan. With its unique and stable microclimate the cave was perfect for food storage.

All five caves have been granted the status of immovable monuments of history and culture.

Detailed information on the terms of the competition is available on the website of the Ministry of Culture.

The deadline for submitting applications is May 12, 2017.



SPLIT, Croatia (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenia's Simon Martirosyan claimed gold in the 2017 European Weightlifting Championships held in Split, Croatia. The Olympic bronze medalist snatched 184 kg and lifted 230 kilograms in the clean and jerk.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Cypriot Parliament Calls For Recognition of Armenian Genocide

NICOSIA, Cyprus (Famagusta Gazette) – The Parliament in Cyprus has condemned the Armenian Genocide, calling on the international community to acknowledge the genocide.

Addressing the House of Representatives at the start of the plenary session on April 9, Speaker Demetris Syllouris said that even if more than a century have gone by since the Armenian Genocide of April 24, 1915 when Turkey applied an ethnic cleansing plan against Armenians, Turkey refuses to acknowledge the murder of one and a half million Armenians.

The House, said Syllouris, was among the first parliaments in the world and the first one in Europe to acknowledge and condemn in 1975 the Armenian genocide, demanding the restoration of the historic truth.

In addition, the Cyprus Parliament approved in 1990, in a unanimous vote, to commemorate the genocide on 24th April and it also passed a resolution penalizing denial of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, modifying existing legislation, which required prior conviction by an international court to make denial a crime.

The House of Representatives, reiterates its appeal to the international community, to recognize and condemn the Armenian genocide, Syllouris added.

On his part, the representative of the Armenian in the House, Vartkes Mahtesian said those guilty of the Armenian Genocide remain unpunished.

Eighth 'Armenia Corre' Race in Buenos Aires

BUENOS AIRES (Agencia Prensa Armenia) – The "Armenia Corre" ("Armenia Runs") race organized by Armenian General Athletic Union and the Homenetmen Scouts was held on the morning of April 2.

"Once again people are with us," Horacio Terzian, president of the Armenian General Union of Physical Culture of Buenos Aires. "Our grandparents and great-grandparents 102 years ago were sent them to a march that was in fact a deadly trap. Today we want to remember them and fight for that genocide committed by the Turkish state," he added.

"Armenia Corre" is a race that has been carried out for eight years and involves many runners, Armenian and non-Armenian, in the center of the city. The theme "Armenia runs for memory and equality" seeks to raise awareness of human rights issues through sport.

Cyprus, Armenia Celebrate 25th Anniversary of Ties

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The Armenian and Cypriot foreign ministers Edward Nalbandian and Ioannis Kasoulides exchanged telegrams on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of establishing diplomatic ties between Armenia and Cyprus, the foreign ministry of Armenia reported.

In his message, Nalbandian mentioned the special place Cyprus has for Armenia, as a brotherly country, where "we are tied not only with the numerous historic-cultural relations dating back to centuries, but also the close inter-state relations anchored on deep mutual respect and warmth."

Nalbandian stressed that during the 25 years of relations between the two countries, a partnership was built on solid foundations and the two countries have wide mutual understanding on important international and regional issues.

Kasoulides noted in this message that the friendly and brotherly relations, as well as the strong cooperation between the two countries "are much deeper that during the past 25 years."

Kasoulides underscored that in this present period of numerous challenges, Cyprus will continue to work in the direction of further deepening relations with Armenia, by creating new opportunities for cooperation for the benefit of the two nations.

Georgia Hails New EU-Armenia Accord

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Georgia's Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze welcomed a new agreement on deepening Armenia's relations with the European Union during an official visit to Yerevan on Tuesday, April 11.

"We discussed the process of Georgia's European integration and cooperation within the framework of the EU's Eastern Partnership program," he said after talks with his Armenian counterpart Edward Nalbandian. "We noted with satisfaction the conclusion of negotiations between Armenia and the EU on a new framework agreement."

Janelidze referred to the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) that was finalized in Yerevan last month and is due to be signed later this year. The CEPA is a less ambitious alternative to an Association Agreement which Armenia planned to sign with the EU before unexpectedly deciding in 2013 to join a Russian-led trade bloc of ex-Soviet states.

Unlike Armenia, Georgia signed a similar Association Agreement with the EU in 2014. The deal involving far-reaching free-trade provisions came into effect in July 2016.

Armenian and Georgian leaders have repeatedly said that Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and Georgia's European integra-



Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian (R) and his Georgian counterpart Mikheil Janelidze

tion will not prevent the two neighboring states from strengthening their relations. According to official Armenian statistics, Georgian-Armenian trade rose by almost 28 percent to \$245 million last year.

Nalbandian said there has been major progress in bilateral political and economic ties in the last few years. "The two sides periodically reiterate that there are no problems between Armenia and Georgia," he told a joint news briefing with Janelidze. "There are only issues that are solved with joint efforts. Our meeting today is further proof of that."

"We underlined our desire to further

intensify our political dialogue," Janelidze said for his part. He said they also discussed ways of boosting Georgian-Armenian cooperation on transport, energy and tourism. He spoke of "great untapped potential" in these and other areas.

The Georgian minister also held separate talks with President Serzh Sargsyan and Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan. A statement by the Armenian presidential press office said Sargsyan and Janelidze "noted with satisfaction that Georgian-Armenian relations are dynamically developing."

Erdogan Says Referendum Turnout among Turks Abroad Jumps

By Tuvan Gumrukcu

ANKARA (Reuters) – Turks living overseas are turning out in greater numbers to vote in a referendum on changing the constitution to create an executive presidency, President Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday, a development that pollsters say could benefit him.

Voters in Turkey will go to the polls on April 16 to decide on the referendum that would give Erdogan sweeping new powers. Voting for expatriate Turks began as early as late March in some countries and is due to run until Sunday.

The referendum campaign has brought a rapid deterioration in relations with some of Turkey's European allies over the banning of some rallies by Turkish ministers in the Netherlands and Germany on security grounds, something Erdogan has denounced as "Nazi-like" tactics.

A high turnout abroad is likely to boost Erdogan, pollsters say, citing past elections, but at home it could hurt him as opposition voters traditionally make up a bigger proportion of those who tend to shun the polls on an election day.

"There is an amazing explosion of votes abroad. Around 1.42 million votes have been cast," Erdogan said at a ceremony in the southeastern city of Sanliurfa, calling on his supporters to flood the ballot box with "yes" votes in the referendum.

The figure Erdogan cited suggests a turnout of around 50 percent, based on the 2.88 million voters registered abroad in the last general election in November 2015, according to data from the High Electoral Board (YSK).

In that election the turnout was around 40 percent among expatriates, with 56 percent of those votes being cast for the AK Party, which Erdogan founded more than a decade ago.

Polls show a close race days before the referendum, putting the "yes" vote slightly ahead, but indicate that nearly half the country could reject the pro-

posed constitutional changes.

Foreign vote results will be announced once the actual referendum is held on Sunday.

Bitterly Divided

One polling company, Mak Danismanlik, seen as close to Erdogan, said initial exit polls from abroad showed the "yes" vote at 62 percent. It said the only country where the "no" vote had prevailed was the United States. It did not say how many people it had polled or where the research was conducted.

Pollsters Gezici, whose research has tended to overestimate opposition support, forecast 82-83 percent voter participation domestically and a "yes" vote as high as 56 percent if the turnout is lower in Turkey.

The referendum has polarized the nation of 79 million. Erdogan's oppo-

nents fear increasing authoritarianism from a leader they see as bent on eroding modern Turkey's democracy and secular foundations.

Erdogan argues that the proposed strengthening of the presidency will avert instability associated with coalition governments, at a time when Turkey faces security threats from Islamist and Kurdish militants.

It was not immediately clear what the turnout in specific countries was, but in the November 2015 election, around 40 percent of the Turks in Germany cast their votes while the figure was around 45 percent in the Netherlands.

Germany's *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper said Turks living there had cast 696,863 votes for the referendum, bringing turnout in Germany to 48.73 percent.

Turkey Starts Mine-Clearing along Borders With Armenia, Iran and Azerbaijan

ISTANBUL (*Hurriyet Daily News*) – Efforts to clear mines have been launched on Mount Ararat in Turkey's eastern province of Iğdir as part of a project financed by the European Union and Turkey in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

According to the source, the project aims to clear Turkey's eastern border of mines to increase Ankara's ability to control the border and provide socio-economic development. As part of the project, mines along the borders with Armenia, Iran and Azerbaijan will be cleared within two years.

The South African firm DENEL-MECHEM will conduct the mine-clearing works as part of the project. Company officials said a total of 15 square kilometers will be cleared of 222,000 mines in 511 areas near the Armenian, Azerbaijani and Iranian border.

Speaking at the ceremony, the head of the European Union (EU) delegation in Ankara, Ambassador Christian Berger, said hundreds of innocent people, including children, die each year after stepping on mines. Berger also said land mines produce serious societal and financial effects and prevent development, as well as killing individuals.

"This project aims to reduce these effects by taking plenty of precautions including clearing the area of mines and helping the victims. The support given by the EU to mine activities is a part of our support for border management. The mines were planted between 1984 and 1999 for border security. Turkey, the EU and the UN are jointly working to clear the area of mines, as well as creating a modern, humanitarian and strong border security," Berger said on April 4.

Community News

AGBU YP Northern California Raises \$20,000 for the AGBU Humanitarian Emergency Relief Fund For Syrian Armenians

SAN FRANCISCO – From February 17 to 19, the AGBU Young Professionals of Northern California (YPNC) held its 17th Annual AGBU San Francisco Winter Gala. The weekend—the theme of which centered on the idea of connection – offered an unforgettable experience for 250 young professionals from across the globe with three full days of events. YPNC directed the weekend's proceeds—\$20,000 – to the AGBU Humanitarian Emergency Relief Fund for Syrian Armenians.

“The driving force behind organizing the Winter Gala has always been on raising funds and giving back to various AGBU projects and programs. We are grateful for the opportunity to support our brothers and sisters in Syria and those relocating, and provide them hope as they endure the conflict in the region,” said YPNC Chairman David Ojakian.

Gala 2017 Weekend began on Friday, February 17, with a welcome reception at the host hotel, the Sir Francis Drake in Union Square, where attendees mingled and began to make their connections to start off the weekend. Following the reception, guests headed to Slide Nightclub where DJ Mikey Tan played Top 40 and mashups at this top nightlife venue in Downtown San Francisco.

Saturday, February 18 brought the return of another Gala Weekend favorite: the San Francisco walking tour. The tour included stops at many different landmarks around the city, including Fishermen's Wharf and Ghiradelli Square. Saturday night was the weekend's signature event, the Connect Gala dinner/dance in the Green Room at the San Francisco War Memorial Performing Arts Center. Complete with breathtaking views of city hall, the evening featured fine dining and dancing to Armenian, international, and popular music.

Sunday, February 19 started with a wine tour to Sonoma Valley, featuring an all-inclusive experience at Cline Cellars. The trip included tours, tastings, and a private lunch at the winery's Barrel Room. Sunday night introduced a new event to the weekend: Karaoke and Game Night where attendees had a final chance to connect over appetizers.

“This was my second year attending the Winter Gala. It is always a pleasure to meet new like-minded people and reunite with old friends – speaking our beautiful language, dancing to our Armenian music and sharing ideas about how we can strengthen our local Armenian communities in the diaspora. I believe in living life with a purpose and a big part of that is showing love and compassion to others,” said Tamara Shamlan of Fresno.

The YP Network makes it a priority to invest in Armenia and Armenian communities around the world by fundraising for initiatives which need attention and assistance. The AGBU Humanitarian Emergency Relief Fund supports programs in Armenia, Canada, Lebanon and Syria for Syrian Armenians, including food and aid distribution; medical assistance; educational programs and children's services. Since 2012, the AGBU Humanitarian Emergency Relief Fund has raised more than 4 million for Syrian Armenians in need.

“As the son of immigrants from Aleppo, I have seen the torment that has been caused to the Armenian community in Syria during recent years. I am so grateful to have had the chance to organize a three-day event that not only brought together young Armenian professionals, but also raised money for an incredible cause,” said Apik Zorian, YPNC marketing director and co-chair of the 2017 gala.

To donate or learn more about AGBU's relief efforts, visit http://www.agbu.org/syriare-lief/help_syria.pdf



From left, Nila and Nazareth Festekjian, Hilda and Saro Hartounian

Armenia Fund USA Raises Funds for Akhtala at Annual Benefit Evening

PARAMUS, NJ. – On March 10, Armenia Fund USA held their Annual Benefit Evening at The Park, in New York City, to support the Toxic Pollution Cleanup Project in Akhtala, Armenia. The evening, which brought together the Armenian community, was a great success. Attendees got to enjoy entertainment by the YY Sisters, an Armenian a cappella folk group, who sang, danced and played musical instruments, as well as music by DJ Harry Latirofian. Guests also got the chance to win three different amazing raffles prizes, which included a Michael Aram metal-ware home accessory set, a hand-woven Megerian Armenian Karabakh design rug, and a plane voucher for a round trip to Armenia.

