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NEWS IN BRIEF

120th Anniversary of Baghramyan Marked

YEREVAN (Arka) – Officials and citizens laid flowers on December 5 on the monument of Soviet military commander Marshal Ivan Baghramyan and paid tribute to his memory. The day marked his 120th birthday anniversary. Armenia’s Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan attended the event.

Baghramyan was a Soviet military commander and Marshal of the Soviet Union. During World War II, he was the first non-Slavic military officer to become a commander of a Front. His experience in military planning as a chief of staff allowed him to distinguish himself as a capable commander in the early stages of the Soviet counter-offensives against Nazi Germany. In November 1943 he received his most prestigious command as the commander of the 1st Baltic Front where he participated in the offensives which pushed German forces out of the Baltic republics.

HIV Numbers Higher in Yerevan than Provinces

YEREVAN (ARKA) – The number of people with HIV is significantly higher in the Armenian capital Yerevan than in the provinces, Seveda Hakobyan, the head of the sexopathology department at the Yerevan State Medical University, said at a news conference on December 1.

“According to our data, there are a total of 2,841 HIV carriers in Armenia, of whom 886 people (31.2 percent) live in Yerevan,” said Hakobyan.

He said 68 percent of HIV transmission in Armenia is through heterosexual intercourse while 23 percent got infected through drug use and 3.1 percent through homosexual intercourse.

He said from 1988, when the first case of AIDS was reported in Armenia to this day, some 350-360 people died of the disease.

Armenia among Top 3 Reliable Russia Partners, Survey Finds

MOSCOW (Panorama.am) – Russians view Armenia as the country’s third most reliable partner after Belarus and Kazakhstan, a poll conducted by the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM) showed.

According to VTsIOM, 60 percent of Russians named Belarus as the most reliable partner nation, with Kazakhstan with 41 percent of the vote, while Armenia is the third with 16 percent of the vote.

Among other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) members, Azerbaijan was named as the most reliable partner by 10 percent of the respondents. Georgia scored 6 percent of the vote, Turkmenistan, Moldova and Tajikistan 5 percent each, and Ukraine 1 percent.

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YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – Skygazers enjoyed magical views as a dazzling supermoon rose across Armenia. December’s full moon, traditionally known as the Cold Moon, appears bigger and brighter in the sky as it sits closer than average to Earth. That kind of full moon won’t be seen again until 2034, according to NASA. The next supermoons will appear on January 2 and January 31, 2018.

Flynn Acknowledges He Took Directions From Turkey During Trump Campaign

By Vera Bergengruen

WASHINGTON (BuzzFeed) – Ten days before he was tapped as President-elect Donald Trump’s national security adviser, Michael Flynn published an opinion column that immediately raised suspicions at the Justice Department.

“We need to adjust our foreign policy to recognize Turkey as a priority,” Flynn wrote in the *Hill* on November 8, 2016, the day of the presidential election. “We need to see the world from Turkey’s perspective.”

He argued for a range of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s talking points, defending his ruthless crackdown on dissidents, calling for the extradition of Erdogan’s rival, Fethullah Gülen, and calling Turkey “vital to US interests.”

What nobody knew then was that three days earlier, Flynn had received the third and last installment of \$530,000 in compensation for lobbying for Turkey’s interests. He would not register as a foreign agent until March, a month after he was fired from the White House.

see FLYNN, page 4

Immigrant and Refugee Aid Group Honors Afeyan

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON – About 700 community, business and education leaders from around Massachusetts gathered on November 30

US, providing them with housing, English lessons and job training. They often meet the people they help at either Logan Airport or Manchester, NH’s airport and take them directly to their new residences.

The theme of the evening was not only charity (of which there was plenty, with the event raising more than \$768,000) but combating the current insular tenor of the administration of President Donald Trump.



From left, Shari Loessberg, IINE board member, honoree Dr. Nourbar Afeyan, Jeff Thielman, president and CEO of IINE and Zoltan Csimma, chair of the IINE board

at the InterContinental Boston at the annual International Institute of New England (IINE) fundraiser, to honor Dr. Nourbar Afeyan as he received the organization’s top award, the Golden Door.

The century-old organization aids immigrants and refugees as they arrive in the

themselves.

The Golden Door Award is given annually by the IINE to a former immigrant or refugee who has become a true force in the US. And Afeyan has certainly become one in biotech, with recognition not only

see HONORS, page 10

Project Save Hosts Afternoon Of Thanks for Donors and Supporters

By Alin K. Gregorian
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WALTHAM, Mass. – Project Save Armenian Photograph Archives turned the tables on its supporters on November 19; instead of asking them, as any small non-profit does regularly, for their support, staff and a committee hosted a brunch at the Westin Hotel to thank all donors and volunteers.

As guests were heading into the main hall for lunch and speeches, the hotel lost power as a result see LUNCHEON, page 12





ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Aronian Ranked Second

PARIS (Public Radio of Armenia) – Armenia's leading grandmaster Levon Aronian has retained his second place ranking in the International Chess Federation (FIDE) December ranking of the world's top 100 players.

Reigning champion Magnus Carlsen (Norway) sits atop the list.

Aronian will participate in the last round of Grand Chess Tour in London, which also features Carlsen, Hikaru Nakamura, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Wesley So, Sergey Karjakin, Fabiano Caruana, Viswanathan Anand, Ian Nepomniachtchi and Mickey Adams.

Mansurian's Requiem Earns 2 Grammy Nods

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – Armenian composer Tigran Mansurian's *Requiem* has been nominated for Grammy Awards in two categories – Best Choral Performance and Best Contemporary Classical Composition.

Armenian conductor Constantine Orbelian has also been nominated for Grammy in the "Best Classical Solo Vocal Album" category for his role in the late Russian opera singer Dmitri Hvorostovsky's latest album "Russia Cast Adrift."

The late American musician, singer, and songwriter Chris Cornell has been nominated for a 2018 Grammy Award for his original song written for the Armenian Genocide film "The Promise."

The awards will take place on January 28.

Armenian Embassy in Poland Takes Part in New Year Charity Fair

WARSAW (Panorama.am) – The Spouses of Heads of Missions' Association (SHOM) accredited to Poland held its 10th annual New Year charity fair at the Marriott Hotel here.

The event was organized under the patronage of Poland's First Lady Agata Kornhauser-Duda. The Embassy of Armenia in Poland was also participating in the charity fair with several pavilions, presenting Armenian souvenirs, jewels, wines, brandies, sweets and traditional dishes, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported.

Kornhauser-Duda visited Armenia's pavilion, which was presented by Armenian Ambassador to Poland Edgar Ghazaryan, Kraków-based Armenian sculptor Ani Muradyan, Center for Development of Armenian-Polish Relations NGO, etc.

All proceeds will go to a number of charity, social and educational organizations in Poland.

Armenia, Estonia to Sign Protocol Ensuring Readmission Agreement

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Armenia and Estonia will sign a protocol on implementing the readmission agreement with the European Union (EU).

The Armenian Parliament is discussing the agreement on signing a protocol ensuring the readmission agreement between the Armenian and Estonian governments.

Gagik Yeganyan of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development, recalled that Armenia and the EU in 2013 signed the agreement on the readmission of persons living without permission.

"It was planned that Armenia could signed protocols ensuring the implementation of this agreement with all the EU member states. Currently we are holding talks on this issue with dozens of countries. We have already signed a similar protocol with France, Estonia is the second country with which we will sign a protocol ensuring the implementation of the readmission agreement," he said.

Yeganyan noted that the readmission process is important for Armenia taking into account the agreements to launch dialogue on liberalization of visas with the EU. According to him, without effective use of the readmission tool it's not realistic to expect that the EU will liberalize visas for Armenia.

Scholae Mundi Foundation and Mahindra Group Announce Major UWC Scholarship Commitment

MUMBAI and YEREVAN – Russian-Armenian impact investors and social entrepreneurs Ruben Vardanyan and Veronika Zonabend have collaborated with Anand Mahindra, chairman of the Mahindra Group, a global group of companies based in India, committing together to \$7.5 million in funding to provide need-based scholarships to meritorious students worldwide to study at one of the UWC (United World Colleges) schools and colleges.

UWC is a global education movement with the mission to make education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future. UWC comprises a network of 17 international schools and colleges on four continents and a system of volunteer-run national committees in 159 countries and territories worldwide that select UWC's scholars independent of socio-economic means.

All three philanthropists are strong supporters of the UWC educational movement – Vardanyan and Zonabend founded UWC Dilijan in Armenia in 2014, and Mahindra Group, led by Anand Mahindra, established UWC Mahindra College in India in 1997.

Under the new commitment, Mahindra Group will contribute INR 150 million (approximately US\$ 2.3 million) over the next five years to support need-based scholarships for

based scholarships for the coming academic year; of that, \$3.7 million will be dedicated to scholarships for international students selected to study at UWC Dilijan in Armenia. The remain-

neers from different parts of the world will enable the UWC movement to reach out to more young people and provide them with a world-class international education. Learning and living



Veronika Zonabend and Ruben Vardanyan

ing \$1.5 million will be allocated to scholarships for students from Armenia, Georgia and Russia to study at one of the other 16 UWC schools and colleges, including UWC Mahindra College. The Scholae Mundi Foundation has already announced a continued commitment in the years to come to enable future scholarship funding.

Furthermore, in recognition of this collaborative scholarship funding commitment, UWC Mahindra College and UWC Dilijan have also committed to support cross-scholarships: UWC Mahindra

at one of the 17 UWC colleges will support them in gaining the skills and intercultural competency needed to become ethical leaders for a better future."

"In today's challenging, uncertain and fast-changing global environment, it is imperative to widen access to opportunities for meritorious students with potential for strong leadership. We hope that our commitment will serve as a catalyst to enhance the impact of the UWC movement and help train extraordinary leaders for the next generation who can navigate the complexity of the world around us with ease," said Anand Mahindra, chairman of the Mahindra Group.

"In this increasingly interconnected and rapidly developing world, it is of vital importance to nurture open-minded, wise leaders with strong humanitarian values, capable of charting a course through uncertain times and playing a pivotal role in caring for local and global communities. We believe that UWC education creates these types of leaders and that the SM Scholarship program will help to make this network more inclusive," added Veronika Zonabend, co-founder and chair of the Board of Governors of UWC Dilijan in Armenia, member of the Board of Trustees of UWC International (UK).



Anand Mahindra

students admitted to UWC Mahindra College. Half of this gift will provide scholarship grants for Indian students, while the rest will be used for scholarship grants for students selected through UWC national committees outside India.

In parallel, the Scholae Mundi Foundation, founded by Vardanyan and Zonabend, has allocated approximately \$5.2 million to fund need-

College will offer a place and a need-based scholarship covering up to 100 percent of all costs to a student from Armenia. Likewise, UWC Dilijan will offer a place and a need-based scholarship covering up to 100 percent of all costs to a student from India, for the next five years.

Sir John Daniel, Chair of UWC International commented: "This extraordinary initiative of great entrepre-

Armenian Government Reports Further Drop in Poverty

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Poverty in Armenia continued to fall slowly last year despite sluggish economic growth, the National Statistical Service (NSS) said on Tuesday, December 5.

In an annual report, the government agency said 29.4 percent of Armenians lived below the official poverty line as of the end of 2016, down from 29.8 percent in 2015.

The poverty line is set at almost 40,900 drams (\$85) per month. The NSS regards as "very poor" over a third of some 880,000 Armenians whose average monthly income did not exceed that figure. Another 54,000 people are considered "extremely poor," NSS officials said as they presented the report to journalists in Yerevan.

Adrine Babloyan of the Yerevan office of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also spoke at the news conference. Babloyan expressed concern over the fact that at 34.2 percent the poverty rate among Armenian children was still above the nationwide average. And it did not shrink considerably in 2016, she said.

Poverty fell more rapidly during an almost a decade of double-digit economic growth in Armenia that came to an end with the onset of a global financial crisis in late 2008.

It stood at 27.6 percent at that time but soared to almost 36 percent in 2010, one year after the country's Gross Domestic Product shrunk by over 14 percent.

Economic growth has been modest since then. It all but ground to a halt in 2016 but seems to have significantly accelerated this year. NSS data released in recent months suggests that the Armenian economy is now on course to expand by at least 4 percent.

Senior government officials have said that rapid poverty reduction is contingent on an economic growth rate of at least 5 percent. Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan's cabinet set this annual growth target in its five-year policy program approved by parliament in June.

The 120-page program says that sustained faster growth will cut poverty to about 18 percent by 2022.

Using a different methodology, the World Bank has recorded lower poverty rates in Armenia. According to it, just under 25 percent of Armenians lived in poverty in 2016. In a report released in May, the bank forecast that the poverty rate will fall to 22.2 percent in 2019.

The NSS currently estimates the average monthly wage in the country at just over 190,000 drams (\$394). The official rate of unemployment exceeds 20 percent.



ARMENIA

Armenian-Made Cosmetics to Be Exported to South Korea

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The first batch of Armenian natural and organic cosmetics worth more than \$10,000 is being exported to South Korea and Hong Kong. The Nairian company received the export order thanks to its participation in the Cosmoprof North America 2017 expo in Las Vegas by the assistance of the Development Foundation of Armenia (DFA).