The night commenced with the MC Elvin Arzuman introducing the hosts of the night, Armenia Fund USA's Chairman Levon Ariyan and Executive Director Lisa Stepanian, who welcomed the crowd with their speeches, followed by Pure Earth Board Member Diana Mkhitarian and founder of Pure Earth Richard Fuller's impactful speeches.

The Toxic Pollution Cleanup Project started in July 2016 when Armenia Fund USA announced their collaboration with Pure Earth, a world leader in the assessment and remediation of toxic sites, to raise funds for this important issue. In 2012, Pure Earth conducted an independent assessment of the soil in Armenia and discovered 23 contaminated sites, threatening the health of many Armenians. The Armenian Apostolic Church monastery in Akhtala was chosen as the first site to undergo the soil cleanup because it has the highest levels of lead contamination. The monastery where children play and families picnic on was built on top of land that was previously a copper mine. The soil lead concentrations in Akhtala were documented to be 47,000 mg/kg, which was more than 100 times the United States cleanup standard of 400 mg/kg, making 84 percent of approximately 500 local children at risk of lead poisoning. Lead poisoning in a child can lead to numerous health issues, which include mental disabilities and developmental delays, decreased bone and muscle growth, damage to the nervous system, kidneys and hearing.

see BENEFIT, page 6



From Left to Right Katia Buchakjian, Carol Sumkin, Richard Fuller, Hilda Hartounian, Diana Mkhitarian, Levon Ariyan, Jen Marraccino, Eileen Karakashian, Tanya Buckucuyan and Lisa Stepanian

Armenian Assembly Congressional Testimony Urges Robust Funding for Armenia and Artsakh

WASHINGTON – The Armenian Assembly of America Executive Director Bryan Ardouny outlined key priorities in the congressional testimony submitted to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs. In the testimony, Ardouny reiterated the bipartisan letter sent to the Subcommittee, spearheaded by Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), and commended the Members of Congress for signing in agreement.

In particular, the Assembly's testimony calls for: \$40 million in US economic assistance to Armenia; \$40 million to support Armenia's efforts to serve as a regional safe haven for refugees; \$20 million to implement the Royce-Engel initiative to advance peace; \$11 million in US military assistance to Armenia; \$8 million to Artsakh; assistance to the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of Georgia; regional energy security; and reaffirmation of the US record on the Armenian Genocide. Considering the dual blockades imposed by Turkey and Azerbaijan, Armenia continues to demonstrate its resilience, which

The Assembly's testimony specifically drew attention to Azerbaijan's deadly cease-fire violations

is why the Assembly also strongly supports a second US-Armenia compact of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).

The Assembly's testimony specifically drew attention to Azerbaijan's deadly cease-fire violations, including last April's offensive that started with the killing of a 12-year-old boy and continued with the gruesome ISIS-style beheading of an Armenian soldier and mutilation of an elderly Armenian couple. Given Azerbaijan's blatant cease-fire violations, the Assembly called upon the United States to “directly condemn such actions and avoid engaging in false equivalency between the aggressor and those defending themselves” and urged the Subcommittee to cease military funding to Azerbaijan. America cannot afford it and Azerbaijan does not need it.

Ardouny highlighted the fact that Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity in 301 A.D. and emphasized the importance of safe guarding Christian and other minority communities wherever they may reside. The Assembly testimony also commended the work of the Near East Foundation (NEF) in this regard and urged funding to support NEF's work in Armenia. In addition to allocating aid to Armenia and Artsakh, Ardouny urged Members to visit Armenia as well as watch the movie titled *The Promise*, a film which depicts the extraordinary events of the Armenian Genocide and comes to theaters this month.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Travelers on the Path of the Great Dream

Hrant K. Sulahian

Aintab, 1871-1949

By Hagop Vartivarian

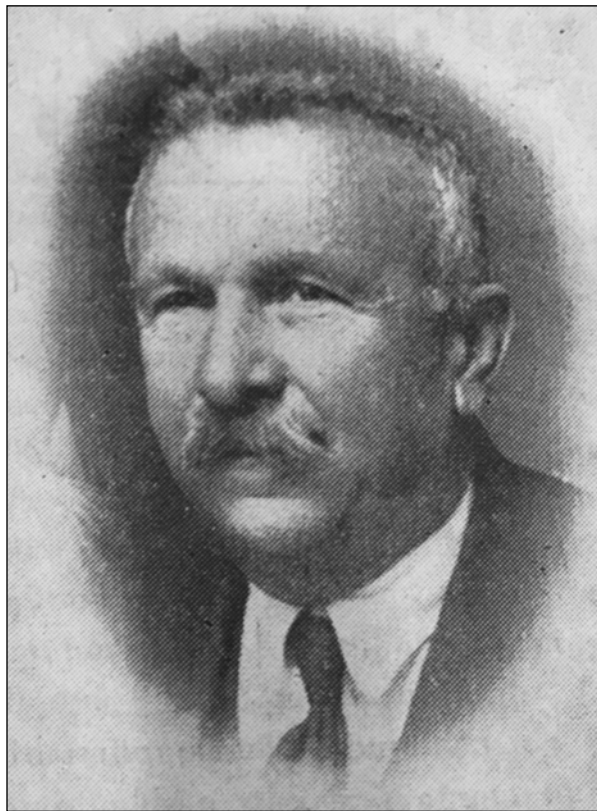
Hrant K. Sulahian was an Armenian from Aintab who played an important role in the Armenian liberation movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and despite the tribulations of the Armenian Genocide, continued to act as an Armenian community leader in Syria.

Hrant's father, Kevork, was a pious man who through his own efforts became well-versed in the Bible, and gave spiritual advice when people assembled. As a result, he was called "sage." He was a part of the Museum Education Association, which in 1867 during the Vartanants holiday was renamed Vartanian. He helped in the construction of the wonderful church of Aintab.

Hrant was born on January 12, 1871, in Aintab and baptized as Krikor. He was a classmate of Armenag N. Nazari in the Mesrobian Alumni School. After this school closed, he went to the Armenian Nersesian School, where he had as teacher of the Armenian language and history Vahan M. Kiurkjian. Kiurkjian inspired him with nationalist feeling and a desire for liberty.

After graduation, Hrant entered the field of commerce like his father, but finding Aintab too confining, moved in 1890 to Constantinople. At this time, the Armenian liberation movement began to coalesce in various cities of Anatolia with large Armenian populations. Cilicia, Sasun, Daron, and Vasburagan turned into centers of Armenian nationalist activity. Outside the Ottoman Empire, liberal newspapers were published and diplomatic actions were taken, which led to state oppressions of Armenians in the provinces and the capital.

As much as an educated and energetic youth like Hrant attempted to confine himself to commerce, the Ottoman authorities could not fail to notice him, especially as they attempted to weaken the economic prosperity of the Armenians. Hrant was arrested by the police in Constantinople as a dangerous Armenian, and thrown into prison for three weeks after being interrogated. After this, he could not remain freely in Constantinople and continue his business, so he returned to



Aintab in 1893-94.

The Hinchagian Party had organized branches very early in Cilicia pursuing goals of Armenian national liberation. The party's headquarters, dreaming of socialism, did not object and accepted this situation among its adherents in Cilicia. A large number of graduates of the Vartanian Association joined the Hinchagian Party, as did Hrant. He soon attained an important position in this party.

They planned a major movement throughout Cilicia, from Zeytun and Hajin to Chork Marzban. Well known activists Mkho Shahen and Badveli Hagop Yeretsian collaborated in this plan. Aghasi was in Aintab and prepared to leave for Zeytun with money and volunteers in order to further the cause of liberation together with Abah, Hrachya and Mleh.

In 1895, Hrant participated in the meeting of representatives from Aleppo, Marash, Kilis and Aintab concerning the Zeytun movement. He was able to collect a substantial sum of money from rich Armenians in Aintab and with six armed volunteers accompanied Aghasi. His comrades assembled in his house read with great enthusiasm Aghasi's letter written a day after the occupation of the Zeytun barracks and the surrender of the Turkish troops. This letter began, "We won, we won!"

The Zeytun movement was not just a revolutionary demonstration. The Sublime Porte was worried about the possible seizure of Marash by the Armenians, so it ordered that Ottoman forces take positions in mountainous Cilicia to stop the advance

of the Zeytun Armenians toward the sea. In November 1895, Hrant led the defense of the chief quarter of the Armenians during attempted massacres.

After a relative calm, he was able in 1897 to marry into a prominent local family. He took Levontin, daughter of Garabed Nazaretian, as his bride and soon had three boys and a girl. One of his sons, Piuzant, died young in Aleppo. The other two, Kevork and Garabed (Charlie), and his daughter Mari (Topjian) already had settled in America.

Hrant had some reservations about the restoration of the Ottoman constitution in 1908 and the accompanying enthusiasm. Less than a year later, the Cilician massacres confirmed his forebodings. He actively participated in the defense of his native town.

In 1910, he was elected as Aintab's representative to the Hinchagian Assembly taking place in Constantinople. On his return, he had turned even more wary concerning the "Constitutional Turks".

The Armenian deportations during World War I were a great trial and tribulation for Hrant. He was arrested in 1915 and after a whole week of severe interrogation, released free. On July 17 he was deported together with the rest of the Aintab Armenians. He remained several months in Aleppo, always under suspicion and surveillance. In October of the same year, he was deported to Damascus, where he stayed under safer circumstances thanks to the intervention of a Turkish judge who was an acquaintance of his father.

Greater misfortunes awaited him. In March 1916, he again was arrested and sent to the Aintab Divani Harbiye [Court Martial], but he managed to escape. He was arrested once more on June 17, and this time sent to the Aleppo Divani Harbiye. They were to try him as a plotter against the state. With the nightmare of the gallows always looming, he remained in prison until November 20.

He applied to the Divani Aliye [Supreme Council] in Constantinople, and succeeded in making his voice heard. Fortunately the death sentence was annulled, probably thanks to the intervention of military commander Jemal Pasha. While still in prison, Hrant wrote a heartrending letter as his last testament, in which he asked his children to take care of each other and their mother.

He once more dedicated himself to Armenian national activism. After Damascus was occupied by the English military, the latter appointed him as a director taking care of the Armenian deportees. By now he had become a member of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL), and was an "honorary member" of the Armenian General Benevolent Union. He was elected as a state deputy to the Syrian parliament from Aleppo.

Finally he decided it an opportune time to move to the United States to be with his children. He arrived in Boston on December 27, 1939 and settled in Watertown. He joined the local ADL. Health issues with his heart forced him to withdraw from Armenian community life, and he died on June 15, 1949 in Watertown.

(Translated from the Armenian)

Armenia Fund USA Raises Funds for Akhtala at Annual Benefit Evening

BENEFIT, from page 5

The collaboration of Armenia Fund USA with Pure Earth has led to educating the Armenian community in the US about the toxic lead pollution problem in Armenia. To date, Armenia Fund USA has conducted several successful campaigns to raise funds for this cause. Tons of support poured through while donations quickly piled up. Armenia Fund USA reached out to a dedicated group of women to volunteer their time and effort in order to create further awareness and raise funds for a Pure Armenia. This group of women includes Pure Earth Board Member Diana Mkhitarian, Pure Earth Senior Director of Development Jen Marraccino, along

with familiar members of the Armenian community Hilda Hartounian, Katia Buchakjian, Nayda Voskerijian, Tanya Bukucuyan and Eileen Karakashian.

Together, Armenia Fund USA and the women of Pure Armenia put together the successful Annual Benefit Evening event that was held to bring this important project to the attention of the local communities. This event could not have happen without Charles and Diana Mkhitarian who generously sponsored the night. Armenia Fund USA is deeply thankful to them, the generous people who donated the raffles prizes and everyone else who helped make the night magical.



The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the US and Canada thanks Ann Barsamian Polasek for her recent donation of \$30 to the TCA Fundraising Drive for the Families of Wounded and Martyred Soldiers.

TOTAL RECEIVED through April 10: \$16,621

To participate in this campaign, please make your checks out to:

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Boston Celtics' Legend, M.L. Carr, to Speak at Holy Trinity Church

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — In continuing its series of events celebrating books and courage and legends, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston presents M. L. Carr, who will

share his inspiring life story on Sunday, April 30, at 12:15 p.m., in the Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall of the church complex at 145 Brattle St. All are welcome to attend. A complimentary light luncheon will be served.

Fr. Vasken A. Kouzouian, pastor of Holy Trinity Church, states that "We are excited to welcome former Boston Celtics great M.L. Carr to Holy Trinity. M.L.'s warm and personable nature puts you at ease within moments of meeting him. Having accomplished greatness in the NBA, M.L. has reached even higher success in his post-player career as a champion of youth programs designed to help today's younger generation understand their potential and stay focused on their goals. In this day and age, when young people are challenged in ways unimaginable only a generation ago, M.L.'s message is a must hear for all ages who have a hand in raising a young person

today."

Michael Leon ("M. L.") Carr is an American former professional basketball player in the National Basketball Association (NBA) and American Basketball Association (ABA), and former head coach and General Manager of the Boston Celtics. He is part and parcel of the Boston Celtics' rich tradition and history especially as a member of the 1981 and 1984 Celtic teams that overcame long odds to hang banners in the old Boston Garden.

Carr, a native of North Carolina, is a 1973 graduate of Guilford College, where he led the team to the NAIA Small College Championship. Drafted by teams in both the NBA and ABA, he eventually played overseas (in Israel) for a year before landing in the ABA in 1975 with the Spirits of St. Louis. The next season, M.L. signed with the Detroit Pistons, playing for that team for three years before signing in Boston. While a player with the Celtics (from 1979-1985), he played on two NBA championship teams in 1981 and 1984. He was instrumental in leading the Celtics' defense past the favored Philadelphia 76ers in the 1981 Eastern Conference Finals, on the way to Boston's 14th NBA championship. He is perhaps best known

for the steal and dunk he made in overtime of Game Four in the 1984 NBA Finals against the Lakers in Los Angeles. That play sealed the win for Boston, tied up the series and helped propel the Celtics to the title.

And who could forget the towel? Carr was famous for waving a towel during crucial situations to fire up the Celtics. The towel at that time accomplished bridging the emotion of how great the Boston fans were with how much they wanted the Celtics to win. Since then, whenever he has entered a room, all the kids wave towels or all the business people wave napkins.

Following his retirement, Carr became the general manager of the Celtics in 1994 (until 1997) and took over as coach for two seasons (1995-1996 and 1996-1997 season). After the 1997 season, he became the Celtics' director of corporate development.

Carr currently resides in Massachusetts where he is a businessman.

The pastor and Parish Council invite the Greater Boston area community to join them on Sunday, April 30, to meet M.L. Carr and hear his inspiring story. And ... for those who remember, don't forget to bring a towel, you can always wave your napkin.



M. L. Carr

NAASR to Host Talk on Longterm Effects of Karabakh War

BELMONT, Mass. — Dr. Gayane Novikova, the Founding Director of the Spectrum Center for Strategic Analysis in Yerevan, Armenia, and currently an Associate at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, will give a lecture entitled "Armenia: Some Features of Internal (In)Stability," on Thursday, April 20, 2017, 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.

The April 2016 four-day war within the ongoing Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, as well as the developments that followed, have unveiled a whole stratum of serious problems in "stable" Armenia, including issues relating to defense. The aftermath of these events will continue strongly to influence internal processes in Armenia, in particular.

In this presentation, Novikova will analyze some long-term consequences of the April 2-5, 2016, events in terms of their influence on Armenian internal political and social developments, including the results of the recent parliamentary elections.

The political transformations ongoing currently in Armenia can be best described as a "palace" coup d'état, initiated by a ruling elite

who have benefited from the general population's low levels of public participation and social mobilization. In the absence of a charismatic leader and strong leadership in general, a tangible program of action, and unity among the different components of civil society, the ruling elite retains the capacity to influence the varying reconstitution of groups and to alleviate, through small-scale concessions, tensions in Armenian society.

Novikova is founding director of the Spectrum Center for Strategic Analysis (since 2001) in Yerevan, Armenia, and is presently Associate at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies. She was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University (2008-2009) and from 2009-13 a Visiting Scholar at Harvard's Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and at the Davis Center. She has also been a Visiting Lecturer in the International Relations Department at Boston University. She is the author of several books, including *The Conflict Potential of the South Caucasus: the Geopolitical Dimension*, more than ninety chapters and articles in peer-reviewed anthologies, and she serves as the editor of Spectrum's annual *Regional Security Issues* anthology.



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Buses to the State House will leave from Watertown at 9 a.m. from St. James Church, 465 Mount Auburn Street, and St. Stephen's Church, 38 Elton Avenue. The buses will depart the State House at 1:15 p.m. and transport guests back to originating locations with an expected arrival in Watertown at approximately 2 p.m. The bus service is free, donated by the Knights of Vartan, Ararat Lodge #1.

Read News in Armenian at:



Donations

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* would like to thank Silva Karachorlu of Chicago for her donation of \$120.

The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* acknowledges with thanks the donation of \$30 from Nayiri K. Berberian in memory of Helen Kishishian, Garabed Babiguian and Dr. Nubar Berberian.



COMMUNITY NEWS



Students with their barometers and anemometers at the Science Fair

STEM Week at St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School

WATERTOWN — Students at St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School's Annual STEM week, held April 3-7, participated in a variety of enrichment activities in science, technology, engineering and math.

On April 3, students in Grades K-5 participated in a Robotics Day with the help of parent volunteers. KIBO robots provided students with the experience of sequencing blocks to command a robot to move through an obstacle course. Students in Grades 3-5 explored with WeDo Lego robots by choosing or drawing a

figure and programming it to move in specific ways. Scratch Jr. was introduced to students in Grades K-2 as they were able to learn how to program a figure to interact with other figures and their environment.

On Tuesday, April 4, students experienced The Whale Mobile and explored the anatomy, habitat, behaviors, and feeding habits of various species of whales. Using sounds, videos, images and whale teeth, students learned about how scientists study Humpback whales and had an opportunity to go inside a life size model of a

whale to learn about how whales and humans are similar and different.

The next day, classes were combined to solve Math Challenges. The Kindergarteners and first graders collected data from the student body about their favorite ice cream flavors to understand which are the most popular at St. Stephen's. The second and third grade students paired up to explore concepts around adding and solving problems using monetary denominations, and the fourth and fifth graders were tasked to build a vacation resort taking finan-

cial planning into account.

On Thursday, students displayed their Science Fair Projects. Third, fourth, and fifth graders were interviewed by a group of volunteer parents. Open viewing of projects took place at the end of the day from 2:30-3 p.m.

On Friday, students participated in an Hour of Code activity in the computer lab which gave them more practice with computer coding.

St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School has students from nursery age through fifth grade.

Annual Dink Program at Harvard Takes Place

TRIBUTE, from page 1

the silence" about the Armenian Genocide.

In the early 2000s, several books were published in Turkey about the Armenians, including one by Takuhi Tovmasyan, about food and the family table, as well as Çetin's book about her Armenian grandmother, which became a turning point for Altınay. The notion that about 200,000 Armenian women were coerced into marrying Turkish men during the time of the Genocide, means that millions of Turks have Armenian ancestry.

In November 2013, the first national conference on Islamized Armenians was held in Istanbul, organized by the Hrant Dink Foundation. Even in this forum in which the Genocide was acknowledged, the issue of sexual violence was mentioned only once, Altınay said.

It was a short hop to get from the historical and hypothetical to the concrete for Altınay, who found out through a cousin that their great-grandfather had been in charge of counting the deportees passing through their town during the Armenian Genocide. He had also married an Armenian woman — his second wife — who had converted to Islam. With the new understanding Altınay had about the Genocide and rapes, she started wondering how consensual the relationship was.

Altınay also touched upon the changing nature of academia in Turkey, where academics are increasingly recognizing the Armenian Genocide and yet, because of the current post-coup crackdown across society, and many lose their jobs or face arrest for going against the official line.

Finally, Altınay paid tribute to Hrant Dink. "He was a great intellectual and human being. We continue to mourn his loss and be inspired" by him, she said.

She praised the work of the Hrant Dink Foundation in Istanbul, with which she is closely involved, saying its many activities, including conferences, exchange programs with Armenia and other educational lectures, are making a huge contribution to civil society in Turkey.

"It is an incredible space and an organiza-

tion that looks at many critical issues and brings people together in a new building in an Armenian neighborhood," she said.

Mahçupyan Talks Referendum

Journalist Etyen Mahçupyan chose to expand the definition of the evening's topic to include the Sunni Muslim majority. As he described it, though they may numerically be a majority, they perceive themselves as a minority.

"It's a special time in Turkish history where the minority is grabbing the chance to come to majority," he said.

Mahçupyan is a columnist who for three years took over *Ağos*, the newspaper Dink had founded, after the latter's assassination. He now contributes to the Turkish dailies *Sabah* and *Yeni Safak*. A member of the Justice and Development (AKP) party, he was appointed an advisor to Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu but was eventually let go after speaking about the Armenian Genocide.

In order to define the idea of a minority, he said a group or individual has to feel outside the sphere of power; there must be a power deficiency and a self-perception as minority, rather than the actual size of the group.

Thus, he summarized, the Sunni Islamic fundamentalists feel they are in the minority. They want to "become a majority and for that they need [Recep] Tayyip Erdogan."

The Islamic community has enlarged and the movement is much stronger than it was in the 1990s, he said, when AKP came to power 15 years ago. "This is a success story. They came from the periphery," he said, and have since replaced Kemalism, an ideology which combines nationalism with secularism. He spoke at length about the trajectory of the AKP power base, which at one time reached out to entities it has since tried to kill off: the army, the Gulenist movement (led by the US-based cleric Fetullah Gulen), the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK) and the European Union. "These are actors that can change political power in Turkey," Mahçupyan said.

AKP needed legitimacy and "that is why they needed those partners. This took them

to 2013. It was understood that Gulen had a very big appetite and the partnership ended," he said.

Once there were no more partners left, "they need to create something without the need of partners" and thus arrived as "restructuring the system."

Mahçupyan said he was certain that the coup last summer, suggested by some to have been orchestrated by Erdogan himself to remove his enemies from the ranks of the military, judiciary and police, among others, was the real deal. He did agree, however, that the coup made his referendum possible. "Turkish nationalists from the left and the right joined together," Mahçupyan said, post coup.

Mahçupyan spoke at length about the constitutional referendum in Turkey on April 16 (which will take place after press time), and the chances of its passage. If approved, it would alter the constitution to concentrate power in the hands of the president and abolish the office of the prime minister.

The "glue" holding the disparate group supporting Erdogan's referendum consists of the following, he said: the fear of terror; the European Union and the US helping terrorists like Gulen and the PKK; going through a survival struggle and a system that cannot deal with any of those problems.

Mahçupyan concluded that he did not think the referendum would pass and that this current political climate "would fade away in a couple of years," as part of the cyclical nature of politics in Turkey.

During the question-and-answer period, Mahçupyan summed up his observation of the Turkish leader: "Erdogan is like a Shakespearean figure to me."

Sevres Syndrome

Libaridian, the former Alex Manoogian Chair in Modern Armenian History, University of Michigan and a special advisor to President Levon Ter-Petrosian, Republic of Armenia's first president, suggested that Turkey is suffering from the "Sevres Syndrome," in which the leadership collectively fears that the country would be divided

through "a collusion of enemies."

"Fear is nurtured and exploited," Libaridian said.

He then spoke about Turkey's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), "the most powerful military alliance ever." However, despite being part of such a colossal group, the Sevres Syndrome "continues to thrive," and thus, "states that rely on enemies find enemies."

The current situation harkens back to the days before 1915 when Armenian and Turkish leftist ideologues, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) and the Hnchakians, and the Committee for Union and Progress (Ittihat ve Terakki), banded together against the brutal Sultan Abdul Hamid, especially regarding land reform. In fact, he said, the Armenian partisans not only had their Armenian ideologies, but they formed the left wing in Ottoman politics.

Of course, the Armenians ended up suffering the most at the hands of their erstwhile allies when the latter came to power. "By eliminating the Armenians, they [the Turkish government] thought they were eliminating the element that was an impediment to their vision of the state. It was a collision of social political struggles," Libaridian said.

Now, he said, the Kurds are in the same position that the Armenians were pre-genocide. The Kurdish-majority HDP party is not only promoting Kurdish rights, but is in the forefront of left-wing progressive thought across the board.

He then spoke about Dink himself, noting that he championed human rights for all and felt he was exercising his right to participate in a democracy by his actions. Libaridian explained that Dink and many like him had been made to feel "they should be thankful for not being massacred" and wanted to move toward being "a citizen with full rights."

Zeghal, the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor in Contemporary Islamic Thought and Life in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization at Harvard University, served as moderator and offered opening and concluding remarks.



COMMUNITY NEWS

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Assembly, Members of Congress Commemorate Armenian Genocide

COMMEMORATION, from page 1

"The Armenian Assembly appreciates the heartfelt remarks by the Members, and their commitment to reaffirming the Armenian Genocide and the proud chapter in America's history in helping to save the survivors of the

ored the victims of the Genocide and emphasized the importance of learning from the lessons of the past so that they are not repeated in the future. Schiff and Trott spoke about new legislation H.R. 220, which states: "the lessons of past genocides should be applied to



The banner overlooking Bay Bridge, Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Director Hayk Demoyan



first genocide of the twentieth century," stated Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny.

Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Rep. David Trott (R-MI), Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA), and Rep. David Valadao

help prevent future war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide." This includes "the proper commemoration and consistent condemnation of the Armenian Genocide" in order to prevent modern day genocides. As Sherman pointed out in his speech, "Denial is the last stage of genocide."

Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Director Hayk Demoyan from Yerevan discussed the importance of preserving the history of the Armenian Genocide in order to prevent repetition. He also spoke about the 25 years of U.S.-Armenia relations, and noted that the first Armenian came to the United States 400 years ago, and was known as "Martin the Armenian."

The Republic of Armenia's Ambassador to the United States Grigor Hovhannissian and Artsakh Permanent Representative to the United States Robert Avetisyan both addressed the crowd, and spoke about the horrors of genocide, echoing the sentiments expressed by the Members of Congress.

Former Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Senior Counsel and Chief Securities Policy Advisor Dean Shahinian acted as Master of Ceremonies, and welcomed guests to the Capitol Hill Commemoration. Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church Vicar Bishop Anoushavan Tanielian gave the invocation and Diocesan Legate of the Armenian Church of America Archbishop Vicken

Aykazian provided the benediction. Aykazian also spoke briefly about his time in Iraq and the devastating destruction of the Christian culture he witnessed.



House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA) and Armenian Assembly Board Member Annie Totah



Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Dave Trott (R-MI), Armenian Assembly Public Affairs Associate Danielle Saroyan, and Armenian Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny

(R-CA), along with Vice Co-Chair Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) attended the commemoration and gave remarks about the work of the Armenian Caucus, and the importance of reaffirmation of the Armenian Genocide, as well as the need to ensure humanitarian aid for Armenia and Artsakh. This past week, the Assembly and a bipartisan group of Members of Congress outlined key priorities with respect to the Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations Bill.

Along with Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs, Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA), House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA), Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-CA), Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA), Rep. Katherine Clark (D-MA), Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA), Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Rep. Brad Schneider (D-IL), Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA), and Rep. Thomas Suozzi (D-NY) participated in the event.

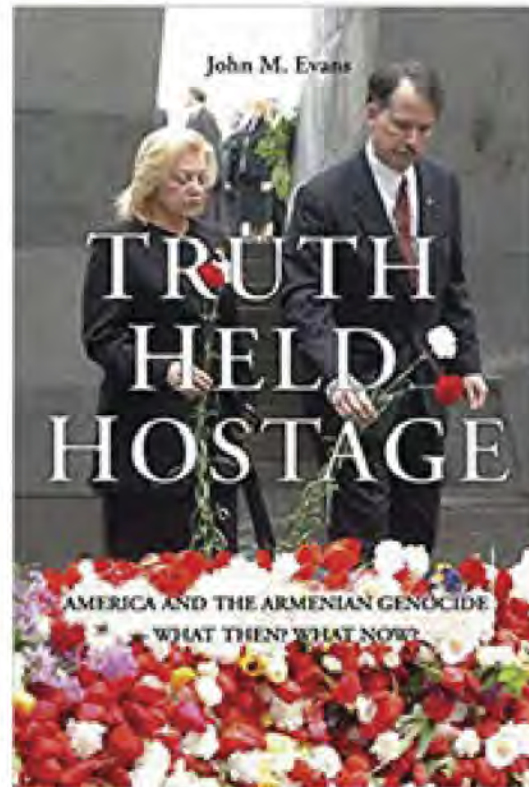
Each Member present hon-



Armenian Assembly Grassroots & Development Associate Mariam Khaloyan, Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Rep. David Valadao (R-CA), and Armenian Assembly Public Affairs Associate Danielle Saroyan

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102 ARMENIAN
GENOCIDE
COMMEMORATION



Navy Christens Guided-Missile Destroyer 'Paul Ignatius'

WASHINGTON – The Navy christened the newest guided-missile destroyer, the future USS Paul Ignatius (DDG 117), Saturday, April 8 during a ceremony at Huntington Ingalls Industries Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Miss.

The USS Paul Ignatius is named in honor of Paul Ignatius, who served as assistant secretary of defense for installations and logistics and later as secretary of the navy between 1967 and 1969, both under President Lyndon B. Johnson. Ignatius had previously served as a commissioned lieutenant in the Navy during World War II. The future USS Paul Ignatius will be the first ship to bear his name.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson served as the principal speaker during the ceremony. During the event, Nancy Ignatius, wife of Secretary Ignatius, served as the ship's sponsor and broke a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow to formally christen the ship—a time-honored Navy tradition.

"When the future USS Paul Ignatius joins the fleet, it will serve for decades as a reminder of Secretary Ignatius's service to our nation as both a naval officer and as the civilian leader of our Navy and Marine Corps," said Sean Stackley, acting secretary of the navy. "This ceremony honored not only the service of this ship's distinguished namesake but also the service of our nation's shipbuilders, who, for centuries, have helped make ours the greatest Navy in the world."

Paul Ignatius will be the 67th Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, the fifth of 14 ships currently under contract for the DDG 51 program. The DDG 51 class provides advanced combat capability and survivability characteristics while minimizing procurement and



Ship's sponsor Nancy Ignatius christens the guided-missile destroyer Pre-Commissioning Unit (PCU) Paul Ignatius (DDG 117), named for her husband, former Secretary of the Navy Paul Ignatius. Also pictured are Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson, left; Cmdr. Robby Trotter, the ship's prospective commanding officer; Dr. Elisa Ignatius, granddaughter of Paul and Nancy Ignatius; Paul Ignatius, the ship's namesake; Philip Gunn, speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives; and Ingalls Shipbuilding President Brian Cuccias. (U.S. Navy photo courtesy of Huntington Ingalls Industries by Andrew Young/Released)

lifetime support costs due to the program's maturity. DDG 51 destroyers are warships that provide multi-mission offensive and defensive capabilities. Destroyers can operate independently or as part of carrier strike

groups, surface action groups, amphibious ready groups and underway replenishment groups. DDG 113 and follow-on DDGs are being built with integrated air and missile defense (IAMD) capability.

The 9,200-ton ship is 509 feet in length, has a waterline beam of 59 feet, and a navigational draft of 31 feet. Four gas turbine engines will power the ship to speeds in excess of 30 knots.



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ANI Armenian Genocide Library Opens in Washington

WASHINGTON – On April 5, the Armenian National Institute (ANI) hosted the opening of its Armenian Genocide Library, giving researchers access to more than 5,000 publications on the Armenian Genocide and modern Armenian history. Dr. Hayk Demoyan, director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan (AGMI), did the honors of opening the library.

"The opening of an Armenian information center in Washington is a very important event. The opening of such a center in the US capital is a major achievement by itself," Demoyan said.

"ANI is grateful to Dr. Demoyan for joining us at the launch of the first phase of our research center and the opening of the Armenian Genocide Library. In this space, researchers will have access to a specialized collection acquired by the Armenian National Institute and the Armenian Assembly of America over the past 40 years," ANI Director Dr. Rouben Adalian stated.

The ANI library has audio-visual equipment through which visitors can also experience a large-screen viewing of the online Armenian Genocide Museum of America (AGMA), as well as other recordings and productions in various formats from around the world.

ANI's Armenian Genocide Library is just one component of a research center that will feature several substantial collections facilitating the

process for historians and scholars to retrieve more documentation about the Armenian Genocide.

Earlier this year, ANI also launched a Turkish language version of its Armenian Genocide website to provide further access for Turkish-



Dr. Hayk Demoyan, left, with Dr. Rouben Adalian

speaking audiences. Mobile friendly versions of the ANI and AGMA websites were launched within the past year.

"There are a lot of plans in the works for the Armenian National Institute to be as accessible as possible for any type of scholar interested in learning more about the Armenian Genocide. ANI's collection will continue to expand, as well as the various channels and languages to share this information," ANI Chairman Van Z. Krikorian added.

Later that evening, the Armenian Assembly of America co-hosted an Armenian Genocide Commemoration on Capitol Hill, where Dr. Demoyan participated and gave remarks.

Arts & Living

Author, Human-Rights Lawyer Fethiye Çetin to speak at Fresno State on 'Echo Of Silence'

FRESNO – Author and human-rights lawyer Fethiye Çetin (Istanbul, Turkey), will speak on the "Echo of Silence" at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 26, at the Berberian Social Hall of St. Paul Armenian Church, 3767 N. First St.

The lecture is being held as part of the commemorative activities associated with the 102nd Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, and is part of the Armenian Studies Program Spring 2017 Lecture Series, supported by the Leon S. Peters Foundation.

Çetin grew up in Maden, Turkey, and had no reason to suspect that she



Fethiye Çetin

had anything other than Turkish Muslim roots. It was only when her maternal grandmother Seher revealed to her that her real name was Heranush that Çetin became aware of her true roots. Heranush was born to parents Hovannes and Isguhi Gadaryan, and was taken from her mother's arms during the Armenian Genocide. She had kept secret her Armenian identity until shortly before her death.

This legacy inspired Çetin's first book, a memoir published in 2004 about her grandmother's story titled *My Grandmother: An Armenian Turkish Memoir*, a compelling account of her gradual discovery of the deep contradiction between her nationalist education and the realities buried deep in Turkish society.

The memoir follows Hernanus through the eyes of her granddaughter, from memories of Çetin's childhood, to the horrendous events of the Armenian Genocide her grandmother revealed to her as an adult.

Çetin will speak about her own choices after learning the truth—whether to speak out or not. She refused to be silent and as a result made significant sacrifices. Today the tide is changing. Where before only the elderly talked about the Genocide, today it is their grandchildren who are talking about it.

Çetin is a Turkish lawyer, writer and human rights activist. She has represented the family of slain newspaper editor Hrant Dink.

The lecture is free and open to the public.



Actors on set (standing, from left, Kyle Dinkjian, Linda Chamesian, Rosine Ghichlian; sitting Harout Nalbandian)

Sequel to Hit Armenian Play A Success

NEW YORK – The debut play "Where Is Your Groom? (Pesad Oor Eh)" II sent waves of laughter throughout the Miller Theatre at Columbia University on Sunday, March 26, where more than 500 guests enjoyed the sequel to the funny saga of America's favorite Armenian family.

The comical and contemporary play by Taleen Babayan appealed to all generations and highlighted themes common in today's Diasporan culture, including balancing assimilation and nationalism, and preserving one's heritage and language in a melting-pot society.



Raele Sabounjian (playing the role of Lara Keshishian, a first-generation Armenian-American) with Kyle Dinkjian (playing the role of her fiancé Ari Apovian).

new passion for acting, bringing a talented writer's words to life, and proudly representing my heritage made this experience a phenomenal one."

While the original play revolved around an Armenian-American family's quest to find their daughter a suitable partner, the sequel focuses on the overbearing nature of Armenian parents eager to plan a wedding their own way. The play satirizes traditional elements of the Armenian family and cultural life and everyone in the audience found the story appealing, meaningful and comical.

see PLAY, page 13

Gallery Z Exhibit Features Top Armenian Painters

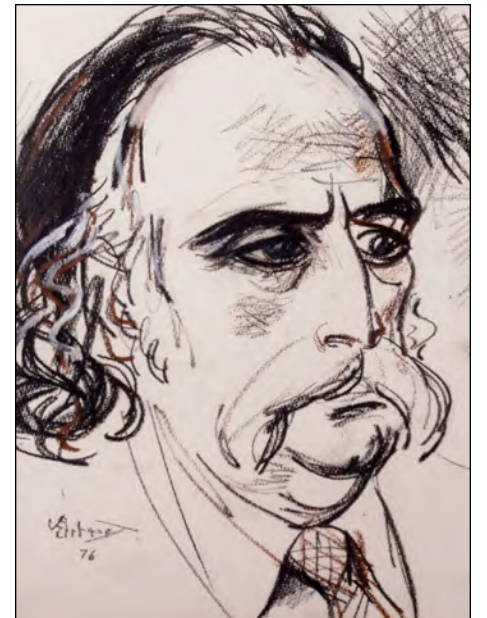
PROVIDENCE, R.I. – Gallery Z in April will showcase the long tradition of exceptional fine art by many of the world's most talented Armenian artists, past and present, from amongst its stable of over 400 established artists from many different backgrounds.

Featured artist Alexander Grigoryan (1927-2008), a celebrated artist born in Leninakan (Gyumri), Armenia, received the highest honor in Armenian Art. He has painted portraits of William Saroyan, Alex Manoogian and director Rouben Mamoulian.

There will be a reception on Thursday, April 20, 5 to 9 p.m.

Grigoryan not only worked in a palette of oils on canvas but was versatile in assorted media, also recognized for his sculptures, pencil portraits and poetry, receiving numerous awards and honorary diplomas.

He graduated from the Yerevan Institute of Art and Theatre, and also studied at the Yerevan Art Specialized School and at the Repin Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in Leningrad. A follower of international artist-painter Martiros Saryan, Grigoryan achieved fame after participating in the exhibition "Five Artists of Armenia" (Alexander Grigoryan, A. Kapantsyan, L. Bajbeuk-Melikyan, H. Siravyan, A. Minas). His works hang in the National Gallery in Yerevan, as well as in museums, galleries and private collections in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Los Angeles, New York, Toronto, Madrid, London, Beirut, Warsaw, Sao Armenia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Bulgaria and more.