Anahit Markosyan, co-founder and scientific director at Nairian, said receiving an order from Korea surprised them since that country is famous as a global hub for cosmetics products throughout the world.

“At the same time, Korean women are well aware of cosmetics and assess the quality and especially its composition. In this sense, it was not surprising that they paid an attention on us,” she said.

She reported that before they exported the shipment, they answered in detail to all the questions from the buyers, provided information on the product’s composition, preparation ways.

Markosyan said they attach equal importance to all

countries where they export the products, such as Russia, Japan and US, but she noted that most of the products are sold in Armenia. “This encourages us a lot since we are able to satisfy the demands of the local people,” she said. Talking about the upcoming programs, she informed that they plan to open a special line for men, as well as they

talks reached the best result. Last week we signed the contracts, at present we have packaged the products, and they will be sent to Korea next week,” Lilit Martirosyan said.

Anahit Mkrtchyan, a back-up team coordinator at DFA, said the export market of Armenian products is being



Some of the Nairian cosmetics

will have products for children. She added that they have also plans to increase the circle of product types. Lilit Martirosyan, marketing and sales director at the Nairian, said the Armenian company was participating in a cosmetics expo in US for the first time.

“For three days, we have met with international buyers, cosmetics experts, distributors, with two of which the

diversified. “We attach importance not only to the increase of physical volumes of exported products, but also to the formation of Armenian brands and increase of their international recognition. The Nairian is a very good example for the remaining companies, since if you have a high-quality product, you can always find the respective market,” she said.

Private Investor to Explore for Oil in Armenia

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – A newly established company controlled by Russian-Armenian billionaire Samvel Karapetyan has asked for a government permission to explore for oil and gas in northern Armenia.

The company called Armenian Oil and Gas held on Monday, December 4, mandatory public hearings in Gyumri on the environmental impact of oil exploration sought by it in the surrounding Shirak province and two other regions in the country’s north. They were attended by officials from the Environment Protection Ministry, geologists and ecologists.

Under Armenian law, such hearings are must

precede the ministry’s decisions on whether or not to allow particular companies to take the first step towards exploiting natural resources.

Speaking at the discussion, an Armenian Oil and Gas representative, Erik Ananian, said the company would use nuclear magnetic resonance, as opposed to traditional drilling, to determine whether the area close to Georgia has commercially viable hydrocarbon reserves. In Shirak, he said, the exploration would be carried out near six rural communities.

“If we see that there is a certain industrial potential [for oil production] we will switch to the next phase,” added Ananian. He would not say whether

the company already has any tentative estimates to that effect.

It also remained unclear when it would start the exploratory work in case of securing clearance from the government.

Hmayak Hovannisian of the Geophysics Institute in Yerevan said it is still too early speculate about the potential size of oil or gas fields in the area. But he stressed that magnetic resonance allows for deeper penetration than exploratory drilling done in Armenia to date.

Another scientist working at the institute, Roland Gasparian, claimed that the possible discovery and extraction of oil would pose an “enormous danger” to local agriculture, while some environmentalists expressed concern at the new method of oil exploration.

Several Western companies have already explored for but found no major oil deposits in Armenia over the past two decades.

The company in question belongs to Karapetyan’s Tashir Kapital group that owns Armenia’s national electric utility and will soon



President Serzh Sargsyan (R) and Russian-Armenian businessman Samvel Karapetyan

also manage the country’s state-owned power transmission network. A Tashir subsidiary is also planning to build, together with other Russian-Armenian and Western investors, two major hydroelectric plants. In addition, it recently launched Armenia’s first-ever solar power plant.

The Armenian-born tycoon further underscored his growing involvement in the Armenian economy on November 13 when he inaugurated another massive shopping mall built by Tashir in Yerevan.

Top Armenian General Forced to Quit Army

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – One of Armenia’s most influential army generals was sacked on Tuesday, December 5, after being publicly rebuked by Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan.

President Serzh Sargsyan relieved Lieutenant-General Haykaz Baghmanian of his duties as deputy chief of the Armenian army’s General Staff just hours after the extraordinary criticism.

Speaking to reporters, President Sargsyan said

The former Soviet army officer had previously commanded two of Armenia’s army corps.

Baghmanian has long been under media spotlight because of his reported business interests and lavish lifestyle that raised questions about his integrity. He has also been occasionally dogged by controversy.

Last year, for example, an entrepreneur from the eastern Armenian town of Martuni alleged that Baghmanian has gained ownership of one of his businesses by fraudulent means. The general denied the allegation. The business in question, a liquefied gas station, is now run by his 28-year-old son.

In 2010, the Hetq.am investigative publication reported that Baghmanian was spotted at a requiem service held for a deceased crime figure.

Hakob Badalian, a Yerevan-based political analyst, suggested that by openly attacking and forcing Baghmanian to quit Sargsyan sought to demonstrate that he has sufficient authority over the military.

“This is a signal to foreign powers, the Armenian public and the ruling clique regarding Vigen Sargsyan’s political clout in the armed forces,” Badalian said.

Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan, 42, is widely regarded a protégé and potential successor of President Sargsyan. He was the chief of the presidential staff before being appointed as defense minister just over a year ago.

Meeting senior military officials in late October, the defense minister pledged to “modernize” Armenia’s army through a seven-year plan of actions which he said will be launched less than three months before he completes his final presidential term in April.



Lieutenant-General Haykaz Baghmanian

Baghmanian has asked to be discharged from the military “at my urging.” He accused the latter of failure to comply with unspecified “working agreements” which is “incompatible with further joint service.” The minister did not elaborate.

Baghmanian has held the position since 2009.

Closing Concert of Khachaturian International Festival to Be Live Streamed on MEDICI.TV

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – On December 11 the world’s leading classical music channel, MEDICI.TV, will live stream the closing gala concert of the 5th Khachaturian International Festival.

The organization announced that this is an exceptional event both in the musical life of Armenia and for the Khachaturian International Festival and the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia.

According to the source, since 2008 MEDICI.TV has provided music connoisseurs with the opportunity to be part of the best classical performances. The concerts of the world’s best collectives, such as Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw and other orchestras, concerts at the most prestigious concert halls, festivals and competitions are broadcast on this channel.

MEDICI.TV has the largest library of classical music in the world. There are about 18,000 programs (3,000 original works), including concerts, ballets, operas and more.

On December 11, the most demanding audience in the world will be able to communicate with the Armenian performing and composing art. The State Youth Orchestra of Armenia, headed by conductor Sergey Smbatyan, will present the Symphony No. 3 by Avet Terterian and the Symphony No.2, The Bell Symphony, by Aram Khachaturian.

According to the source, the live broadcast of the concert by MEDICI.TV implies great preparatory work. The TV Company has its clear criteria and the Khachaturian Festival organizational staff has been able to satisfy all of the requirements.

The Khachaturian Festival will be the first in the region to be presented to such a large audience.

International News

Argentina Province Recognizes Armenian Genocide

BUENOS AIRES (Agencia Prensa Armenia) – The province of San Luis, Argentina, approved on November 21 a law of adherence of the National Law 26,199 that declares April 24 of every year as the “Day of Action for Tolerance and Respect between Peoples” in commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, becoming the twentieth province to do so.

The Chamber of Senators of San Luis voted unanimously for the formal recognition of the Armenian Genocide and adhered to “the acts and events for memory and claim of the Armenian community” and undertook to “promote actions of commemoration at the provincial level,” according to the approved project.

“This adherence of the Senate legislators takes place in the context of the 10 years of the promulgation of the National Law and the declaration of the *Parlasur*,” said Nicolas Sabuncuyan, director of the Armenian National Committee of Argentina. “It ratifies the consensus that exists at a regional, national and federal level regarding one of the main issues of the Armenian Cause, and will be the platform for a closer work with the representatives of the people of San Luis, especially in the field of education and the memory transmission.”

Article 4 of Law 26,199, enacted on December 13 2006 and promulgated on 11 January 2007, invites provincial governments to “adhere to the provisions.” The provinces that have already joined the National Law are Buenos Aires, the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, Catamarca, Chaco, Chubut, Córdoba, Corrientes, Entre Rios, Jujuy, La Pampa, La Rioja, Mendoza, Misiones, Neuquen, Rio Black, Salta, San Luis, San Juan, Santa Cruz, Santa Fe and Tierra del Fuego.

Iran, Azerbaijan Most Serious Disagreements Over Caspian Sea

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Most of the disagreements over the Caspian Sea issue exist between Iran and Azerbaijan, Armen Israyelyan, an expert on Iranian studies, said on Facebook, adding that Russia is currently hosting a regular meeting of foreign ministers of the Caspian littoral states, namely Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. The key purpose of the meeting is to discuss issues over the legal status of the Caspian Sea emerged after the break-up of the Soviet Union.

According to the expert, following numerous meetings, the five Caspian littoral states have still failed to elaborate an issue over the sea status, which will become a subject of discussion for all sides, since Russia and Kazakhstan hold talks in one format, while Russia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan cooperate in a different format.

There is somewhat of a common denominator between Russia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan over the legal status of the Caspian Sea, with Iran and Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan and Iran and Turkmenistan still left to hold talks separately over the issue.

Delegation Headed by President of Swiss Parliament to Visit

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Cochairman of the Switzerland-Armenia parliamentary friendship group Dominique de Buman has been elected President of the lower house of the Swiss parliament, the National Council.

De Buman told La Gruyere that Armenia will be among the first countries he will visit as President of the National Council. “There will be official visits by delegations, first to Armenia during the period of February 3-8. It is the country of my preferences. I have achieved the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the parliament,” he said.

De Buman added that he also plans to pay official visits to Brazil, France and Germany.

Flynn Acknowledges He Took Directions From Turkey During Trump Campaign

FLYNN, from page 1

According to a document obtained by BuzzFeed News, the Justice Department’s counter-espionage division contacted Flynn about his Turkey work as early as November 30. They also shared their suspicions with White House counsel Don McGahn in January, a former senior Justice official told BuzzFeed News.

In the court filing released on Friday, Flynn admitted that “officials from the Republic of Turkey had provided supervision and direction” over his firm’s lobbying work, called the “Turkey project” in the document.

While Flynn’s work for Turkey was overshadowed by his guilty plea for lying to the FBI about contacts with Russian officials, Friday’s court filings were the first time the retired Army lieutenant general has acknowledged that a foreign government directed his actions while he served on the Trump campaign. This contradicts previous statements by Ekim Alptekin, the Turkish businessman whose company paid Flynn, and by Turkish officials, who have vehemently denied that Flynn’s lobbying was connected to their government.

“For the record: nobody remotely linked

Ex-Georgia Leader Freed from Police In Kiev

KIEV, Ukraine (BBC) – Supporters of former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili freed him from a police van in Ukraine’s capital Kiev on Tuesday, December 5, after his detention on suspicion of assisting a criminal organization.

Saakashvili, 49, then urged the crowds to impeach President Petro Poroshenko, a former ally.

Saakashvili was made a Ukrainian citizen in 2015, automatically losing his Georgian passport.

He was stripped of his citizenship in July and is now stateless.

He has accused Poroshenko of failing to root out corruption and being corrupt himself. Poroshenko has denied such allegations in the past.

With one hand in handcuffs and surrounded by hundreds of people, Saakashvili urged his supporters to march to the Ukrainian parliament.

“I urge you to start a peaceful protest to remove Poroshenko. You should not be afraid,” he said through a loudspeaker.

Ukraine’s prosecutor general said Saakashvili had 24 hours to hand himself over to the authorities.

Earlier, before he was freed, masked officers had dragged him from his home.

Several people were injured in scuffles between police and Saakashvili’s supporters.

Saakashvili’s detention was part of an operation “to disrupt a plan of revenge of pro-Kremlin forces in Ukraine,” Prosecutor General Yuriy Lutsenko said.

He is suspected of receiving financing from a criminal group linked to ousted President Viktor Yanukovich, Lutsenko added.

Prosecutors also released audio and video recordings which they say proved that Saakashvili and his supporters had received hundreds of thousands of dollars from the group.

Saakashvili said the recordings were fake.

If found guilty, he could face up to five years in jail.

Saakashvili also faces the threat of extradition to Georgia, where he is wanted on corruption charges. He claims the accusations are politically motivated.

to the Gov. of Turkey knew about Gen. Flynn’s article in advance and I wasn’t consulted either,” Alptekin, an Erdogan ally, tweeted on March 8, the day after Flynn registered as a foreign agent.

Alptekin did not return requests for comment on Friday, but he has previously disputed that he was “taking directions from anyone in the government” of Turkey, had any ties to Erdogan, or received money from the Turkish government to pay Flynn.

Flynn’s registration with the Justice Department shows that, as part of his work, he met with Turkey’s foreign minister, Mevlüt Cavusoglu, and energy minister, Berat Albayrak, at a hotel in New York in September 2016. Albayrak is also Erdogan’s son-in-law.