Sketch of William Saroyan by Alexander Grigoryan

Said Martiros Saryan of him, "My dearest, noblest Alexander Grigoryan is one of the most talented artists. He creates Art."

In addition to Gallery Z's regular website, director Berge Zorian had also created a designated Armenian-art website (www.armenianart-galleryz.com) as a user-friendly reference for the gallery's extensive representation of many foremost Armenian artists with their biographies.

A diverse collection of works in assorted media will also be on exhibit from the following other excellent recognized Armenian artists: Vladimir Aivazyan b.1915 d.1999, Lazar Artazian b.1857 d.1924, "Pakrad" Ashot-Krikorian b.1939, Rafael Atoyan b.1931, Mariam Attarian, Anoush Bargamian b. 1963, Martin Barooshian b.1929, Seda Bekarian b.1953, Yevkine De Greef b.1934, Areg Elibekian b.1970, Robert Elibekian b.1941, Vagharshag Elibekian b. 1910 d.1994, Samuel

see GALLERY, page 14



ARTS & LIVING

Detroit Presents A Family Affair Of the Musical Variety

DETROIT – The St. John Armenian Church Music Guild and the Tekeyan Cultural Association presented a musical afternoon on March 12, 2017 at the St. John Church Cultural Hall in Southfield, Mich., featuring violinists Henrik and Hrayr Karapetyan, and pianist Hasmik Manukyan. The audience members were wowed by their energetic performances of the classical music of Milhaud, E. Bagdasaryan, Brahms, Babajanian, and Khachaturian.

Manukyan, gave an expressive, technically superior performance of Brahms' *Poeme for Piano*. Henrik and Hrayr, whether performing together the *Serenade with Dandelion* by V. Sharafyan or as soloists, executed every note with outstanding technique and virtuosity. Given the beauty of the classical selections, the audience members were delightfully transformed to the light-hearted, entertaining selections of Shostakovich's *Five Pieces* and Frollov's *Divertimento*.

The three received their initial musical training in their native Yerevan, Armenia and have continued to perform throughout the world.

The Karapetyan brothers dedicated this concert to the memory of their father, Hayk Karapetyan, a prominent journalist and avid lover of classical music. A surprise appearance was made by Lucine Sahakyan, the mother of the brothers, who sang the familiar Armenian folk song, *Chinar Es*. After an encore, the artists received the 200 guests at an afterglow reception.

The St. John Armenian Church Music Guild promotes concerts of classical, traditional/folk, sacred, and contemporary music performed by Armenian and non-Armenian musicians of high caliber. Past performances sponsored by the Music Guild were musicians from the Detroit Opera Company, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Sima Trio, and Ani and Ida Kavafian.

-Violet Cholakian



Pianist Hasmik Manukyan



Pianist Hasmik Manukyan and violinists Henrik and Hrayr Karapetyan



Lucine Sahakyan sings, accompanied by Hasmik Manukyan.

Saturday, June 3, 2017
at 8:00 PM

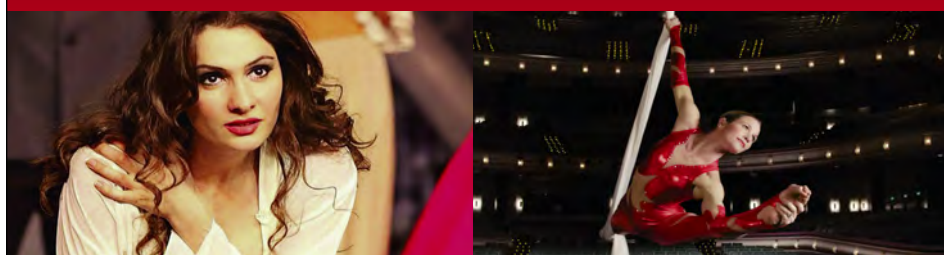
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Sequel to Hit Armenian Play A Success

PLAY, from page 12

"I laughed so much I had tears running down my eyes," said audience member Ruby Gulian. "I truly enjoyed the performance and I congratulate all of the young Armenians involved on stage and in the audience."

"My entire family enjoyed the dynamic storyline and spot-on cast," said guest Raffi Salbashian. "We need more professional productions like this in our community."

An added benefit to staging the play performance was the friendships and bonds formed off-stage over the course of a seven-month rehearsal process. Though all Armenian, many in the group hadn't met one another before and enjoyed the opportunity to expand their net-

works even further.

"It was a thrill to be in the company of such dedicated talents serving the Armenian-American community," said Raffie Bagrevandian, a real-estate professional from Astoria who played the role of Russian-Armenian businessman Sergei. "The positive support received from the multi-cultural audience was invigorating and I'm looking forward to collaborating with this magnetic group once again."

"What was important to me, aside from making people laugh, was to stir feeling in the audience," said Babayan. "I wanted this story and these characters to remain with everyone even after the laughter subsided."



Aram Gharapetian (playing the role of patriarch Koko Keshishian) and Nairi Hartounian (playing the role of matriarch Siroun Keshishian) during a scene from *Where Is Your Groom Part II*.

'The Promise' Screens at Vatican With Director Terry George

By Nick Vivarelli

ROME (*Variety*) – “The Promise,” a movie about the Armenian genocide, screened at the Vatican on Tuesday with director Terry George, producer Eric Esrailian and some talent in attendance, in a clear sign of Catholic Church support ahead of the film’s upcoming US release. (See story on page 1.)

The big-budget epic was bankrolled by late billionaire Kirk Kerkorian. Its lead actors, Christian Bale and Oscar Isaac, did not make the trek to Vatican City, but the intimate event held for Vatican officials in the 50-seat Vatican Cinematheque’s screening room was attended by stars Shohreh Aghdashloo and James Cromwell and by singer-songwriter Chris Cornell, who composed the theme song.

The Vatican screening comes after Pope Francis last year made his first visit to Armenia. During the visit, he used the term “genocide” to describe the slaughter of an estimated 1.5 million Armenians by Ottoman Turks during World War I.

The pope’s remark sparked an angry reaction by the Turkish government, which strongly denies that a genocide occurred, arguing that it was wartime and many Turks were killed as well and insisting there was never a systematic plan to execute Armenians.

Esrailian, head of Survival Pictures, which he set up with Kerkorian to produce “The Promise,” traveled to Armenia for the papal visit.

“When he [Pope Francis] mentioned the word ‘genocide’ once in the big Mass, you could hear a kind of collective gasp and people getting tearful because he spoke really as a world leader,” Esrailian recalled. He noted that Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity as a state religion, “so it has a special place in Catholicism.”

“When there was awareness [within the Vatican] that a major film was being made, we were contacted to screen the movie. So we sent a private link to be viewed,” he said.

“The Promise,” which world-premiered at the Toronto Film Festival last September, will go on wide release in the US on 2,000 screens via Open Road Films on April 21.

The roughly \$100-million film is considered a breakthrough after several attempts to make a Hollywood film about the Armenian Genocide failed during past decades because of what

director Terry George calls a “denialist lobby,” which these days is efficiently run by the government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, he claims.

Turkish Counterpart

George said there was a denialist propaganda machine behind “The Ottoman Lieutenant,” a film with strikingly similar elements to “The Promise,” but which allegedly takes the side of the denialists. “Ottoman Lieutenant” went on release via New York-based Paladin on roughly 200 screens in the U.S. in March.

“It’s an Erdogan propaganda film released as a feature film in the United States, remarkably, just ahead of us,” the director said. “The Ottoman Lieutenant,” which stars Josh Hartnett and Ben Kingsley, was produced by a Turkish company called Eastern Sunrise Films.

Variety critic Dennis Harvey, in his review of “The Ottoman Lieutenant,” wrote that, “[in] this primarily Turkish-funded production, the historical, political, ethnic and other intricacies – not to mention that perpetual elephant in the room, the Armenian Genocide, which commenced in 1915 – are glossed over in favor of a generalized ‘Whattaya gonna do... war is bad’ aura that implies conscience without actually saying anything.”

“The Promise” centers on a love story involving a medical student (Isaac), a journalist (Bale), and the Armenian woman (Charlotte Le Bon) who steals their hearts. All three find themselves grappling with the Ottomans’ decision to begin rounding up and persecuting Armenians.

“The construct of the love triangle is clearly there for people who are unaware of the genocide or not particularly that interested in it,” said George.

“It’s a big, old-fashioned love story. I think we’ve created a classic form of story, and hopefully women in particular will be entertained by it,” the director added.

#KeepThePromise

As part of its marketing strategy, Survival Pictures has launched a #KeepThePromise social impact campaign for which it has already recruited Elton John, Barbara Streisand, Andre Agassi, Cher, Sylvester Stallone, among others, for an anti-genocide call to action connected to the film which has a strong philanthropic aspect. Survival Pictures’ cut of the box office will go to charities including The Sentry, the non-profit group co-founded by George Clooney and activist and author John Prendergast.

Gallery Z Exhibit Features Top Armenian Painters

GALLERY, from page 12

Gareginyan b.1961, A. Gevorgian b.1928 d.2003, Emma Gregorian b.1943, Avejik A. Hagopian b.1944, Harutune Hovhanesian b.1922, Edward Issabekian b.1914 d.2007, Levon Jamgochian b.1947, Albert Khachaderian b.1938 Vava Khachadourian b. 1895 d.1984, Stephen Koharian b.1982, Mary Melikian b.1927, Kevork Mourad b.1970, Zareh Mutafian b.1907 d.1980, Petros Najarian, Karnig Nalbandian b.1916 d.1989, Marsha Odabashian b.1954, Martin Petrosyan b.1936, Hovsep Pushman b.1877 d.1966, Simon Samsonian b.1915 d.2003, Kegham Tazian b.1938, Vartan Tovmasian b.1948.

In addition, Gallery Z displays a rotating selection of original fine art (paintings, photographs, drawings, mixed media, glass, sculptures, assemblages, lithographs) from its stable of over 400 locally, nationally or internationally renowned fine artists, along with fine ceramics and pottery, jewelry and Armenian and international handicrafts. The “Italy” room expands the local Federal Hill Italian ambiance with “Dreamy Venice”, luminous handmade Murano glass gifts and jewelry imported from Venice by Gallery Associate Linda Kamajian, set amidst fine art either related to Italy or by some of Gallery Z’s established Italian-American artists.



Drawing of a woman by Simon Samsonian

The exhibit will go through April 30. Gallery hours are Wednesday 12-6 p.m., Thursday-Saturday 12-8 p.m., Sunday 12-6 p.m. and by appointment.

All receptions are free and open to the public.

“★★★★★
A POWERFUL,
EXCITING EPIC.”
Ted Baehr, *Movieguide*

OSCAR ISAAC
CHARLOTTE LE BON
CHRISTIAN BALE

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IN THEATERS APRIL 21

SURVIVAL PICTURES
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PG-13
OPEN ROAD

Monumental Book on *Khachkars* Presented At Zohrab Center

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK – The year 1993 was a life-changing year for Hrair Hawk Khatcherian. That year, he was told that he had lung cancer and had only 10 days “to die.” Subjected to unbearably painful treatments in the hospital, he had placed on his hospital room wall a cross and photographs of Armenia and Artsakh.

“It was by staring at them fiercely, day by day, with my mortally wounded hawk’s eyes that I succeeded in tearing myself from the claws of death, to take flight again, and to rise high in the sky in the direction of my true destiny,” he revealed. It marked the beginning of a unique mission for him.

Since that crucial year, Khatcherian made a solemn promise to God that he would photograph *Khachkars* around the world. “My approach comes from the biblical, faith and soul-filled side of my life. The story of *Khachkars* is to bring humanity back to heaven.”

And so began a 24-year grueling journey involving “research, planning, cars, boats, airplanes, helicopters, cameras, reflectors, tripods, cameras, flash and tape measure.”

The result became a monumental book, *Khachkar*.

On Monday, March 30, the photographer presented an engrossing lecture replete with dozens of slides from this unique album to an enthusiastic crowd, at the Zohrab Information Center of the Armenian Diocese.

In his welcome message, Zohrab Center Director Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan said, “this unprecedented album, spanning over 500 pages, with more than 1,000 exquisite photographs, comprises the most comprehensive photographic documentation to date of these intricately adorned crosses sculpted into stone – no two alike – which are omnipresent throughout the Armenian homeland.”

And in Hawk Khatcherian’s own words, this herculean work of the Christian art form “is a book that will never be completed,” related Fr. Daniel.

“*Khatch* means cross in Armenian,” said Khatcherian, starting his talk. “Born with a predestined family name of Khatcherian, I could not help but witness and photograph *Khachkars*, (stone-carved crosses).”

For Khatcherian, this life’s work has been a soulful pilgrimage of 24 years to 45 countries, encompassing “Christ, heaven, hell, earth, cow dung, mud, rain, hail, clouds, and sun.” These travels included Armenia, Artsakh, historic Armenia, Cilicia, Iran, Georgia, Lebanon, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Crimea, Venice and museums worldwide.

Danger Zones

Many times, these trips were in dangerous militarized areas, including near the Azerbaijani border, and at the base of Mt. Ararat which had been mined by the Turkish government. Often, he walked for three to four hours in muddy forests, or rock strewn cliffs, in freezing cold or brutally hot weather, sometimes going back to the same spot many times to catch the right light or wait until the rain or snow had subsided.

In Jerusalem, he perfected his climbing skills, borrowing a ladder spanning two floors high to get the correct angle of a *Khachkar* imbedded in the cupola of a church.

“These *Khachkars* did not happen

overnight,” he related. “The master carvers dedicated their art and creativity for important events and victories, even for the birth of a village, an ordinary child’s birth, for the fertility of crops, for rain, or for the health of a sick person,” he said, adding that on some stones secret messages were inscribed.

Christ and Mother Mary were dominant subjects, and the themes of angels, eagles, lions, oxen are repeated again and again on these art forms. From the 13th century on, Christ is never shown crucified, with a few rare exceptions. He is depicted at the top of the plaque, in a triumphal way.

Commenting on some of the areas, he said that the *Khachkars* in Artsakh were “more down to earth, natural and unique, with the tallest (some 12 feet high) found in the Dadivank church in the remote and scenically beautiful Kelbajar region of Artsakh. They were so tall because centuries ago, the area was home to some of the royal princes of the Armenian homeland.

In Kars, *Khachkars* had been used as masonry, and in Van as steps for defense. In Nakhichevan, now under the control of Azerbaijan, they were employed to build train tracks. In Nakhichevan’s Julfa cemetery, the



Photographer Hrair “Hawk” Khatcherian

biggest in all of Armenia’s history, where several thousands of *Khachkars* stood, the cemetery was completely destroyed in 2002 and 2005 by the local Azerbaijani authorities.

The *Khachkar*, distinguished by the originality of its appearance, and dominated by the image of the cross, symbolizes the Tree of Life. Its particular scale is particularly striking, and goes back over one thousand years, surviving to the present day, not only on Armenian territories not systematically destroyed, but also in diasporan communities.

Patrick Donabedian of Aix Marseille University has written, “While embodying a strong national and religious identity, the art of *Khachkars*, probably the most iconic example of Armenia through the ages, demonstrates a large openness to the outside world, and a great faculty of exchanging and sharing. It is definitely the opposite of the hatred it is sometimes the victim of.”

Today, in excellent health, Khatcherian whose photographs encompass 14 unique albums, “lives only for his family (wife and two teenage children), Armenia, Artsakh, and the fundamental and exceptional benchmarks of the Armenian world.”



Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

Fresh Sautéed Spinach and Vegetable Salad

INGREDIENTS

1 lb. spinach, washed, stems removed, roughly chopped
1 medium zucchini, peeled, diced
1/2 medium red onion, minced
1 medium cucumber, peeled, seeded, diced
2-3 large cloves garlic, mashed
1 cup plain white or Greek yogurt
1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1/2 teaspoon cumin
1/2 teaspoon dried mint
3 tablespoons olive oil plus 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Zest of one lemon
Sea or Kosher salt and black pepper
Aleppo pepper or paprika as garnish
Fresh chopped mint as garnish

PREPARATION:

Sauté the garlic in a tablespoon of olive oil for about a minute, add the spinach, zucchini and red onions, toss, and cook for 5 minutes on medium heat. Remove the pan from heat and transfer the spinach and vegetables to a bowl and keep warm.

In another bowl, combine the cucumber with the yogurt, red pepper flakes, cumin, dried mint, the remaining olive oil, lemon juice, and salt and pepper. Add the sautéed spinach and vegetables to this mixture and toss to coat all ingredients. Garnish this salad with lemon zest, Aleppo pepper or paprika, and fresh chopped mint and serve.

Serves 4.

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

*For Christine’s recipes that have been published in Sunset and Cooking Light Magazines, go to: <http://www.myrecipes.com/search/site/Datian>

Fine Arts Committee Of St. John Armenian Church

Presents

A Retrospective Exhibition Of works by

NORA AZADIAN

Oils, watercolors
charcoals & tempera
Portraits, Landscapes
Still life-s

Sunday, April 23, 2017

Introduction of the artist
and her creative world by

Dr. Raffi Belian

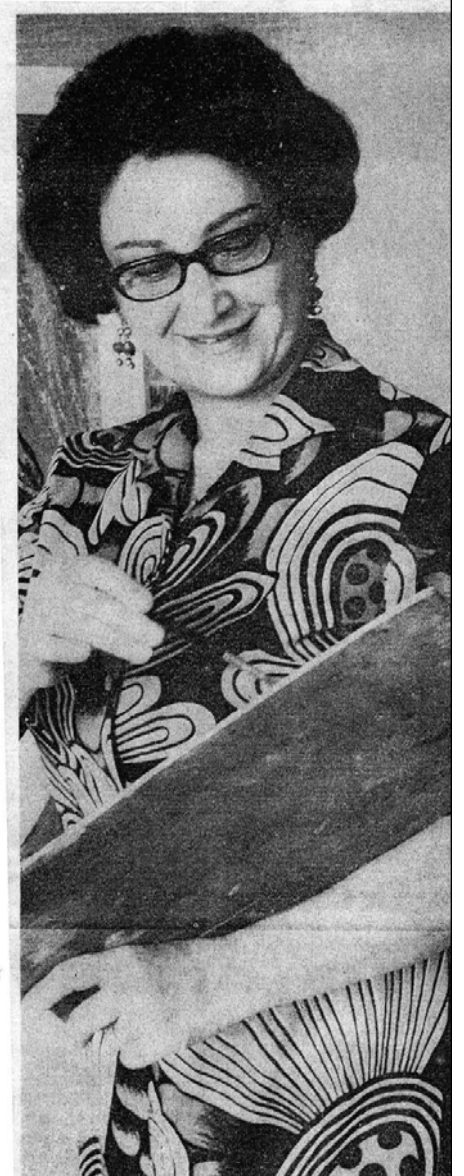
Chairman, Fine Arts Committee

Opening Reception

12:30 – 3:00 p.m.

St. John Armenian Church
22001 Northwestern Hwy.
Southfield, Michigan

Exhibition will continue
through April 27.





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.

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 — Eastern Caribbean Cruise aboard the Royal Caribbean's Freedom Of The Seas. Travelling to: St. Kitts / St. Johns, Antigua / San Juan / Labadee, Private Island. Cabin Rates starting from US \$919 / person 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 Janie.

MASSACHUSETTS

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 Lightning, 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 asteonian@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 Kesablian 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 — "Armenian Science and Science Education: Scientific Research in Armenia - Armenia's Young Scientists" presented by Professor Ashot Chilingarian. Learn about the future of science and science education, its promises and struggles. Sponsored by Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA), Armenian Cultural Foundation and NAASR. 7 p.m. Free and open to public. Refreshments provided. For info Alisa Stepanian at asteonian@aol.com or 617-501-1215.

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 — Concert featuring winner of multiple international competitions, violinist, Eva Aronian (from Canada) graduating from New England Conservatory (NEC) and pianist Pierre-Nicolas Colombat, graduate student at NEC. Reception 2-3 p.m., concert 3-4 p.m. Hosted by the Canadian Consulate, the Andreassian Music Fund, and the Canadian Women's Club at the Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic Street, Arlington, MA tickets \$15. RSVP at armanda2711@yahoo.com or 617.962.0049. Limited seating

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 Nevert 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 US diplomat since Ambassador Morgenthau's story in 1918. All welcome to attend. Complimentary light luncheon. For further information, contact the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632.

APRIL 27 — Unwind with ArmComedy, at 7 p.m. Make Armenia Green Again is a benefit for Armenian Assembly of America and Armenia Tree Project. ASA Boston is joining forces with these organizations to bring ArmComedy to all students! This student-only event with ArmComedy is \$15 (with student ID) and is in English. Includes pizza/refreshments, and your donation will help plant a tree in Armenia. Ticket link: www.tinyurl.com/armcomedyasa Location: Northeastern University (Richards Hall) (Green Line Northeastern University stop or Orange Line Ruggles stop).

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 Chaverdian, 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 Nevert 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 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 20 — A Day of Faith, Hope, Love and Service at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary starting at 4:30 p.m. This event will include Divine Liturgy, diaconate ordination, and consecration of a new baptismal font (4:30pm), 2017 Graduation Ceremony (7:00pm), and an evening reception (7:30pm). His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate, will officiate. Join us for the entire evening or just a segment! 486 Bedford Road, Armonk, NY 10504. RSVP by May 11 to 914-273-0200 or info@stnersess.edu. For more info or to donate go to www.stnersess.edu. All are invited.

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

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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



ARTS & LIVING

'The Promise' Opens Across US and Canada on April 21

PROMISE, from page 1

#ThePromiseTheFilm and invite friends and family to join the campaign. (3) Go to daytime and night screenings of "The Promise" during its opening week. (4) Review the film online at www.rottentomatoes.com and www.imdb.com as honestly as you see fit.

Produced by Kirk Kerkorian's Survival Pictures and directed by Academy Award winner Terry George ("Hotel Rwanda"), "The Promise" features an outstanding international cast, including Oscar Isaac, Charlotte Le Bon, Christian Bale, Shohreh Aghdashloo, Angela Sarafyan, and many more. All proceeds from



Oscar Isaac as Michael Boghosian in "The Promise"

nied from Paris after the sudden death of her father. When Michael meets Ana, their shared Armenian heritage sparks an attraction that explodes into a romantic rivalry between the two men, even as Michael hangs on to a promise from his past. After the Turks join the war on the German side, the Empire turns violently against its own ethnic minorities. Despite their conflicts, everyone must find a way to survive – even as monumental events envelope their lives.

In addition to the all-star cast, acclaimed musician and activist Serj Tankian served as the film's executive music consultant and contributed a modern rendition of the Armenian

folk song, *Sari Siroun Yar* to the soundtrack. "It's been an honor to be an impartial ear and eye to the film," said Tankian. "The best way to counter high budget disinformation campaigns by the Turkish government is to move people with the truth via the arts. I've been doing it for years with music and wanted to help do it through film somehow." The original title song for the film was written and performed by Chris Cornell of the band Soundgarden and the original score was composed by Academy Award winner Gabriel Yared ("The English Patient").

In addition to the release in the United States and Canada on April 21, "The Promise" will also be released in the Middle East (Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, UAE, Yemen) on April 20; in Armenia and Russia on April 27; in the United Kingdom on April 28; in Poland on May 5; in Australia on May 25; in Thailand on June 1; in Spain on June 2; in Belgium on June 14; in the Netherlands on June 15; in Singapore on June 22; in South Africa on June 23 and in Italy on August 24.

The grassroots campaign to ensure the box-office success of "The Promise" has been a worldwide effort supported by a joint coalition of Armenian organizations in North America,



Director Terry George

including: All-Armenian Student Association (All-ASA), Armenia Fund, Armenia Tree Project, Armenian Assembly of America, Armenian Dramatic Arts Alliance, Armenian Catholic Eparchy in the United States & Canada, Armenian Film Foundation, Armenian Gay and Lesbian Association of New York (AGLA NY), Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA), Armenian Missionary Association of America, Armenian Missionary Association of Canada, Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA), Armenian National Committee of Canada (ANCC), Armenian National Institute (ANI), Armenian Network of America, Armenian Prelacy of Canada, the Armenian Relief Society (ARS) of the United States, Armenian Students' Association of America, Arpa Foundation for Film, Music and Art (AFFMA), Children of Armenia Fund (COAF), Constantinople Armenian Relief Society (CARS), Diocese of the

Armenian Church of America (Eastern), Diocese of the Armenian Church of Canada, Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to Canada, Embassy of the Republic of Armenia to the United States, Gay and Lesbian Armenian Society (GALAS), Hamazkayin Educational & Cultural Society of the United States, Hayastan Foundation Canada, Knights and Daughters of Vartan, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), Office of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in the United States, ONEArmenia, Organization of Istanbul Armenians (OIA), Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada, Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief (SOAR), Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, and Zoryan Institute.

To join the joint effort in North America, contact communications@agbu.org.

the film will be donated to non-profit organizations, a first for a film of this scale.