Flynn’s acknowledgment of the Turkish government’s role in his work appears on the last page of a five-page statement of facts devoted primarily to spelling out in detail how he lied to FBI agents about his contacts with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak, the actions for which he pleaded guilty.

But under the heading “Other False Statements Regarding FLYNN’s contacts with Foreign Governments,” the statement of facts lays out how he also failed to disclose his work for Turkey under the Foreign Agent Registration Act, which requires US citizens who lobby on behalf of foreign governments to disclose their work to the Justice Department within 10 days.

Flynn signed the document, agreeing “that it is true and correct.”

Why Flynn was not charged with violating FARA is unknown. Special Counsel Robert Mueller included FARA violations in charges he filed in October against former Trump campaign chair-

man Paul Manafort.

But even without an indictment, Friday’s filings make it clear that Flynn was aware that he was working on behalf of Turkey even as he advised Trump’s campaign and sat in on classified intelligence briefings given to presidential candidates.

It also raises anew questions about what Trump and his other advisers knew of Flynn’s work. When Flynn’s work for Turkey became public, the White House said Trump was unaware.

But Flynn’s lawyer has said that he asked Trump’s transition team before the inauguration if Flynn should register as a foreign agent, and documents obtained by BuzzFeed News show that the Justice Department on Jan. 24 notified McGahn, the White House counsel, that Flynn was suspected of working for Turkey.

In the statement of facts filed in court Friday, Flynn acknowledges lying to FBI agents about not knowing the extent of the Turkish government’s involvement in his work, about the purpose of his work, and about writing the Nov. 8, 2016, commentary on his own initiative.

Flynn’s contract with Alptekin, through his firm Inovo BV, ended on November 15, three days before Trump nominated him to be his national security adviser, according to Justice Department filings. However, during the transition he made decisions that conformed to some of his former client’s top priorities. In one case, Flynn halted a military operation against ISIS that would have partnered the US with Kurdish forces that Turkey considers a terrorist faction.

(BuzzFeed News senior investigative reporter Jason Leopold contributed.)

Kurdish Forces Announce Full Liberation of Deir Ez-Zor, Syria

DEIR Ez-Zor (Washington Post) – The People’s Protection Units (YPG) said on December 3 that the Kurdish fighters liberated the eastern countryside of Deir ez-Zor with the help of the U.S.-led Coalition forces and Russia.

The YPG said on Sunday that its forces fully cooperated with local tribes of the city.

The Kurdish group said the U.S.-led Coalition and Russian forces had provided “air and logistical support, advice and coordination on the ground.”

Co-chair of the committee Nuri Mahmud, who represents the Kurdish militias, stated that the Kurdish units were ready to ensure the security of the Russian servicemen, deployed along the eastern shore of the Euphrates.”

Poplavsky’s statement, released Monday by the Russian Defense Ministry, was seen as part of Moscow’s efforts to strengthen ties with the PKK-affiliated militias. The Defense Ministry said among the delegation was the Russian General Yevgeny Poplavsky, one of the commanders of the Khmeimim Air Base, an air-base now operated by Russia in the Syrian city of Latakia.

Syrian troops declared the city fully liberated on November 3.

It was the first time that the Kurdish group voiced gratitude to Russian Federation for its support.

“The actions of people’s militia units against Daesh terrorists are supported by Russian combat planes...”

YPG spokesman Nouredine Mahmoud thanked Russian forces as well as the US-led coalition for logistical and air support and said he hoped for more coordination with the two global powers.

Western diplomats said US Assistant Secretary of State David Satterfield asked the opposition’s negotiating delegation in Geneva a few days ago about how to include the Kurdish SDF units in the political process.

In September, Russia accused the SDF of targeting Syrian regime forces with artillery fire and even threatened to retaliate if the strikes repeat.

Poplavsky, speaking at Sunday’s meeting involving tribal leaders from eastern Deir ez-Zor province, also noted that Russian military advisers helped coordinate their fight against the Daesh in the east.



Kurdish Forces in Deir Ez-Zor



INTERNATIONAL

Russia, Iran, Turkey Agree to Advance Syrian Peace

MOSCOW (AP) — The leaders of Russia, Turkey and Iran on Wednesday, November 22, discussed ways to promote a peaceful settlement in Syria, including the return of refugees, humanitarian aid and prisoners' exchange, while fractured Syrian opposition groups were meeting in Saudi Arabia in a bid to overcome their divisions and form a united front for Syrian peace talks in Geneva.

"Militants in Syria have received a decisive blow, and there is a real chance to put an end to the civil war that has raged for many years," Russian President Vladimir Putin said at the start of talks with Turkish and Iranian counterparts in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi.

Putin noted that political settlement will require concessions from all sides, including Syrian President Bashar Assad's government.

Assad made a surprise trip to Russia late Monday for talks with Putin, which the Kremlin said were intended to lay the groundwork for Wednesday's trilateral meeting.

Speaking after the three-way talks, Putin said the Syrian leader pledged to conduct constitutional reforms and hold new elections under UN supervision.

"The process of reforms isn't going to be easy and will require concessions and compromises from all those involved, including the Syrian government," he said.

In their joint statement after the talks, Putin, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan emphasized the need for all parties in the Syrian conflict to release all prisoners and hostages, hand over bodies and search for those missing to help create conditions for a lasting cease-fire and the launch of political talks.

They also called on other countries to pro-

vide humanitarian aid, clear Syrian territory of mines and restore vital infrastructure destroyed by the war.

"We have reached a consensus on helping the transition to an inclusive, free, fair and transparent political process that will be carried out under the leadership and ownership of the Syrian people," Erdogan said.

Even though Russia and Iran have backed Assad's government since the start of the Syrian conflict in March 2011, while Turkey has supported his foes, the three countries have teamed up to help mediate a peace settlement.

They have sponsored several rounds of talks between the Syrian government and the opposition in Astana, Kazakhstan, and also have brokered a truce between Syria's government and the rebels in four areas, helping reduce hostilities.

UN deputy spokesman Farhan Haq, asked about the trilateral meeting of the leaders, said: "Our focus remains on the meetings that will begin in Geneva on November 28. We hope that all the other processes that are underway will contribute to a successful round of talks in Geneva."

Meanwhile, the UN envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura spoke at the opening of a three-day gathering of the Syrian opposition in Riyadh, where around 30 opposition groups are expected to come up with a unified delegation and a vision for the Geneva talks.

De Mistura said he planned to have two rounds of talks in Geneva in December. He is set to travel to Moscow later this week.

"It is our common interest that today, you

elect the best and most inclusive team among yourselves," de Mistura said. "A strong, unified team is a creative partner in Geneva and we need that."

The Riyadh meeting, however, has already been marred with disagreements. The notoriously fragmented opposition is divided by visions of a future role for Assad, the length of a transitional period as well as the constitution that will see the country move toward elections.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir said in opening remarks that the opposition meeting comes amid international consensus to reach a resolution.

"There is no resolution to the crisis without Syrian consensus that achieves the demands of the Syrian people and ends their suffering," al-Jubeir said.

Russia, which has welcomed the Saudi efforts to unify the opposition, will also be hosting a meeting in Sochi that's expected to bring the opposition and Syrian government together in early December. Turkey and Iran pledged Wednesday to help the success of that meeting.

Earlier this month, the first attempt to convene it failed amid differences, reportedly including the participation of Kurds.

Turkey sees US-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters as a terror group and an extension of Kurdish militants that have waged a three-decade-long insurgency inside its borders.

Erdogan on Wednesday strongly reaffirmed Turkey's objection to Kurdish Syrian militia playing a part in negotiations on Syria's future.

"The exclusion from the process of terrorist

elements that target Syria's political unity and territorial integrity as well as our national security will continue to remain our priority," he said. "No one should expect us to come under the same roof, to appear on the same platform as a terror organization."

Russia has been involved in a delicate diplomatic dance, trying to engage the Kurds without offending Turkey. Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, dodged a question about Kurdish participation in the planned Sochi meeting, saying only that it should be "inclusive."

Putin, whose military intervention in the war saved Assad's government from imminent defeat, called US President Donald Trump, Saudi King Salman, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi on Tuesday to brief them on his talks with Assad and coordinate the planned peace efforts.

Putin's broad outreach highlighted a key role Russia has come to play in the Syrian conflict and reflected Moscow's desire to engage all key players.

Some of the opposition delegations in Riyadh are backed by Gulf countries, which had sided with the anti-Assad rebellion, while others have been supported by Russia. Another opposition group is backed by Egypt, which has also kept contacts with the Syrian government.

The Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya TV said some members of the Russia-backed delegation withdrew from the meeting. A member of the delegation, Qadri Jamil, said they backed out to object other delegations putting conditions on the talks, including limiting a future role for Assad. The Russia-backed opposition is promoting political reform under Assad's rule.

IIGHRS Graduate Paves Way for Victory in Ground-Breaking Human Rights Case in Argentina

TORONTO — November 29, 2017 marked a victory in human rights for the people of Argentina. The Escuela Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA) mega-trial, which took place over a period of five years, has ended with the conviction of 29 former officials of the military dictatorship that governed the nation from 1976 to 1983. They were sentenced to life in prison for their roles in the former dictatorship's practice of killing civilians by throwing them from aircraft.

Federico Gaitan Hairabedian is the human rights attorney that worked alongside the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) which represented the human rights groups in this trial that just reached its final verdict.

Gaitan Hairabedian was the first of many students from Argentina to attend the

International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies' (A Division of the Zoryan Institute) annual Genocide and Human Rights University Program (GHRUP) in 2005. Since its launch in 2002, the program is held annually in partnership with the University of Toronto History Department.

This high-profile human rights trial put a spotlight on the systematic torture and killing of thousands of people suspected of being opponents of the military government. They were held in a clandestine detention center at a naval base in Buenos Aires on the orders of the junta that ruled Argentina at that time. In a series of hearings, witnesses recounted in chilling detail how civilians were drugged, loaded onto aircrafts and dumped into the waters off

the coast of Buenos Aires. Prosecutors tried 54 former Argentinian officials in the deaths or forced disappearances of 789 people, and presented testimony from more than 800 witnesses. While the practice has long been known, prosecutors managed to cross-reference testimony and documents to detail how one of the most atrocious tactics of Argentina's dictatorship was carried out.

The trial also shed light on the complicity of the Roman Catholic Church in the junta's crimes. No member of the clergy was accused in the trial, but prosecutors alleged that church officials were complicit in hiding detainees from international human rights inspectors.

The Argentinian junta is said to have detained, tortured and killed as many as 30,000



Federico Gaitan Hairabedian



The many members of the military junta on trial in Argentina

people it deemed "subversive." In addition to killing people suspected of being dissidents, military officials kidnapped hundreds of babies who were then reared by families loyal to the government.

Gaitan Hairabedian followed in the footsteps of his grandfather and mother, both human rights lawyers that worked together to pass a law for the Argentinian government to take responsibility in the search and pursuit of justice for the disappeared persons. Since graduating from the course, Gaitan Hairabedian became one of the founding members of Zoryan Institute's sister organization, the Luisa Hairabedian Foundation.

The Luisa Hairabedian Foundation and the Zoryan Institute joined together to encourage a new generation of scholars, lawyers and activists to engage in research, publication and practice in the field of Genocide and Human Rights Studies. Year after year, the Institute is proud of graduates such as Gaitan Hairabedian, who promote the cause of universal human rights awareness and prevention of genocide.

Community News

Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit Celebrates Centennial Anniversary

By Rosette Tootikian

DETROIT – As the plans for the Centennial Anniversary of the Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit unfolded, a wave of enthusiasm pervaded the church family and friends. The enthusiasm was evidenced first, by the 16 members of the 100th Anniversary Committee, headed by Rodney Keteyian, who accepted their responsibilities cheerfully and discharged them most efficiently.

The same interest was demonstrated by the members and friends of the church in their prompt and generous response to the Centennial Anniversary Fund, established by the Church Council on this milestone.

The wave of enthusiasm was at its peak on Saturday, November 18, with an overflowing attendance of more than 260 people at the Pine Lake Country Club, in Orchard Lake, Mich.

Following the American and the Armenian national anthems, rendered by Deacon Rubik Mailian, with the accompaniment of our own Susan Harrison and the invocation of Rev. Shant Barsoumian, a sumptuous dinner was served to the attendees of the banquet. Preceding the meal, however, delicious appetizers were offered by the Pine Lake Country Club.

Christmas ornaments were placed on the tables for each attendee, donated by an anonymous member of the church as a memento from the Centennial Anniversary banquet.

The Master of Ceremonies, Rodney Keteyian introduced the Southfield Mayor Kenson J. Siver and welcomed the guests. After which the ceremonial cutting of the anniversary cake by the present Pastor Rev. Shant Barsoumian, the former Pastor Rev. Makarios Darawi and the Minister Emeritus Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian with the enthusiastic singing of Happy Anniversary to the ACC.

Taking part in the program with three to five minutes of brief but meaningful testimonies were given by Mark Kadian, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Rev. Shant Barsoumian, Pastor, Michael Banerian, representing the Youth of ACC. Carole Basmadjian, President, Women's Christian Fellowship, Rodney Keteyian, Chairman, Centennial Anniversary Committee, Dr. Richard Marburger, former long-time Moderator, Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian, Minister Emeritus. An Armenian poem dedicated to the Armenian Church by poet Vahan Tekeyian, entitled "The Armenian Church," was recited by Dr. Taline Hagopian.

The entertainment part of the program included six bilingual musical selections, both of religious and patriotic nature. The performing artist was the talented Deacon Rubik Mailian, accompanied by Susan Harrison. The program began with an Armenian Sharagan, Dér Gétso along with Armenian popular songs from composers Yegmalian, Babajanian, Hovanissian, and Italian and English selection, and closed with a Christmas Carol. The atmosphere was very pleasant and warm, all those who were present seemed to be in a good mood of celebration.

One of the celebration's pleasant and heart-warming surprises was the generous donation of \$5,000.00 by Mike and Maral Arzoumanian, which enabled the Centennial Committee to reach its avowed goal of raising \$100,000 on the church's 100th anniversary.

The memorable evening came to an end with the singing of the Hayr Mer and the benediction of the clergy of the Greater Detroit Armenian churches.

A Commemorative Book was given to the attendees. The pictorial booklet consisted of letters by church and civic dignitaries as well as institutional information about the church.

The Centennial Anniversary committee members should be commended for their superb performance. They provided ample evidence, that they are capable of achieving great accomplishments.



ATP planted another quarter-of-a-million trees this year, which offer countless benefits to people and the environment

ATP's 5.5 Million Trees Have Impacts on People of Armenia

WOBURN, Mass. – A new pair of winter boots for a daughter, a denture from a husband to his wife, and tools for a young hairstylist to start a home-based business. These are some of the things the local villagers employed by Armenia Tree Project (ATP) are planning on buying with their reimbursement for working on an afforestation project in Tashir this fall.

ATP's Forestry and Community Tree Planting departments have wrapped up the planting of another 160,767 trees this season, bringing the total to 248,491 planted in 2017. Of this total, 7,450 were fruit trees including apricot, peach, pear, and wild apple.

By Ani Melkonian

"We're proud of our tree planting results. After this fall, we've planted a total of 5,464,991 trees and shrubs since 1994," exclaimed Executive Director Jeanmarie Papelian. "The number has been growing steadily, and will continue to do so as we work hard to protect and improve Armenia's natural heritage by providing trees as well as environmental education to the people."

Tashir is a quiet town in the Lori region. It is the kind of place where people don't like to dream and prefer to live without expectations. And, unfortunately, due to high unemployment rates leading to increased emigration, that is the case with most of rural Armenia. If you go to Tashir in spring or fall, the only excitement or noise you'll hear will be coming from ATP's afforestation plot where men and women of all ages are clinking and clanking away to transform the landscape.

ATP has been operating in Tashir for the past three seasons and recruiting temporary workers from the region to help with planting and maintenance of the trees. About 150 people are hired annually by ATP for reforestation projects, and the workers are paid based on the quantity of trees they plant.

"It's not easy at all. Go ahead, try," says Arevik, who is from the nearby village of Petrovka. She is the village school guard and has come to Tashir to plant with her daughter.

She is right. It is heavy work, no matter how soft the soil looks. "We think it's worth it, of course. We have a slightly different quality of life during planting season. Our burden is a little less," says Arevik as she continues to plant vigorously.

Arevik's daughter is a self-taught hairdresser. With no barbershop in the village, she'll use her earnings from the planting to purchase tools and work out of her house.

Across the field, Vahan is leaving a long trail of pines behind him. "I need to get a denture for my wife, so I can kiss her again," he jokes and quickly dodges

see TREES, page 8

Portantino Brings Lusine Chinkejian on Board Sacramento Team

GLENDALE – Recently state Sen. Anthony J. Portantino (D-La Cañada Flintridge) announced the addition of Lusine Chinkejian to his Sacramento office staff. Chinkejian will be working on broad public policy issues including those of concern and impact to the Armenian American community in the 25th Senate District. She will also help staff the State Senate Select Committee on California, Armenia and Artsakh Trade, Art and Cultural Exchange. Senator Portantino Chairs the Committee.

Chinkejian, who speaks fluent Armenian, graduated from John Burroughs High School in Burbank, is an attorney and a recent graduate of UC Davis School of Law. Prior to that, she attended UC Berkeley, receiving a BA with Departmental Honors in political science and a minor in Spanish.

"I am very grateful and excited to have Lusine join our staff. It is important for me to have a representative who has significant public policy experience and understands the unique concerns within the district. Lusine has attended high school in SD 25 which enables her to better assess the needs of the district and the Armenian American community," observed Portantino.

Chinkejian comes to the Senator's staff from the California Assembly Committee on the Judiciary, where as an intern she prepared bill analyses for the legislative record on issues of education, civil law and public safety. Chinkejian was also the senior section editor for the Journal of Juvenile Law and Policy during her time at UC Davis School of Law.

"I'm so thankful and thrilled to join a team that works tirelessly to ensure the success and wellbeing of the community at large in the 25th Senate District. In particular, Senator Portantino's strong advocacy for education is admirable and I look forward to contributing to that effort," expressed Chinkejian.

Portantino represents nearly 930,000 people in the 25th Senate District, which includes Altadena, Atwater Village, Bradbury, Burbank, Claremont, Duarte, Glendale, Glendora, La Cañada Flintridge, La Crescenta, La Verne, Los Feliz, Monrovia, Montrose, Pasadena, San Dimas, San Marino, Shadow Hills, Sierra Madre, South Pasadena, Sunland-Tujunga, and Upland.

Neponsit Valley Armenians

NORWOOD, Mass. – Neponsit Valley Armenians announce three Saturday morning activities for families in the Neponsit Valley and its contiguous and surrounding towns. Sponsored by the Amaras Art Alliance, the first in the series will be Armenian Christmas, Saturday, January 6, 2018.

Families will engage in an interactive and participatory reading of the birth of Jesus, followed by an Armenian Christmas craft. Vartanantz Day and the beginning of Lent will be observed on Saturday, February 10 when the children will learn the story of St. Vartan and prepare a Lenten calendar.

On Saturday, March 24, the children will observe Palm Sunday, reenact Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, prepare Armenian Easter eggs and play the traditional Armenian egg game.

The program is free but registration is required. To register for the series, location in Norwood and time contact Neponsitvalleyarmenians@gmail.com.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Lasers Provide Ray of Light for Children And Adults Suffering in Armenia

BOSTON – A parent will do anything to help his or her child live a normal life. But, what if your child were born with a life-altering birthmark on their face? There is technology to treat your child, but you have no access to it. And even if there is access to it overseas, that costs a lot of money which the parents very probably do not have. This was the case, before we came to Yerevan, Armenia to change the lives of these children.

Children in Armenia, born with red and purple birthmarks on their face or body, live with life altering conditions that leaves them isolated and ostracized, ridiculed by other children in school, and deprived of a normal childhood. Although not life threatening, these skin conditions have a huge psychological impact on a child's life. In the United States and in most developed countries, these birthmarks, known as vascular anomalies, are treated shortly after birth with simple medical laser procedures. Such procedures for treating vascular birthmarks and scars, developed by Harvard Professor Dr. Rox Anderson, were made specifically to remove the birthmarks, without the need for conventional surgery. Millions of children worldwide, born with vascular anomalies, have benefited from these laser treatments, which have changed the trajectory of their entire lives.

In Armenia, these children were left untreated, because this technology did not exist. Untreated, these birthmarks become darker in color, increase in size and cause facial deformities. Unfortunately, as these children become adults, they become more isolated from their communities, and from the world. The shame associated with these lesions keeps most of them at home, as going out in public leads to uncomfortable interactions. When red birthmarks are located around the eyes, it can lead to increased pressure inside the eye, which if not diagnosed and treated, leads to blindness. This type of blindness is completely preventable, if the screening and treatment are started early.

There is nothing more deeply satisfying for doctors, than to help a child in need, and give them the opportunity to live a normal life. Successful treatment of a child enhances the quality of life of the tight knit, extended family. This is the reason Dr. Lilit Garibyan's team decided to go Yerevan, and make history, by bringing medical laser technology, treatments, education and training for the children with vascular anomalies and scars.

Led by Garibyan, a Yerevan native, currently assistant professor of dermatology at Harvard Medical School, a team comprising dermatologists and laser experts was assembled to travel



Dr. Rox Anderson, Dr. Lilit Garibyan, Dr. Christine Avakoff and Dr. Hovik Stepanyan at the Wellman Center for Photomedicine in MGH. Dr. Stepanyan traveled from Yerevan to Boston to attend the Harvard Medical School CME Laser Training Course in November 2017.

from the US to Yerevan to establish a medical laser clinic. Garibyan initiated these efforts as a resident in Dermatology at Massachusetts General Hospital/ Harvard Medical School, and was doing her postdoctoral fellowship with Anderson. This facilitated the task of obtaining lasers directly from companies that manufacture them, such as Candela-Syneron and Quanta.

Anderson is world-renowned for his contributions to laser medicine. In addition, he has conducted similar missions in Vietnam with Dr. Thanh Nga Tran, who was a classmate and co-resident with Garibyan at Harvard. At the time, Garibyan was also actively involved with Armenian-American Medical Association in Boston and served as their secretary for number of years, which helped make connections with Armenian doctors. Serendipitously, at the same time, another Armenian-American dermatologist, Dr. Christine Avakoff, was looking for a team of laser experts to travel to Armenia, with her to train a local doctor there, to perform laser treatment for vascular anomalies. Avakoff was about to retire and wanted to donate one of her own lasers to the Armenian American Wellness Center in Yerevan.

Garibyan also enlisted the help of her colleague and friend, Dr. Ray Jalian, who is also a laser fellowship-trained Armenian dermatologist working in Los Angeles. This core team consisting of Garibyan, Anderson, Jalian and Avakoff, have worked closely together and made several trips to Yerevan to accomplish their goal of bringing much needed medical laser technology to the children of Armenia.

Their team also received much needed help from Dr. Nishan Goudsouzian, an anesthesiologist at Massachusetts General Hospital, who had close ties with Arabkir Medical Center in Yerevan. Goudsouzian traveled with the team to Yerevan and performed the general anesthesia for the children who were treated there.

Since 2013, when the team first traveled to Yerevan for this mission, they have now established two main centers in Yerevan, where medical laser treatments are done to treat children and adults. The two centers are the Armenian American Wellness Center and Arabkir Medical Center where for the first time, patients can receive laser treatments for vascular anomalies and scars.

Garibyan's team has not only given lectures on the role of laser treatment of vascular anomalies, but has also educated the physicians on the medical management of these conditions and the associated side effects, such as blindness. Every patient with vascular anomaly known as port-

wine stain around the eye, is now being screened for increased eye pressure, to start treatment before blindness occurs. Sadly, this association was not known to the doctors in Armenia, and multiple children and adults with port-wine-stain around the eye already had blindness in that eye. Thanks to this mission work, this unnecessary cause of blindness will no longer happen.

Young children with another type of vascular

ments for patients in Armenia at the Armenian American Wellness Center. He has given two lectures in Spain and in Russian on the laser treatment outcome of his patients from Armenia. He has patient referrals from as far as Ukraine who travel to Armenia for consultation and treatment with him.

"There is no better way for me to give back to Armenia than use the education and training I



Dr. Ray Jalian, Dr. Hovik Stepanyan, Dr. Lilit Garibyan, Dr. Christine Avakoff and Dr. John Poochigian at the Armenian American Wellness center which is the other medical laser center they have established in Armenia.

anomaly known as hemangioma, are now being managed with oral medications, such as propranolol, instead of undergoing unnecessary and invasive surgical procedures, which may leave scars.

Hundreds of children and adults have now been treated with vascular medical lasers to remove red birthmarks from their faces, giving them another chance at a normal life. This medical laser mission has now taken four different lasers, worth over \$400,000, to Armenia capable of treating multiple vascular anomalies and scars. The hope for the donations is to make medical laser treatments accessible and affordable to everyone. Last month, this team even sponsored the travel and educational training of one of the physicians from Armenia, Dr. Hovik Stepanyan, to Boston, for the Harvard Medical School Laser Training course. Stepanyan, who knew nothing about medical lasers before the training started, has now become an expert in laser treatments of vascular anomalies. He has completed several hundred medical laser treat-

ments for patients in Armenia, to help children in Armenia," Garibyan stated. "I have truly been blessed to live in the United States, to graduate from Harvard Medical School with an MD and PhD degrees, to complete residency training in dermatology at Harvard, and to meet Dr. Rox Anderson, who has become my mentor. But I can't forget where I came from, and the people and children of Armenia who suffer from treatable skin conditions. The impact of these treatments was clearly apparent to me on our last trip to Armenia in 2016. A mother of a young girl with a facial birthmark, who had already received 4 laser treatments at the AAWC, and had obtained great results, hugged all of us with tearful eyes. Even though she could not speak English, her warm and grateful embrace told all of us how appreciative she was of this work."