In the film, it is 1914. As the Great War looms, the vast Ottoman Empire is crumbling. Constantinople (Istanbul)—its once vibrant, multicultural capital—is about to be consumed by chaos. Michael Boghosian (Oscar Isaac) arrives in the cosmopolitan hub as a medical student determined to bring modern medicine to Siroun, his ancestral village in southern Turkey where Turkish Muslims and Armenian Christians have lived side by side for centuries. Photo-journalist Chris Meyers (Christian Bale) has come only partly to cover geo-political news. He is mesmerized by his love for Ana (Charlotte Le Bon), an Armenian artist he has accompa-

MASSACHUSETTS

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

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 — The Society of Istanbul Armenian's of Boston will Honor Rev. Arakel Aljalian as the Father of the Year. Saturday at 7 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 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 admis-

sion, limited seating. RSVP to info@panasianrep.org, or call 212-868-4030

APRIL 27 — A Celebration of Service. Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, invites the public to a celebratory reception to congratulate the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan and the Very Rev. Fr. Simeon Odabashian on the 20th anniversary of their priestly ordinations. Vespers service at 7 p.m., at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral. The reception and program will follow at 7:30 p.m. in Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium of the Diocesan Center (630 Second Ave.). To RSVP (by April 17) call (212) 686-0710 or email rsvp@ordination20th.org. Donations will be used to underwrite the publication of a revised, expanded edition of a church classic, Prayers for Healing. Contributions may be made payable to the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America with Memo: Prayer Book. Contributions can be mailed to the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, 630 Second Ave., New York NY 10016.

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.

PENNSYLVANIA

APRIL 23 — A Genocide Remembrance Event. Remembering the Past/Building the Future. Sponsored by the Armenian Intercommunal Committee of Philadelphia. Sunday. 2 p.m. St. Gregory Armenian

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 Chaldranian 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 Dedication of Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Monument, and the 102nd commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, 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 program. 12:45 p.m. Guest speaker Marc A. Mamigonian, NAASR'S director of Academic Affairs. All are welcome to come and remember Holy Martyrs and survivors of the 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.

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

COMMENTARY

A Towering Mistake in Baku

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Extreme vetting and due diligence are standards which President Donald Trump wishes to be exercised by everybody except for himself and his family. Before him, almost every presidential candidate, and for that matter every candidate for public office, had felt duty-bound to reveal his or her own finances. Mr. Trump, however, refused to divulge his finances and the taxes he had paid, but he got elected anyway. He did, however, pledge to extricate himself from his businesses, delegating the day-to-day operation to his sons, Donald Jr. and Eric, but he continues his financial interest in the company.

Experts on the matter of ethics, including the Office of the Government Ethics Director Walter Shaub, say that President Trump is not doing enough to divest himself from his business interests. That kind of involvement will open the presidency up to criticism that those interests may color how the US approaches that country, since he has international business interests around the world, especially in some volatile spots.

Already, Mr. Trump's administration's warm relations with Vladimir Putin and his soft spot regarding Russian issues are believed to be derived from his business interests in that country.

If those allegations are of a speculative nature, more factual criticism has recently been directed at the president and his business interests in one of the most corrupt states in the world, namely Azerbaijan.

In 2014, Trump announced a hotel project in Baku, in which he partnered with Anar Mammadov, the son of Azeri Transportation Minister Ziya Mammadov, one of President Ilham Aliyev's cronies. Mammadov is considered one of the most corrupt government officials, a standout even in Azerbaijan, well known for rampant corruption by the government. (Mammadov's son had a recent fallout with First Lady Mehriban Aliyev's clan, the Pasha Holding Group, having duped his partners in a business deal.)

"Even though the Trump organization appears to have withdrawn from the Baku tower deal, serious questions remain unanswered about the Trump organization's potential criminal liability," they wrote.

Before coming to the legal impact of the above deal, one major question pops up in our minds: why was Azerbaijan excluded from the Muslim countries whose citizens are banned from receiving visas to the US?

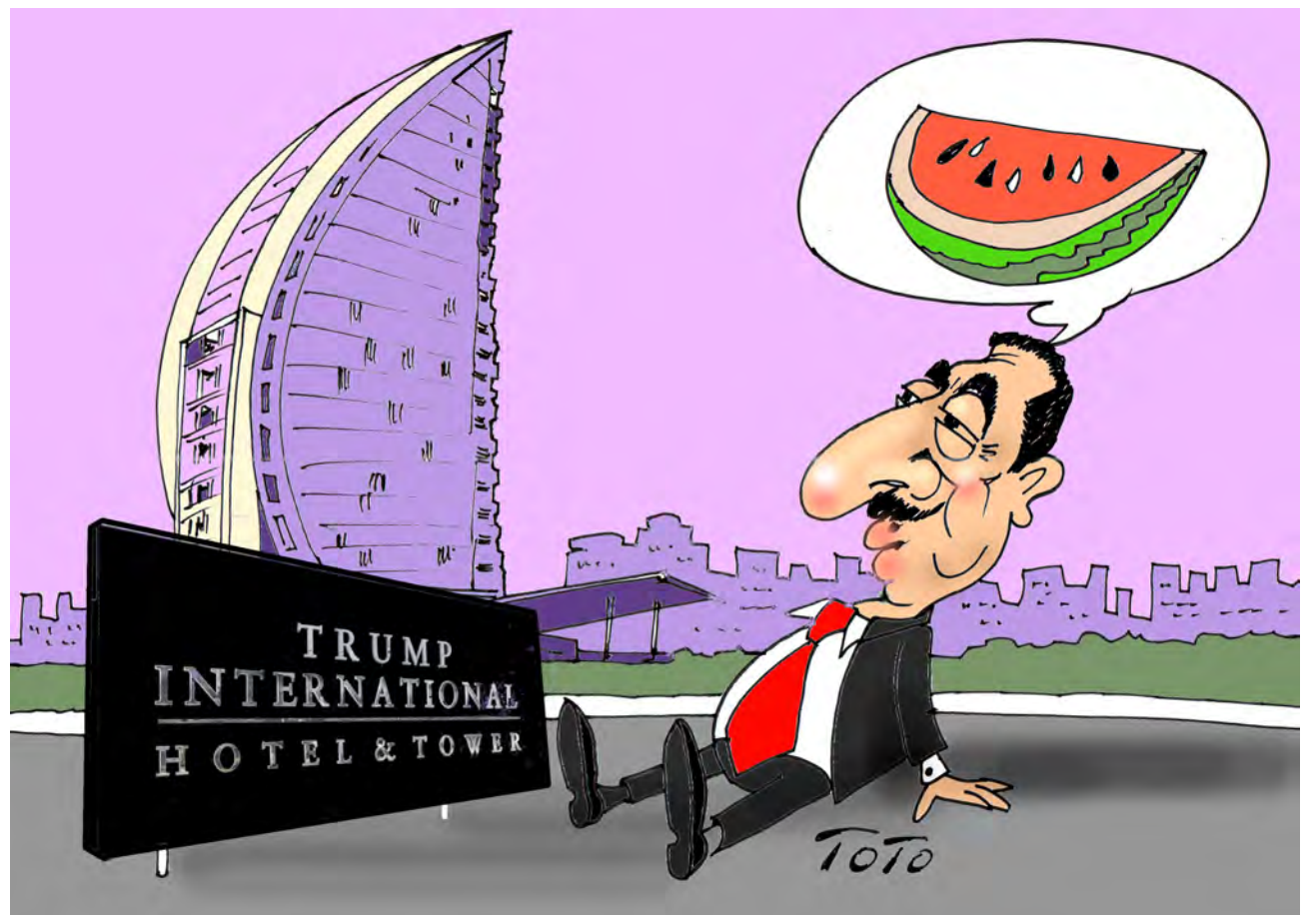
But the request for the probe seems to have more serious political and legal implications; thus, Ziya Mammadov had ongoing business relations with the Iranian construction company Azarpasillo, which in turn is believed to be a front for the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. That would have violated US and international sanctions put in place against Iran.

From all indications, the Baku tower project has gone bankrupt because of many miscalculations.

In defense of the Trump operation, the company lawyer Alan Garten has announced that "we did not own the hotel. We had no equity, we did not control the project, we did not pay any money to anyone. Therefore, it could not be a violation of FCPA." (The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, passed in 1977, forbade American companies from participating in a scheme to reward a foreign government official in exchange for material benefit or preferential treatment.) That kind of statement is the primary duty of any lawyer but it remains to be seen what an investigation would reveal if one is carried out.

According to the *New Yorker* story, a photo appeared of Ivanka Trump on her website, in which she wore a hard hat, in the Baku building, with the caption, "Ivanka has overseen the development of Trump International Hotel & Tower Baku since its inception, and she recently returned from a trip to the fascinating city in Azerbaijan to check in on the project's progress."

It is good to know that all the money wasted on the project was from Azerbaijan, whose fortunes are dwindling in recent months. In an unrelated issue, British Petroleum (BP), which is the main investor in Azerbaijan, has decided to cease its



The American public is exposed daily to such scandals, which have become common place. But Mr. Trump's association, in doing business with corrupt governments, goes beyond business ethics to impact US laws and national security.

Indeed, a letter by three Democrat senators addressed to respective authorities, has requested an inquiry into the Trump project in Baku, in light of revelations which appeared in article in *New Yorker* magazine ("Trump's Worst Deal," March 13). The letter by Senators Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Diane Feinstein of California and Ben Cardin of Maryland was addressed to Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and FBI Director James Comey. The senators specifically noted in the letter: "It appears that the lack of due diligence by the Trump organization described in the article exposed President Trump and his organization to notoriously corrupt Azerbaijani oligarchs and may also have exposed the Trump organization to the IRGC or Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.

operations in Shahdeniz oil field. Also, Georgia, which has bypassed Armenia in all regional projects as part of its friendly ties with Azerbaijan, has decided to cut its dependence on Azeri gas supplies.

Whether an investigation is carried out or not, the revelations themselves have already tarnished Trump's business deals.

When so many business interests are at play, what would be the prospect of a Trump solution to the Karabakh issue? He has not yet addressed that problem because he has been learning the trade on the job.

What message he would issue for the Armenian community on April 24 is also a great unknown.

Unpredictability has been the hallmark of Trump policies but he must at least be consistent with himself. If extreme vetting is a priority for the president, he must be the first one to comply with that policy. Otherwise, Baku's bankrupt tower may come to symbolize his policies.

Mirror Spectator



Established 1932
An ADL Publication

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The Armenian Mirror-Spectator is published weekly, except two weeks in July and the first week of the year, by:

Baikar Association, Inc.

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

Telephone: 617-924-4420

FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

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For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

U.S.A.	\$80 a year
Canada	\$125 a year
Other Countries	\$190 a year

© 2014 The Armenian Mirror-Spectator
Periodical Class Postage Paid at Boston, MA
and additional mailing offices.

ISSN 0004-234X

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Trump's Attack on Syria: Wrong For so Many Reasons

Many Americans and people around the world followed with great concern the off-the-cuff and zany ideas Donald Trump voiced during the presidential campaign and more ominously after becoming President.

It is one thing to disagree with him on a domestic policy issue like banning Muslim tourists or healthcare or building a wall, it is quite another when he issues threats to foreign countries such as Iran and North Korea, and even worse when he orders a missile attack on Syria.

What is wrong with such a disastrous decision? President Trump does not have the requisite background knowledge about the Syrian conflict, except for what he has read in some fringe publications and seen on his favorite TV Channel, FOX News.

President Trump stated that he was deeply touched by the images of babies he had seen on TV who had been hurt by a chemical attack. Who would not be? Certainly, he had an emotional and impulsive reaction to heart-wrenching pictures, which cannot be a substitute for a well-thought out foreign policy without a thorough examination of the facts of this tragic incident and careful consideration of the consequences of an extreme action like launching 59 tomahawk missiles on a Syrian air base.

Fortunately, President Trump's aides alerted Russia shortly before the attack, to avoid any Russian casualties which could have had catastrophic consequences for the entire world.

Furthermore, President Trump's actions violated the US Constitution, as he neither sought nor received the legally required authorization from the US Congress to launch a war on another sovereign state.

President Trump had neither the wisdom nor the patience to wait for the outcome of the investigation of the circumstances of the chemical attack – to verify who is truly responsible for this terrible attack.

The Trump Administration accused the Syrian Air Force of carrying out a chemical attack near Idlib. The Syrian and Russian governments have a different version of these events. They affirm that Syria does not possess any chemical weapons after its 2003 agreement to dispose of all such hazardous materials. Furthermore, Syria claims that the chemical explosion was caused by its Air Force bombing a warehouse belonging to Syrian terrorists who had stored these dangerous materials. It makes no sense for President Assad to use chemical weapons while he is winning, risk antagonizing the West, and precipitating a military backlash.

We recall that back in 2013, there was another chemical attack on a Damascus suburb that killed many more people than the one near Idlib. Back then, President Obama was close to going to war with Syria wrongly believing that the Syrian government had crossed his announced “red line.” However, when he learned that the chemical attack near Damascus was a “false flag,” meaning that it was orchestrated by Turkey and its terrorist allies to force the United States to intervene militarily in Syria, President Obama did not go through with his plans to launch missiles on Syria. No one should forget that US officials in 2003 presented fake “intelligence” evidence to the world claiming that President Saddam Hussein possessed WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction), to justify the invasion of Iraq.

Ironically, many Republican members of Congress who are now applauding President Trump for his decision to attack Syria, back then were the most vocal critics of President Obama for planning a similar attack. Furthermore, even though the 2013 chemical attack killed many more people and babies, Donald Trump issued 40 tweets urging President Obama not to attack Syria. Trump did not seem to care about “beautiful little Syrian babies” back then, as he is claiming now.