Garibyan said she encourages everyone in the community to help. If interested in getting involved and helping, contact Dr. Lilit Garibyan at lgaribyan@mgh.harvard.edu



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COMMUNITY NEWS

ATP's 5.5 Million Trees Have Impacts on People of Armenia

TREES, from page 6

a punch from her. By the time the project is complete, everyone on the field is a little closer to each other and to their natural surroundings.

"Trees give us so much to be thankful for, and most people don't even know half of it," says Papelian, "Trees are how we create jobs in Armenia. How we help people improve their standard of living as well as the environment."

The trees are supplied by ATP's four nurseries, which provide full-time employment to several dozen local villagers, many of whom are Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan. Trees are also purchased from ATP's award-winning Backyard Nursery Micro-Enterprise Program, which is another way people benefit from the organization.

"This year the backyard nurseries expanded to include 19 families," explains Papelian. "The way it works is ATP gives these families seeds and trains them in propagation. Once grown, ATP buys the seedlings and replants them in

nearby regions."

About 5,000 of the trees planted this fall were purchased from families in Aghavnavank Village who are part of the program. Next year, ATP expects to purchase even more seedlings from the backyard nursery owners. The project was named Energy Globe Award Winner for Armenia at the European Parliament.

ATP also traveled to remote border villages, distributing fruit trees to households as a way to ensure food security and fortify the populations' roots in the land. It is estimated that ATP's trees produced a yield of 1.5 million pounds of fruit this year alone.

"With the support of the diaspora, we are proving there is a way to improve human welfare through trees," concludes Papelian. "Together we are making Armenia a greener and better place to live in. Selfless acts like planting trees have positive ripple effects which can be felt for generations to come. We hope everyone will Get Rooted with ATP and watch it grow."

OBITUARY

Mary Atamian

Lifelong Community Volunteer

WORCESTER — Mary Atamian, 93, of Worcester, passed away at home on Wednesday, November 22.

She was born in Worcester to Charles and Yougaper Thompson.

She is survived by her husband of 70 years, Eli, their two sons, Elias A. Atamian and his

ing, was a great card player and an even better cook. She was a people person and always enjoyed the company of her family and friends. To know Mary was to love her. As a friend of her once said, "There is a humanitarian side to Mary that very few people know about, people will do anything for Mary." She was a person with a big heart and big ideas.

As a lifelong volunteer and activist whose passion would extend that skill and desire to fundraising, she did it with real style.

She coordinated many events and sponsored various fundraising activities for those in the community including organizing fashion shows to benefit Hope Lodge, Cystic Fibrosis, Woman's Club Scholarship of Uxbridge and The Armenian Church of Our Saviour. She also organized "High Fever Frolics," a musical revue that benefited Memorial Hospital.

She received numerous honors and awards including the American Cancer Society Award, the John J. Calabro and Sidney Wilensky Humanitarian Award by the Arthritis Foundation, the Massachusetts Easter Seal Parker Trowbridge Founders Award, Worcester Women's History Project Award, UMass Memorial Foundation Award, and the Armenian Assembly of America Award.

The family thanks Rev. Aved Terzian, pastor of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour, for his love and support, her caregivers Michelle, Sandra, Janet, Carla and Shelia, and the staff at Jewish Healthcare Hospice.

Her funeral service was held Saturday, November 25, at the Armenian Church of Our Saviour, 87 Salisbury Street, Worcester.



wife Jean-Marie, and Edward C. Atamian, and his wife, Susan; grandsons Ross, Kirk, William, and Elias John and his wife Rebecca; a sister Arek Thompson; a sister-in-law Virginia Atamian; and several nieces and nephews.

Her daughter Rosemary died in 2001. She was also predeceased by her two brothers, Nishan and George, and her sister-in-law Josephine Thompson.

She loved spending her winters in Florida and summers at Cape Cod. She enjoyed read-

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COMMUNITY NEWS

National Center of Armenian Memory in Décines, France Promotes Armenian Studies and Culture

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

DÉCINES, France – One of the largest centers of Armenian population in France is in Décines, a suburb of Lyon in the Rhône-Alpes region. Here, along with other Armenian institutions, all located on the same Rue de 24 avril 1915 (“April 24, 1915 Street,” a street name symbolically given on the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in 1965), is the new Centre National de la Mémoire Arménienne, or National Center of Armenian Memory (CNMA, www.cnma.fr).

The goal of CNMA, according to its brochure, is “to restore to the populations of Armenian origin in France and Europe their capacity of cultural transmission, encumbered by systematic destruction and their deterritorialization of one hundred years ago.” Its target audience includes French Armenians, researchers, students and any person interested in history and culture.

The CNMA opened on October 20, 2013 with both the French Minister of Culture and Communication and the Armenian minister of the diaspora present, along with various local politicians and the Armenian ambassador to France. Its unique architectural plan won the Prize of Honor of the GPAU Rhône for 2013. The CNMA was conceived in 2006 by the staff of the Maison de la Culture Arménienne (House of Armenian Culture, MCA) of Décines.

According to the CNMA website, leaders of the Armenian community were “desiring to inscribe their history in that of the French republic.” This approach of presenting Armenian history in the context of French values and history is stressed in the website, which goes on to declare (in French) that “beyond the universal values of the French Republic,” allowing French Armenians to know their history, including the reason for the exodus of their ancestors and their manner of integration into French society, “helps to live a double culture serenely.”

This dual approach is no doubt solidified by the dual source of funding, approximately half from Armenian donations and loans, and half from French regional, provincial and municipal state bodies.

Though a new institution, the origins of the CNMA are intimately connected to several earlier organizations, beginning with the Maison

the Armenian cause in France. There are MCA's in other cities of France.

The MCA of Décines in 1980 in turn created the Centre d'études, de documentation et d'informations arméniennes (CEDIA), with a library of over 6,000 works and 30,000 microfiches, as well as photographic and video documentation. Its goal was the preservation and transmission of Armenian culture through its



The National Center of Armenian Memory in Décines, France

library and various activities.

In 2006, the MCA decided to take its activities onto a higher level, more academic and organized, and intended for a broader audience, so it adopted the CNMA project. It decided to buy the necessary real estate for this. In 2011 the work of constructing the building began.

Today the CNMA has two fulltime staff members, Daniel Meguerditchian, the cultural coordinator, and Marie Picot, who is responsible for the documentary materials.

Meguerditchian stated that his academic background is in ancient Armenian history. He has in particular done research on Roman Armenia, including the period of Lucullus and Hadrian. He has a postgraduate Diplôme d'étude approfondies (something akin to the all-but-dissertation stage in US academia) from the University of Lyon III in ancient history. However, in part through his job, he also has developed an expertise in 19th-century Armenian nationalism, the Armenian massacres

the personnel of the institution and its outreach efforts through the Internet and social media. He was involved in the original organization of the center, and earlier, as secretary of the Conseil de coordination des organisations arméniennes de France [Council of Coordination of Armenian Organizations] of the Rhône-Alpes region, worked toward the creation of the Armenian Genocide monument in

the center of the city of Lyon (2006).

CNMA's first goal is to document and preserve Armenian memory and heritage in the diaspora. For this purpose, it has a multilingual collection of books, audiovisual media, photographs, historical documents. It includes a lending library of over 6,000 books for adults, 220 for children, and many DVDs as well as periodicals. Its non-lending archives include 10,000 documents, maps and books, as well as 1,000 audiovisual items and several thousand photographs. It has been digitally scanning its works to make them available through OpenSource, and its resources are listed through the French University System of Documentation (Système Universitaire de Documentation française – SUDOC), and since 2016, CNMA has been supported by the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research through Collections of Excellence (“Collections of Excellence”). Its bibliographical work contributes not only to French libraries but also those of Armenia.

Secondly, it is involved in teaching to transmit memory. CNMA approximately one year ago entered into a partnership with the Catholic University of Lyon in order to prepare jurists and others working for the defense of human rights. This program requires many different intellectual disciplines. The university students visit the CNMA, and sometimes there are interships on Armenian history and its connection with human rights history. In addition, students in library sciences come to the CNMA. The university has a chair of Armenology which in the theology division run by Maxime Yevadian (http://sourcesdarmenie.com/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=19&Itemid=37).

Efforts are underway to develop a partnership with the University of Lyon.

In addition, primarily for secondary school students, who must study the Armenian Genocide as part of their curriculum, as well as for university students, CNMA offers two types

of educational workshops. The first one is called “the act of genocide, through the case of the genocide of the Armenians,” and uses the point of view of a civilian population in total war to examine the Armenian Genocide comparative to other genocides. It is given at CNMA or can also be organized outside in other institutions. The second workshop is called the “citizen trajectory,” and includes a visit with commentary to the Armenian quarter of Décines, to study how foreign refugees like the Armenians could through several generations become fully integrated French citizens. It examines questions of multiple identities and conflicts in daily life. Over 2,000 students have taken these workshops since 2013. Groups of interested adults can also be accommodated in workshops.

Thirdly, it organizes expositions and outreach activities throughout the year to make the memory and heritage living. It collaborates with local organizations and large French national institutions. Among the large exhibitions it has put together are “The Armenian Book from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment: A Culture in Diaspora” with the Bibliothèque Mazarine in 2013, “The Century of Genocides” with the Shoah Memorial of Paris in 2014, and “The Genocide of the Armenians: Stigmatize, Destroy, Exclude,” again with the Shoah Memorial, in 2016. It also participates in conferences and events organized on various universal questions such as human rights and oppression.

While all this is academic work or its popularization, Meguerditchian explained that it also may have an indirect political influence, as a type of “soft power” of the Armenian community.

After discussing the difficulties of life in the diaspora, Meguerditchian said, “I think that it is truly a question of general interest for the Armenians throughout the diaspora to force themselves to get out of their narrow Byzantine circles in order to concentrate on what is important.” The collective experience of the Armenians in diaspora in the period of modernity, he continued, contains both



The menu for the ARA restaurant in the CNMA building.



The two fulltime staff members of the CNMA: Daniel Meguerditchian, the cultural coordinator, and Marie Picot, responsible for the documentary materials

du peuple Arménien [House of the Armenian People], built in 1932 primarily through the efforts of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, including some leaders of the first Republic of Armenia like Arshag Jamalian, and affiliated circles. This rallying ground for Armenians was revitalized in 1977 and renamed the MCA, as part of a movement to give greater vitality to Armenian culture and

and genocide, and the story of Armenian refugees in France. In the earlier part of his education, he obtained a master's degree from the University of Paris I, where he studied political science. He said that this helps greatly in his present work.

Meguerditchian runs the cultural and pedagogical elements of the CNMA, and lectures on Armenian issues as well as being responsible for

unique elements as well as universal ones, and studying it can be fruitful for both Armenians and for humanity. Consequently, it must be disseminated broadly. At the same time, the Armenians themselves no matter which country they live in would benefit by being aware of their history.

Aside from lectures and local events, the CNMA has supported from 2014 a theater company in residence called la Compagnie de création théâtrale Saté-Âtre, which uses both the French and Armenian languages.

The CNMA building serves as a center for other Armenian organizations besides the CNMA and the theatrical company. The MCA runs a weekly Armenian school there, and provides French language classes for new immigrants, as well as courses in music, dance, art, and cultural activities. Finally, a restaurant called ARA (Association Restauration Arménienne) operates on the ground floor of the CNMA building, and its revenues support the activities of the CNMA.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Immigrant and Refugee Aid Group Honors Afeyan

HONORS, from page 1

statewide, but globally. He is the founder, CEO and senior managing partner of Flagship Pioneering, a Cambridge-based incubator for life sciences companies. The firm's Flagship VentureLabs is where its team of scientific entrepreneurs turn far-fetched ideas into reality.

Compassion in Intolerant Times

Rep. Joe Kennedy III (D-Boston) kicked off the evening by speaking before the formal portion of the program. He stressed that support for the IINE was especially important now. After congratulating Afeyan, he said that the honoree represented the best of history, traditions and values.

"Given the times we are in, we need to take a moment to understand our histories and stories," Kennedy said. Immigrants are all around and they add to the mix, he said, noting that during the evening, he had met people from Sudan, Afghanistan, Congo, Syria and Iraq, among others. "It is pretty extraordinary," he said. "I am cognizant of my own family's history," he said, including his mother's side, who fled religious intolerance in Europe to his father's side who fled Ireland for economic reasons.

He continued with the theme of compassion, speaking about the Choctaw Nation whose members, forcibly moved by the US government to Oklahoma from their homes in the Southeast after a long march on the Trail of Tears in the 1830s, had sent much of their savings to the starving victims of the Potato



Rep. Joe Kennedy (D-Boston) with guest Purni Karki

Famine in Ireland in the 1840s.

He asked what it would mean when "society says no to those fleeing danger." He also said that "polarization and tweets" are not what this country is about.

Shari Loessberg, a member of the IINE Board of Directors, read a letter from the president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, L. Rafael Reif, in which he said he was "thrilled to hear of the selection and am deeply grateful for your services to MIT."

Dr. Afeyan is a member of the Corporation (Board of Trustees) of MIT, from which he had received his PhD in biochemical engineering in 1987. He is a former senior lecturer at the university's Sloan School of Management. He is currently a lecturer at Harvard Business School.

Helping Immigrants

IINE has three centers – Boston, Lowell and Nashua, NH. According to one staffer, the individual refugees are often resettled in Boston whereas families go to the other two locations because of housing costs in Boston.

IINE President and CEO Jeffrey Thielman, who at the start of the program greeted every single person walking into the hall, praised the evening's honoree for all he has done for immigrants. He also gave the grim statistics that currently around the world there are 65 million displaced persons, with 22 million refugees.

"It is the greatest humanitarian crisis our generation," Thielman said.

Thielman also gave some information about the IINE. He noted that last year the organization had helped 2,000 persons in New Hampshire and Massachusetts from 66 different countries.

He praised the evening's honoree, saying "people need you to make a difference in the years to come."

Another speaker, Rob Perez, founder and chair of Life Sciences Cares, said his organization "collectively aggregates resources and deploys them toward [battling] poverty in Boston." Perez said that by helping provide "economic survivability" to the poor residents of Massachusetts, the biotech community was able to give back. He also announced establishing a partnership with IINE before saying that Afeyan is "one of the architects of our industry."

Another speaker was Stelios Papadopoulos, chair of the board of Biogen, who also chaired this year's Golden Door Award.

A Greek immigrant himself, he stressed that often in reality there is little difference between refugees and immigrants once they land in their new country. They often suffer from similar problems, poverty and lack of familiarity with the new country. He also suggested that refugees and immigrants often become innovators. He noted that "21 percent of companies [in biotech] were started by immigrants or children of immigrants – a bunch of foreigners," he joked.

The US, he said, has traditionally appreciated diversity, "though there is a temporary lapse in judgment and ineptitude" at this moment.

He spoke about meeting Afeyan 30 years ago while the latter was at MIT.

"Noubar is not smart; he is off the charts," he said. "He has the uncanny ability to see the future as yesterday."

Papadopoulos read a letter from Dr. Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the former president of Brown University. "I congratulate you and the International Institute of New England for their wisdom for their selection of Noubar," he had written. "He knows that with wealth comes responsibility. He now is determined to give back. ... To me he personifies the spirit of plurality."

Honoring Afeyan

Previous winners of the Golden Door Award have included former Massachusetts Supreme Court Chief Justice Margaret Marshall, cellist Yo-Yo Ma and Stephen Mugar, making Afeyan the 36th US citizen of foreign birth to receive the honor.

The Golden Door is derived from a quote at the foot of the Statue of Liberty which concludes with the lines "Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Afeyan, when he finally came on stage to pick up his award, confessed that he was going to talk far longer than usual because he had so much to cover. He praised the IINE and added, "The life sciences community gathering to support them is very important in creating a lot of financial resources" for them. "We have to take a bigger and bigger responsibility" in the state.

Not only is he an immigrant, he said, but his many close friends who had attended the evening supporting him were also immigrants from the Middle East.

He gave some background on himself, from his birth and growing up in Lebanon, which he and his family fled because of the civil war, to landing as refugees in Montreal, Canada in 1975. Yet he went back further, detailing the story of his ancestors' survival in the former Armenian lands in the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide. His father's family came from Adabazar and his mother's from Urfa. One grandfather eventually found his way to Bulgaria while another ended up in Lebanon.

"Anywhere we move, people have to worry. Calamity follows



Stelios Papadopoulos, chair Biogen



Dr. Noubar Afeyan

us," he joked.

On a more serious note he continued, "All innovation is intellectual immigration. The feeling of utter fear and determination when we try to discover some new technology."

That is why, he suggested, "immigrants aspire to fields of innovation."

He spoke at length about the Armenian Genocide and how it had affected his family. His grandfather and a brother had gotten a second chance on the very last stop on the Baghdad-Berlin train, on which they were forced to travel, part of the throngs sent to die in the forced marches along the Deir Zor Desert. They were saved by a German officer at the very last moment because they spoke German. They, in turn, were able to save many Armenians that followed them on the train.

Reading an excerpt from Peter Balakian's *The Burning Tigris*, he noted his debt of gratitude to the US for all its citizens had done to help the victims of the Armenian Genocide. In a hall "a couple of blocks away," he said, at Faneuil Hall.

"It's November 26, 1894, the Monday before Thanksgiving, a windy and clear evening, as men and women file into Faneuil Hall from all over Boston and from the suburbs of Cambridge, Watertown, Winchester, and as far out as Quincy and Andover. They have come to this public meeting place near the harbor to talk about the most pressing international human rights issue of the day," the massacre of the Armenians by the Ottoman government, he read.

This, he said, led to the creation of the first US self-organized effort to help people outside the US. The group raised what is equal to \$1 billion in today's currency, before evolving into the Near East Foundation and going under the control of the US Congress.

Then he switched to Syria, where the civil war has led to the deaths of millions and the forcible evacuation of millions of others. Armenia has accepted more than 20,000 Syrian refugees, he said, "when they realized that 100 years ago, a whole lot of people took them."

He dedicated a large portion of his acceptance speech to explaining his latest philanthropic endeavor in the Armenian world, the Aurora Prize for Humanity, which is "gratitude in action."

In essence, the organization gifts one individual with a \$100,000 award for their humanitarian actions and gives them the chance to pick, in turn, a group that has inspired them with their humanity and gift them up to \$1 million and to keep the cycle of giving going.

According to the group's website, the Aurora Prize parent group, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative (AHI) was launched on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors. Those fortunate few who survived were saved by the courageous and heroic acts of institutions and individuals who intervened, at great risk. A century later, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative seeks to express gratitude, share remarkable stories of survivors and their saviors, and celebrate the strength of the human spirit.

The Aurora Prize was founded jointly by Afeyan, Vartan Gregorian and Ruben Vardanyan.

Afeyan serves on the boards of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Armenian General Benevolent Union, the IDEa Foundation, the UWC Dilijan College in Armenia, and the Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology.

continued on next page



Ambassador Samantha Power Joins the Aurora Prize Selection Committee

NEW YORK – The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative announced this week that Former United States Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power is the newest member of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity Selection Committee. As a part of the Selection Committee, Power will join the other humanitarians, human rights activists and former heads of state to determine future recipients for the annual \$1.1 million Aurora Prize.

“We are very excited to welcome Ambassador Power to the Aurora Prize Selection Committee. With her notable experience on the world stage, she has made great strides in aiding those in the developing world and standing up for the most vulnerable members of our global community,” said Noubar Afeyan, co-founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. “With her unparalleled expertise in human rights around the world, we are honored that she will review Aurora Prize nominations and help shape the future of the Aurora Prize.”

Power served as the 28th US representative to the United Nations and as a member of President Obama’s cabinet, and became known as one of the country’s foremost thinkers on foreign policy. Prior to her work at the United Nations, she served on the US National Security Council as special assistant to the president and senior director for multilateral affairs and human rights, where she focused on atrocity prevention, United Nations reform, LGBT and women’s rights and the promotion of religious freedom, among other issues. She also authored the Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*. Given her influential work in human rights and democracy, she has been recognized several times over, including as one of *TIME*’s “100 Most Influential People” and *Foreign Policy*’s “Top 100 Global Thinkers.”

“The Aurora Prize and its laureates recognize that, while it is essential to remember past atrocities, we each have the power to assist those who are saving lives in the present,” said Power. “I take great pride in being part of the prize’s Selection Committee, which seeks to honor those who make great sacrifices to help others, and who find a way to mobilize human kindness and persevere amid steep odds.”

She will join current Aurora Prize Selection Committee members Nobel Laureates Oscar Arias, Shirin Ebadi and

Leymah Gbowee; former president of Ireland Mary Robinson; former president of Mexico Ernesto Zedillo; human rights activist Hina Jilani; Director of the Institute of Global Health Innovation at Imperial College London Lord Ara Darzi; President Emeritus of the International Crisis Group and former foreign minister of Australia Gareth Evans; Medecins sans Frontieres Founder Bernard Kouchner; President of Carnegie

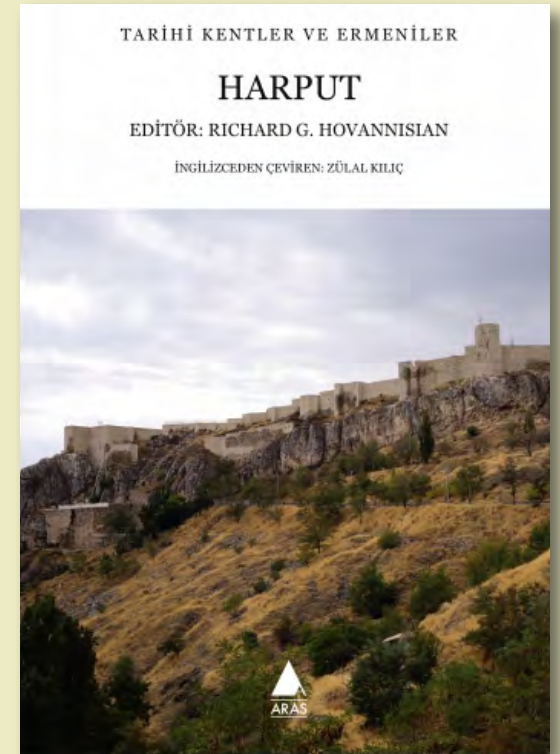


Samantha Power

Corporation of New York Vartan Gregorian; and Academy Award-winning actor and humanitarian George Clooney.

The Aurora Prize, now in its third year, was founded on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors. The Selection Committee will convene in Berlin, Germany on December 4, 2017 to review nominations from this year’s process, which gathered 750 submissions from 115 countries. Concurrent to their meeting in Berlin, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative will host its first Aurora Dialogues outside of Armenia, titled “Millions on The Move: Need for Development and Integration.” The Aurora Dialogues Berlin is a joint effort of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, Global Perspectives Initiative, Robert Bosch Stiftung and Stiftung Mercator, and was held on December 4-5.

The 2018 Aurora Prize finalists will be announced on April 24, 2018, the day of commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in 1915. The Aurora Prize, established on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviors, provides the laureate with a \$100,000 grant and the opportunity to continue the cycle of giving by nominating organizations to receive a \$1,000,000 award. The third annual Prize will be announced on June 10, 2018, at a ceremony in Armenia.



Richard Hovannisian’s Volume on Kharpert Published in Turkish

ISTANBUL – Aras Publishers has announced the publication of *Harpur*, the third volume in Turkish translation from the UCLA Conference series on Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces, organized by Prof. Richard G. Hovannisian between 1997 and 2009.

The original English language volume is titled *Armenian Tsopk/Kharpert*, consisting of 15 chapters on various aspects of the region’s history from antiquity to the years of genocide and final expulsions to 1930.

Volumes previously published in Turkish by Aras include *Van* and *Bitlis ve Mus*, and the publishers announce the intent to translate successively all fourteen volume in the series for the Turkish-reading public.

Hovannisian stated: “I am deeply gratified that the fourteen volumes growing out of the UCLA conferences and published in English under my editorship by Mazda Publishers in the United States are now being made available in Turkish by Aras Publishers in Istanbul. I regard this as a significant and hopefully positive development.”

Immigrant and Refugee Aid Group Honors Afeyan

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Giving Voice to Immigrants

Several immigrants and refugees were among the speakers. The program was kicked off by U-Meleni Mhalaba-Abedo and Rodrigue Kalambayi as part of Suitcase Stories. Mhalaba-Abedo been born in the US but eventually returned to Africa, witnessing the birth of modern Zimbabwe from Rhodesia and the dismantling of Apartheid in South Africa. Eventually she made her way back to Boston.

Kalambayi of Congo, spoke about the murder of his father and later he and his mother and numerous siblings made their way to Uganda where they lived for 11 years before making their way to the US. “I am so happy, going to school. I have a job for the first time in 11 years. I can smile again. I can dream again.”

Another speaker was Tamara Jasim, a refugee from Iraq, who spoke about the hard years they faced in Iraq before fleeing first to Northern Iraq, then Turkey and finally the US. Her husband, Ahmed, an electrical engineer, worked for the government and was therefore considered suspect. She, her husband and their then 2-year-old son were helped in resettlement in the US, where volunteers from IINE met them at Logan Airport and directly took them to their new furnished apartment in Lowell. Now, she said, her husband works as a technician and the couple have bought a home in Tyngsboro, where their children go to school.

With deep emotion, she thanked those gathered and in return, received thunderous applause.

To learn more about the International Institute, visit iine.org; for more about Aurora Prize visit auroraprize.com.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Project Save Hosts Afternoon of Thanks for Donors and Supporters

LUNCHEON, from page 1

of a howling storm. The mood was not dampened however; in fact, because of the lack of microphones, a certain less formal spirit took over.

The afternoon provided the opportunity to see the transition of leadership from founder and former executive director Ruth Thomasian to Tsoleen Sarian as well as the announcement of the organization's new ventures.