Both the White House and many self-declared pundits in the American media, who have made up the most outrageous lies about Syria in the last six years, are now claiming that eliminating the use of chemical weapons in Syria is in the US national interest. They also affirm that the chemical weapons are banned by international treaty and their use is a violation

of international law.

While acknowledging the truth of these statements, one has to ask:

1) Why no investigation was carried out of the chemical attack, prior to the US Missile launch?

2) Under what right President Trump has appointed himself the arbiter of international law and policeman of the world? International law, by definition, is an issue touching all countries, not just the United States. The proper venue to investigate, condemn and punish such violations of international law is the United Nations Security Council, not the White House. Furthermore, attacking a sovereign nation is itself a violation of international law.

3) By attacking Syria and destroying its military planes, President Trump has in fact emboldened and strengthened the ISIS terrorists to continue and expand their criminal acts in Syria and around the world, particularly when they see that each time they use chemical weapons, the West accuses President Assad for it and attacks Syria. Furthermore, by weakening and replacing President Assad, President Trump risks causing chaos and terrorism similar to Iraq and Libya, leading to many more deaths. Who will replace President Assad and what guarantees are there that his replacement will not be ISIS, resulting in not just 80 deaths as in the recent chemical attack, but additional million casualties on the top of the half a million deaths in the Syrian conflict in recent years? The last thing the Syrian people need is more attacks and more bloodshed. What they need is painstaking diplomatic effort to find a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

All those in the US and around the world who were concerned that President Trump would make reckless decisions and endanger international peace, have regrettably witnessed the first such incident within the first 100 days of his Presidency. Everyone now fears that more such saber-rattling and unwarranted destabilizing attacks will take place in the coming weeks and months in other parts of the world. One hopes that President Trump did not initiate the attack on Syria simply to distract attention away from many of his domestic problems, as he has done repeatedly on other issues in recent weeks.

Finally, what happened to President Trump's repeated brash statements about “America First,” and “I am the President of the United States, not the President of the world”?

Armenia's Parliamentary Election a Step Forward for Democracy?

By Raffi Elliott

Voters across Armenia took part in the country's 7th parliamentary election on Sunday, in what many observers described as the most important in Armenia's modern history. The vote comes a year and a half after Armenia passed a controversial constitutional reform bill restructuring the country into a parliamentary republic.

The ruling Republican Party of Armenia, easily retained its position, winning nearly half the national vote and 55 seats. Oligarch, Gagik Tsarukyan's party came in second with 30 seats, while the newly-formed liberal political alliance, YELQ had a surprisingly strong showing, with 9 seats. The Republicans are widely expected to form a governing coalition by adding their junior partner, the ARF's 8 seats.

Despite well-documented evidence of vote-buying and voter intimidation in the weeks prior to the vote, both local and international observers have agreed that the voting process went on without any major irregularities typical of previous elections.

Building on the successful deployment of citizen observers in previous elections, civic activists and international monitoring groups worked to train thousands of observers to cover most of the 2,000 election poll stations. They were joined by the OSCE's team of election monitoring experts. This year, dozens of diaspora-Armenians travelled to their homeland to help ensure a smooth voting process. Among them were prominent Armenian celebrities the likes of Serj Tankian, Atom Egoyan and Arsinée Khanjian.

Both the United States and the European Union pledged to support a landmark election reform agreement between the opposition and the government by providing financial support, as well as electronic voting machines and live streaming cameras. Some reports of malfunctioning cameras were addressed in a statement by the EU representation in Armenia and quick-

ly repaired. Some voting machines were also temporarily malfunctioning, including one which did not recognize President Serzh Sargsyan's fingerprint (despite repeated attempts). These glitches were attributed to technical error rather than ill intent.

Of the 9 parties and blocs officially contesting the election, only 4 made it past the threshold: the Republican Party, the Tsarukyan Alliance, the YELQ bloc and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

Of notable absence in the new parliament are former president Levon Ter-Petrosian's Armenian National Congress, Arthur Baghdasaryan's Rule of Law party Raffi Hovannisian's Heritage Party. The latter of which has been reduced to a shadow of its former prominence when Hovannisian emerged as an unlikely challenger in the 2013 presidential election.

Splitting from a long Armenian political tradition of defeated candidates calling foul, the opposition did not contest the results. YELQ published a statement citing the tally as: “on the whole formed as a result of voting by the citizens who took part in the elections.”

This sentiment was echoed by the OSCE observers who witnessed very few major voting irregularities on election day. A spokesperson for EU commissioner Federica Mogherini pledged continued support for Armenia's “democratically elected new Parliament and Government.” The Embassy of the United States in Yerevan, meanwhile, released a statement broadly praising the election process, noting that “voters were able to freely exercise their right to vote”. Some have attributed the smooth process to the presence of Batman as a registered election observer.

Critics of the government have noted, with some truth, that the ruling Republicans' employment of ‘administrative resources’ gave it an unfair electoral advantage. As with previous elections, reports of government officials coercing civil servants to vote for them have surfaced. Teachers, hospital workers and police officers were threatened with dismissal unless

they voted for the Ruling party. Older voters, with vivid memories of soviet-era ‘elections’, often comply out of fear.

The most damning evidence of ‘administrative resources’ being used in the government's favour came with the release of a report by the Union of Informed Citizens where school principals admitted to collecting votes for the ruling party. The group impersonating Republican Party officials called the principals of over 136 schools, 114 of whom reported that they had worked to secure parents' votes. In one recording, the Principal of a Gyumri school who had garnered a list of 1700 names proudly announced that they were “using all methods, including intimidation, to deal with voters.”

Republican Party spokesman, Eduard Sharmazanov deflected criticism, accusing the UIC of deceiving the principals by impersonating Republican officials. The Central Election Committee (CEC), which investigated the report at the request of the Opposition claimed to find no wrongdoing on the part of the RPA on the grounds that the recordings didn't constitute enough evidence to disqualify the party. The CEC has let off the RPA with nothing more than a slap on the wrist for obvious campaign violations in the past, including confirmed cases of vote-buying, and election-related violence.

Bribes have become a staple of this election's campaign season. The primary culprits being the ruling Republicans and the Tsarukyan Bloc. These parties have taken advantage of widespread apathy by convincing voters to ‘sell’ their votes in exchange for cash or other benefits. In some cases, voters would literally hold out for the highest bidder. Styopa Safaryan, of the opposition Free-Democrats, recounted being approached by a man at a rally in Vanadzor, asking what sort of ‘compensation’, his party was offering.

Not everyone was enticed by vote-buying and intimidation, however. Tatevik, a young schoolteacher, defied orders to vote for the Republicans. Her entire family instead voted for the opposition YELQ bloc.

Entrenched anger over the death of the ‘Bread Bringer’, (who succumbed to an illness he contracted while in police custody following his involvement in last year's ‘Sasna Tsrer’ incident) may have also pushed some voters away from the Republicans.

Sunday's election is notable for a number of reasons: It can easily be counted amongst the ‘cleanest’ ballots in Armenia's history. Most International observers, as well as the opposition, has conceded that despite some violations on voting day, the final tally corresponded with the ballots cast by voters. The question remains whether the ballots cast reflected the real intentions of citizens. It is apparent that the Republicans have used every resource at their disposal. In doing so, they accomplished the impressive feat of securing reelection despite being the most unpopular government in recent history. The opposition subsequently failed to stand out as a clear alternative. The resulted voter apathy was easily exploited by the regime.

Despite cleaner elections, vote-buying has been persistently identified as a major problem. This is more of a cultural, rather than a systemic issue since vote buying is typically possible with vote selling. Civil society's message that votes matter and should not be sold for short-term gain has yet to resonate with voters.

Twitter user, Nune Harutyunyan put it this way: “Next time, I won't protest against the gov't, I'll protest against the people who sold themselves and my future”

This election can also be seen as a turning point for opposition politics. YELQ's remarkably strong showing has transformed the bloc into the country's dominant liberal opposition force overnight. Formed as an alliance between the two recently-established liberal parties: Bright Armenia and Civic contract and the older Republican Party, YELQ nurtured a following amongst younger, mostly urban voters thanks to its ‘down to earth’ rhetoric and savvy use of social media, like its hashtag #Yelqka (there is a way out). The reputation Its leaders, see DEMOCRACY, page 20



Schumer, Geragos to Speak at Times Square Commemoration

NEW YORK – US Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and powerhouse attorney Mark Geragos will speak at the 102nd anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on Sunday, April 23, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Thousands will gather in Times Square (43rd St. & Broadway) to commemorate the first genocide of the 20th century. This historic event will pay tribute to the 1.5 million Armenians who were annihilated by the Young Turk Government of the Ottoman Empire. The commemoration will also celebrate the survival and spirit of the Armenian people, their rich heritage and global contributions and include the talented young voices of the Hovnanian Armenian School students who will sing the Armenian and American national anthems and God Bless America. Presenters will include civic, religious, humanitarian, educational, cultural leaders and performing artists. This event is free and open to the public.

Events leading up to the commemoration



US Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY)

include a genocide awareness walk-a-thon over the Brooklyn Bridge on Saturday, April 22,

2017 followed by fellowship in Brooklyn Bridge Park as well as a young professionals event at City Perch in Fort Lee, New Jersey, where Olympians Migran Arutyunyan and mixed martial arts champion Albert Ghazaryan will be present and honored.

The 102nd Armenian Genocide Commemoration is organized by the Mid-Atlantic chapters of the Knights & Daughters of Vartan (www.kofv.org), an international Armenian frater-

nal organization headquartered in the United States, and co-sponsored by the Armenian General Benevolent Union (www.agbu.org), the Armenian Assembly of America (www.aaainc.org), the Armenian National Committee of America (www.anca.org), the Armenian Council of America and the Armenian Democratic League - Ramgavars.

Participating organizations include the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, Prelacy of the Armenian Church of America, Armenian Missionary Association of America, Armenian Catholic Eparchy for US and Canada, the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA), the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF-YOARF), Armenian youth organizations and university Armenian clubs.

For more information visit, www.kofv.org/main/april232017 www.april24nyc.org, www.armenianradionj.net, www.theforgotten.org, www.armenian-genocide.org, www.twentyvoices.com

Bipartisan Congressional Group Urges Trump to Affirm Armenian Genocide

AFFIRM, from page 1

genocide, you will stand with President Reagan, who recognized the Armenian Genocide in 1981, and the Eisenhower Administration, which did the same in a 1951 submission to the International Court of Justice."

During his time in office, President Ronald Reagan squarely acknowledged the Armenian Genocide stating that "Like the genocide of the Armenians before it, and the genocide of the Cambodians which followed it – and like too many other such persecutions of too many other peoples – the lessons of the Holocaust must never be forgotten."

Additionally, the letter references America's humanitarian intervention, adding: "Among the proudest chapters in our shared history is America's remarkable record of protesting the Genocide and in caring for the survivors of this crime." The letter highlighted the Near East Relief, a Congressionally chartered humanitarian organization which raised \$116 million (more than \$2.5 billion in 2017 dollars) to aid the victims of the Ottoman Empire's mass murder of millions of Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Pontic Greeks, Syrians and other persecuted peoples.

Parliamentary Election a Step Forward for Democracy?

DEMOCRACY, from page 19

the firebrand former newspaper editor, Nikol Pashinian and the US-trained human rights lawyer, Edmon Marukyan as straight shooters in Parliament has also helped them stand out in a roster filled with political has-beens.

They have replaced Hovannisian's Heritage party in that role. The latter's poor showing as part of an electoral alliance with Vartan Oskanian and former defense minister, Seyran Ohanian, has driven the final nail in the coffin for their respective political careers. The same can be said for Rule of Law's Arthur Baghdasaryan.

Sunday's election will have far-reaching implications for Armenia's future. The effective use of new electoral monitoring technologies and methods, as well as the diaspora's participation, have demonstrated that change can be accomplished through the bal-

lot box. Serious hindrances for democracy, such as the unfair use of state resources, and vote-buying remain.

The new parliament will be faced with a real challenge. It will be tasked with reviving the country's sluggish economy, raising living standards, and restoring the broken social contract with disillusioned citizens. The Republican-led government, headed by the new, and charismatic Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan has made a number of promises in the run-up to the elections. Citizens should hold them accountable. In the meantime, it is up to the opposition to position itself as a clear, and proven alternative to the status quo. It has 5 years to accomplish this feat. The clock is ticking.

(Raffi Elliott is a Yerevan-based correspondent for *Abaka* newspaper of Montreal and the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.)

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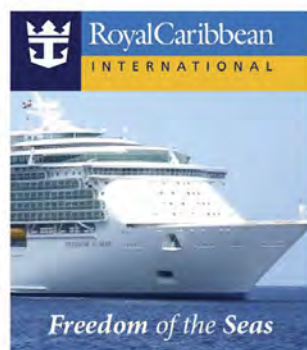
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