"The objective of today is to say thank you. In appreciation to Ruth Thomasian our founder, to you our supporters and friends, to our photo donors, staff, and volunteers. I will also share with you what is ahead for Project SAVE, and how you are a part of our future," said Sarian.

Sarian spoke about the new collaborations Project Save has embarked upon with Houshamadyan (houshamadyan.org), a project which seeks to recreate a picture of life in the Ottoman Armenian towns and villages.

"It is a vibrant and dynamic organization and is growing and expanding," Sarian said.

Next, she said, Project Save is collaborating with Digital Commonwealth, which provides access to materials through a consortium of libraries, museums, archives, and historical societies from across Massachusetts. It has shared 220 banquet and panorama photos with Digital Commonwealth.

"This collaboration brings awareness to our work beyond the Armenian community, as the photos can be explored across a variety of websites," she said.

She also announced that Project SAVE has signed an agreement with the USC Shoah Foundation (<https://sfi.usc.edu/>) to work together to develop educational resources centered around the use of Project SAVE. "By expanding their IWitness program to include Armenian photographs from Project SAVE, this collaboration will afford teachers and students the opportunity to gain insight to a more complete story of the Armenian people,

pre-genocide to post-genocide," she said.

Legacy of Ruth Thomasian

Sarian invited Dorothy Keverian to speak, adding that she and her husband, Jack, have been longtime sponsors. Keverian, beaming with delight, asked for a standing ovation for Thomasian, who in keeping with the light mood, ran from the back of the room to the front, waving a napkin.

"You are incredible, giving of yourself for 42 years," Keverian said. She also pointed out to an enlarged picture on display of the late speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, George Keverian, her husband's brother, on horseback as a child, one of the many the family has donated to Project Save.

"He said 'work with Ruth Thomasian. I just gave her photos of yesteryear,'" said Keverian, quoting her brother-in-law.

"The photographs allow us to see the Genocide and the happiness before the Genocide and life today," Keverian added. "My children have found this valuable, particularly with the calendar."

Every year, Project Save publishes a calendar with a specific theme. This year's theme is "Our Armenian Journey," focusing on immi-

grants and refugees in recent times.

"Jack and I have found this to be our favorite philanthropy and George had something to do with that," Keverian said. "It keeps the photographic heritage of the Armenian community worldwide and [makes

is why history is so important," she said. "The mirror helps guide you on a safe path from one's life road for the future generations."

In the past, she said, talking about history in the Armenian community was not something that everyone was comfortable doing. In



Thanks Giving Brunch Committee, Lorky Libaridian, Vartus Varadian, Tsoleen Sarian, Executive Director, Nicole Babikian event chair and Armine Manukyan missing: Talin Badrikian



From left, Connie Koutoujian, Anita Shishmanian and Adrienne Amirian



Mary Baroosian and John Kebabjian

available] visual resources to researchers."

Then she concluded, "The new executive director [Sarian] has done a fabulous job," before adding in jest, "The only reason Ruth picked her was that she was Aintabsi."

Next, the program turned to Thomasian in earnest. Said Sarian, "Someone recently described Ruth and her work as 'an admirable project started and managed by one determined woman to preserve and disseminate historically significant photo record of Armenian life both before and after the genocide and both in historic Armenian land and in the diaspora.'"

"Ruth has taught me to be aware of keeping an egalitarian balance: of gender, location, decade, and also class — not just the successful business owners and highly educated, but also to focus on the regular people. She is tenacious to ensure that people recognize and value the professional work of Project Save. Thank you for giving me the freedom to lead Project Save, as I proceed with humility and great respect," she noted.

Sarian thanked all those who have donated photographs to the Project Save archives. "Our 45,000 photos are collected on kitchen tables and living rooms, from over 1,200 individuals and families. Photos from before the Genocide, photos from missionaries during the genocide and photos of Armenian life through the Diaspora. The individuals captured in the photos, their names, and stories are documented. We are able to teach their stories, give their testimony, and share their information to the greater world."

She also thanked longtime archivist Suzanne Adams as well as volunteers Joseph Chau, Marc Fogel, Edward Kazanjian, Jirair Libaridian, Daiga Lorena, Laurence Mini, Elizabeth Wood, John Kebabjian, Marlin Keshishian, Sophie Tolajian and Ed Der Kazarian.

She stressed that she wanted to make the archives available to the greater Armenian community as well as the greater global community. She asked for the "shoebox of photos and albums that you have in your family. We want them."

Thomasian, now the CEO of Project Save, wasted little time in speaking about the organization she had founded 42 years ago.

"I've always loved history. I recently found an analogy for what history is," she explained, "a rearview mirror."

"We have to see what came behind us. That

fact, she recalled that her grandfather discouraged speaking at dinner, saying "this is an eating table, not a talking table."

As for her stepping down as executive director, she said it was time. "I am not going to live forever," leading to the concept of change. The one change that has come to Project Save is the digital age. She praised Sarian and archivist Suzanne Adams for digitizing the photos.

All those speaking about Project Save stressed that the organization does not simply take the photos but speaks to the donors at length in order to have the most precise information about what the photos have captured. The donor interviews are taped and archived.

Thomasian joked about her new role, "I collect photos very well. Now, I collect money."

More seriously, she added, "My heart is so warm with love for Tsoleen."

The keynote speaker was Dr. Hayk Demoyan, the former longtime director of the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute in Yerevan, Armenia, who is currently a visiting scholar at Harvard's Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies.

Demoyan praised the organization for doing "a wonderful and exceptional job." He first became aware of them when he started looking for photos from the era of the Armenian Genocide. He eventually used many photos from the organization in Yerevan at the Genocide Museum for the centennial event.

He then spoke about the more obscure history of Armenians in the US, noting that he is researching Martin the Armenian, the first ethnic Armenian to settle in the US, in his case Virginia.

"Just keep collecting photos," he suggested, "as a historian and as a customer."

The program was sponsored by Nicole Babikian Hajjar and Dr. Jean-Jacques Hajjar and Adrienne Tashjian. Serving on the event committee were Nicole Babikian Hajjar, including, Vartus Varadian, Taline Badrikian, Armine Manukian and Lorky Libaridian

Said Hajjar at the end of the program, "I am heartened to see the amount of support and enthusiasm for this organization, especially as it is at a turning point as it shifts gear. It is extremely promising in the very good hands of Tsoleen Sarian."

To purchase a calendar or to find out more about the organization, visit www.project-save.org

Arts & Living

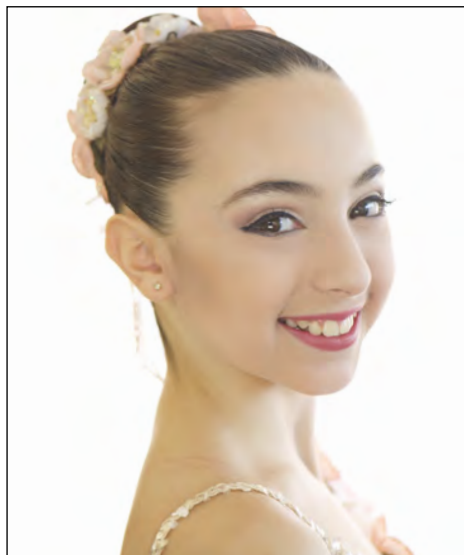
Ani Kassian-Howard Appears in Boston Ballet's Production Of 'Nutcracker'

BOSTON – Ani Kassian-Howard of Belmont is performing in Boston Ballet's production of Mikko Nissinen's "The Nutcracker" in the lead children's role of Clara. Kassian-Howard has been a student at Boston Ballet School since fall 2017. "The Nutcracker" opened November 24 at the Boston Opera House with performances through New Year's Eve, December 31.

At age 14, Kassian-Howard is no stranger to the role of Clara. In Maryland, she performed the role (and many others) at the Olney Ballet Theatre for the Berrend Dance Center's production of Mary Day's "The Nutcracker" (Patricia Berrend, director). Prior to this, she also performed the role in an abridged version of the ballet for Kinetics Dance Theatre's Student Company (Ellicott City, MD) called "The Cracked Nut" (Becca Buller Sigmund, director).

Born in Boston, Kassian-Howard has lived in Maryland for the past 10 years and is the daughter of concert pianist Anna Soukiasian and Dr. Jeffrey Howard, professor of violin at Towson University. Her primary training has been at the Berrend Dance Center and Kinetics Dance Theatre where her teachers included Patricia Berrend, Tim Fox, Runqiao and Erin Du, Aaron Jackson, Erica Molina, Dmitri Malikov, Becca Buller Sigmund, Jodi Guzewich and Lauren Tait. She has additionally participated in Summer Intensives at Maryland Youth Ballet, Boston Ballet and Carolina Ballet.

Kassian-Howard is performing in 15 of 44 shows this season in the role of Clara. She joins 250 other young Boston Ballet School students from around New England in Mikko Nissinen's "The Nutcracker." Three different casts will take on various roles, such as toy soldiers, pages, reindeer, lambs, polichinelles, baby mice and party children during Boston Ballet's 44 performances of "The Nutcracker."



Ani Kassian-Howard

Since its world premiere in 2012, Mikko Nissinen's and Robert Perdziola's re-envisioned production has been delighting audiences and critics alike. The production marked the first time Boston Ballet built a new production entirely from the ground up, engaging crafts men and women from all over the United States. Perdziola illustrated more than 40 sketches that were transformed into the production's larger-than-life sets that range from calm, subtle colors in the Act I party scene to vibrant colors in Act II's Land of the Sweets. The 2012 production also incorporated more than 350 beautifully intricate costumes and fine-tuned choreography. New lighting design by renowned Finnish designer Mikki Kunttu was added in 2015.

All children performing in "The Nutcracker" are students of Boston Ballet School and coached by an experienced staff including see BALLETT, page 16



Ece Temelkuran

Temelkuran Speaks on Turkish Politics and Her New Novel *The Time of Mute Swans*

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Turkish journalist and author Ece Temelkuran presented a talk organized by the BostonBul organization at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) on November 27. This event was part of the tour for the newly-published English translation of her book, *The Time of Mute Swans*.

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

Temelkuran said that though this was a novel, it was at the same time a political work, so she would also speak about current Turkish politics.

"I have been a political person since I was 8 years old, so I see no harm in combining politics with literature," she explained at the start of her talk.

Temelkuran was introduced by Emrah Altindis of BostonBul to a primarily young and Turkish audience. She began speaking in fluent and wry English.

Temelkuran said that popular literature did not often deal with the history of the Turkish republic, and instead focused on the Ottoman Empire, as if the former were not poetic enough to be portrayed. She decided to rectify this with her novel, and was inspired by a number of true stories, including episodes from her childhood.

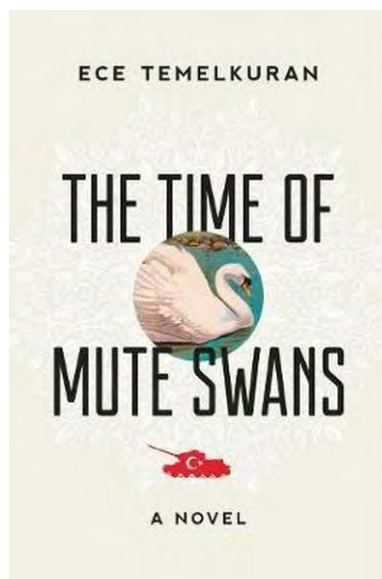
Apparently the leading general of the 1980 coup in Turkey, Kenan Evren, decided to build a new park in the Turkish capital of Ankara and took swans from the already existing Swan Park to the new location. To prevent them from attempting to fly back, he ordered veterinarians to take decisive measures, and they operated on the swans to remove a certain bone. As a consequence, the swans could no longer fly.

Eventually, people in Ankara forgot that swans normally could fly, and thought this was the natural state of swans. Temelkuran used this as a metaphor for Turks after the military coup, when people forget their human capacity for creation and resistance.

Another symbolic event in 1980 was the visit of migrating swans from Siberia for the first time. Temelkuran in wonderment exclaimed that it was if they were trying to remind the people of Turkey that swans can actually fly, and that people can do things. They returned every year until 2013, which was the year of the Gezi Park uprising. Again, it was as if their mission was accomplished and people finally were aware that swans can fly and people can resist. During the Gezi uprising, university students in Ankara ran to protect the swans from teargas, just as her two eight-year-old characters attempted to protect the swans from the crippling effects of the 1980 coup.

The subtitle of Temelkuran's talk was "Remembering as a Cure for Global Political Sickness." Temelkuran said that she learned from her work on the Armenians and the Kurds that when society is offered the chance to remember, it

see TEMELKURAN, page 16



Christopher Atamian Poetry Collection *A Poet in Washington Heights* Wins Tölölyan Prize

BOSTON – The Regional Executive Committee of Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society of Eastern United States announces the winner of the 4th Minas and Kohar Tölölyan Prize in Contemporary Literature, Christopher Atamian for his poetry collection titled *A Poet in Washington Heights*. The book is forthcoming from Nauset Press.

Atamian was the winner of the inaugural Minas and Kohar Tölölyan Prize in Contemporary Literature, for his translation of Nigoghos Sarafian's *The Bois de Vincennes*.

Atamian is a translator, writer and director. In 2006, he produced the OBIE Award-winning play "Trouble in Paradise" and was included as an invited artist to the 2009 Venice Biennale for his video "Desire." His short films and videos have screened throughout the world and he appears regularly in such publications as the Huffington Post and the *New York Times*, and was for several years the dance critic for the now-defunct New York Press. Atamian has written one novel, *Speaking French*, and is at work on several commercial musicals and film scripts.

In his work as a translator, Atamian has translated six books from French and Western Armenian into English, including Nigoghos Sarafian's *Bois de Vincennes*, and three for Columbia University's Middle Eastern Studies Department: Krikor Beledian's *Fifty Years of Armenian Literature in France*, and Marc Nichanian's *Literature and Catastrophe and The Armenian Language Throughout History*. He has also translated Philippe Delma's *The Rosy Future of War* (The Free Press) and is currently at work on Denis Donikian's *Vidures/Offal*, an award-winning novel published on Actes Sud.

Atamian has worked in senior positions for leading media companies, including ABC, Ogilvy Interactive, and JP Morgan's marketing division. He received his bachelor's degree from Harvard University and his MBA from Columbia Business School, and is also an alumnus of USC Film School. He has been a Fulbright, Bronfman, and Gulbenkian Scholar.

Atamian has been active in the Armenian community since he was a teenager and has served on the board of the Columbia Center for Armenian Studies and as executive director of the Armenia Fund USA. He was the elected president two years running of the Armenian Gay and Lesbian Association of NY (AGLA NY) and currently sits on this organization's board of trustees.

Named after one of the major Armenian literary critics of the second half of the 20th century and his wife, a devoted teacher of that literature for decades, the annually awarded Minas and Kohar Tölölyan Prize in Contemporary Literature recognizes the work produced by talented writers working in North America. The prize is intended to encourage new work in all the major genres of literary production, as they are currently understood in North America. Works in Armenian, English, French and Spanish are considered if the authors are of Armenian ancestry, or the work has an Armenian theme or revolves around an Armenian topic.

Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society's Eastern Regional Executive initiated this prize a number of years ago to encourage and recognize those who write in the Armenian language or on Armenian topics. The financial award of \$1,500 is made possible through the generosity of Edward and Vergine Misserlian of San Francisco, California.

The jury consists of Dr. Sima Arahamian (Montreal), Anoush Agnerian (Montreal), Dr. Vartan Matiosian (New York/New Jersey), Gourgen Arzoumanian (California).



ARTS & LIVING

A Tale of Two Churches: Penang and Singapore

By Nadia Wright

SINGAPORE (Biblioasia.gov.sg) – In Penang, the Armenian Apostolic Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator was consecrated in 1824; nearly 12 years later in Singapore, another church bearing the same name was consecrated.

The futures of these two churches could not have been more different: while the Penang church was demolished in 1909, the Singapore church continues to exist to this day as the focal point for a small but thriving Armenian community, besides being a tourist attraction.

Around 301 AD, Armenia became the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as the state religion after the apostle Gregory converted its king, Tirdates III. This would cause much strife in later years as Armenia stood between two great Muslim powers: Persia and the Ottoman Empire. In the early 16th century, in his war against the Ottomans, the Persian king Shah Abbas razed the Armenian city of Julfa and deported some 25,000 Armenians to Persia (present-day Iran), mainly to his new capital Isfahan. He resettled most of the Armenians in an area that became known as New Julfa.

It was the descendants of these Persian Armenians, renowned for their acumen as merchants, who subsequently settled in India and later, Java, Penang and Singapore. As religion was integral to their lives, these diasporic merchants built churches in their new settlements as soon as they had the means. Penang and Singapore were no exception.

In 1786, Francis Light acquired the island of Penang from the Sultan of Kedah on behalf of the British East India Company (EIC) and established the settlement of George Town. The colony soon developed into a bustling center and attracted Armenian merchants from India and Java. Initially, these Armenians used the services of the Catholic and Anglican clergy for worship; however, as their numbers increased, they felt the need to have a church of their own.

In February 1821, an Armenian delegation met the British Governor of Penang, William Phillips, who asked for a plan

and an estimate of costs. The sum needed was \$7,000. Armenian philanthropist Carapiet Arrackell bequeathed \$2,000 of this amount, and the community raised another \$2,000. As they were short of \$3,000, the Armenians petitioned Governor Phillips for a donation in 1822.

Phillips was of the view that hardworking Christian people would be an asset to the colony and to encourage more Armenians to settle in Penang, he donated \$500 on behalf of the EIC, while recognizing that this amount was much less



A painting of the Armenian Church in Singapore by John Turnbull Thomson, 1847. This view shows the original chancel and the second turret.

than what the Armenians were anticipating. Indeed, this was a paltry sum compared with the \$60,000 the EIC had donated towards the building of the Anglican St. George's Church in Penang. The directors of the EIC readily approved the donation seeing that it would encourage these hardworking and peace-loving people to settle in Penang.

The Armenian merchant Catchatour Galastaun not only made good the shortfall, but additionally purchased a plot of land in September 1821 at Bishop Street between Penang Street and King Street. Construction of the church commenced under the supervision of British merchant and shipwright, Richard Snadden, and, in 1822, Bishop Abraham of Jerusalem officiated the laying of the foundation stone. In May 1824, the community bought the neighboring site that had housed the government dispensary, thus enlarging the church compound and providing space to build lodgings for the priest.

On November 4, 1824, the church was consecrated in a service led by Bishop Jacob of Jerusalem and assisted by Rev. Iliazor Ingergolie, Penang's first fulltime Armenian priest. The church was officially named the Armenian Apostolic Church of St Gregory the Illuminator. The local press described the church as the project of a "public spirited individual" (in reference to Galastaun), proclaiming it to be "one of the best proportioned and most elegant" buildings in Penang, adding that it "reflects much credit on the Armenian population."

Galastaun and his peers must have envisaged a much larger Armenian community settling in Penang when they pressed for a church. But this, unfortunately, did not materialize: Armenian numbers in Penang never surpassed more than 30. The success of rival Singapore spelled the end of the Penang church. After Singapore became the capital of the Straits Settlements in 1832 and surged ahead as its commercial center, there was little incentive for Armenian entrepreneurs to sink their roots in Penang. The community shrank as members left, and the remaining few struggled to support the church.

Despite Penang's tiny Armenian congregation, priests were

sent out from Persia approximately every three years until 1885. After that, church services were held only when a priest visited Penang. The last was conducted in 1906 by Archbishop Sahak Ayvatian from the Mother church in Isfahan. On his visit, Ayvatian discussed the future of the deteriorating church building with key members of the Armenian community. Whatever their decision, the church's fate was sealed in February 1909 when decaying beams caused the collapse of a major balustrade, and large sections of the walls caved in. There was no option but to raze the building, retaining only the churchyard and parsonage.

As a memorial to the church, Armenians Joseph Anthony and Arshak Sarkies commissioned German architect Henry Neubronner to design a commemorative monument that was erected in 1909. Over the years, the monument as well as the garden surrounding it and the tombstones in the graveyard became neglected, leading the press to report that this made a mockery of those who had erected the memorial.

The Armenian Church in Singapore

The fate of the Armenian church in Singapore took a different trajectory altogether. Within a year of the establishment of a trading post in Singapore in 1819 by Stamford Raffles, Armenians began arriving. Initially, Reverend Iliazor Ingergolie travelled from Penang to conduct services for the Armenian community in Singapore. But after the community grew to around 20 in 1825, the Armenians wrote to the Archbishop in Persia asking that a priest be sent to serve their spiritual needs. In 1827, Reverend Gregory Ter Johannes arrived in Singapore.

At first, Ter Johannes conducted services in the premises of an Armenian merchant named Isaiah Zechariah, but soon, as in Penang, the community wanted its own church. In March 1833, Zechariah began petitioning Samuel Bonham, the Resident Councillor in Singapore, for a grant of land. Eventually a suitable site was agreed upon at the foot of Fort Canning. This land had earlier been granted to Dr. Nathaniel Wallich to establish an experimental botanical garden, but this particular site facing Hill Street was left unused.

Bonham sent the request for land along the bureaucratic path to Thomas Church, the acting governor in Penang, who then forwarded it to the government in Calcutta (Kolkata), hoping it would be approved as the Armenians were "peculiarly docile and diligent and in every respect desirable colonists." In July 1834, approval for the land was granted; the welcome news reaching Singapore in September, whereupon the Armenians sprang into action.

The leading British architect of the time, George D. Coleman was commissioned to design the church and oversee its construction. Work commenced at a rapid pace. The foundation ceremony was conducted on January 1, 1835 by the Very Rev. Thomas Gregorian who travelled from Isfahan for the occasion, and the local priest Rev. Johannes Catchick.

The total cost of the construction, as well as accessories and regalia for the priest, amounted to \$5,058.30. While the

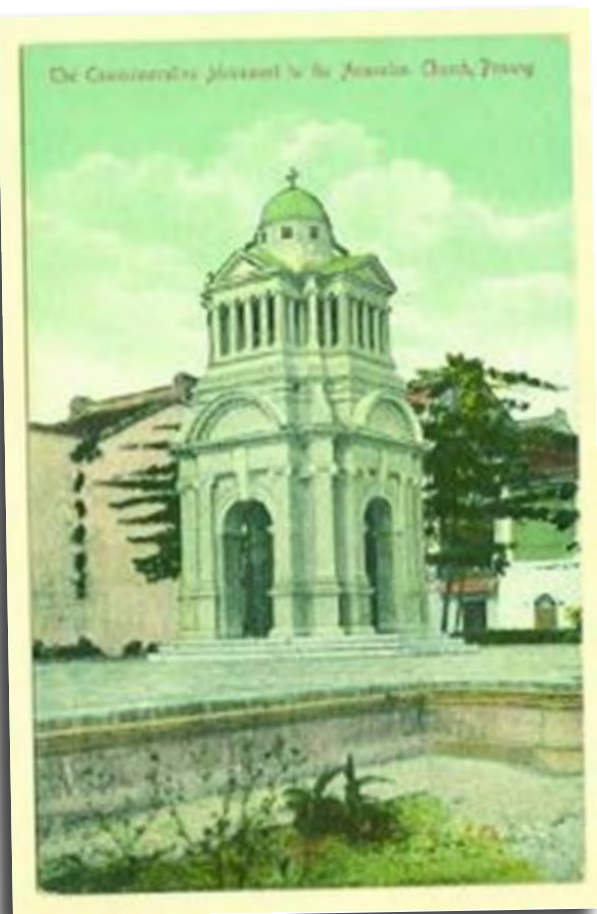


The Armenian Church in Singapore as it looks today, with major alterations made around 1853 by George Maddock – the new steeple, new east portico and the flat roof. Courtesy of the Armenian Church.

Penang church benefited from two wealthy donors, Singapore was not so fortunate. A public subscription was launched and, by mid-1836, some \$3,120 had been donated, mostly by local Armenians. This left a shortfall of nearly \$2,000 as well as the further \$600 that was required to build a parsonage.

The paucity of donations from non-Armenians led to a sharp rebuke from the Singapore Chronicle newspaper, which had hoped that the meagre \$370 donated by the Europeans and others would be supplemented; after all, Armenians had generously donated when the call was made to raise funds to build St Andrew's Cathedral. But the plea largely fell on deaf ears. Fortunately, the 12 or so local Armenian families managed to raise the money, and also promised to cover ongoing costs.

On March 26, 1836, the church was consecrated and dedicated to St. Gregory, sharing the same name as the Penang church – the Armenian Apostolic Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator. The *Singapore Free Press* declared it as one of Coleman's "most ornate and best finished pieces of architec-



A postcard featuring the Armenian Commemorative Monument in Penang, c. 1909.



ARTS & LIVING

ture." The paper reported in glowing terms:

"This small but elegant building does great credit to the public spirit and religious feeling of the Armenians of this settlement; for we believe that few instances could be shown where so small a community have contributed funds sufficient for the erection of a similar edifice."

Indeed, the church relied on a very small community (which never numbered more than 100 at its peak) to maintain it, as well as pay for the services of a priest. The burden of supporting the church was one continuously faced by the Armenians in Penang and Singapore. In Penang, the Anthony family supported the priest for many years, while in Singapore in the 1930s, that task was taken on by Mrs. Mary Anne Martin.

In the 1840s and in 1853, the Singapore community raised money for major modifications to the roof and dome. Over the years, generous individuals further contributed to improvements and additions. For example, in 1861, Peter Seth donated the bell in the steeple, although this was not hung until the 1880s. In that same decade, Catchick Moses paid for the back porch and a new fence around the compound.

As in Penang, the priest lived in a parsonage within the church grounds. The original small building paid for by Simon Stephens was replaced in 1905 by a splendid Edwardian edifice commissioned by Mrs. Anna Sarkies in memory of her husband, John Shanazar Sarkies.

The church, parsonage and grounds were damaged during World War II when the British military occupied the premises. After the war, the church trustees requested compensation to pay for repairs, but in the end the War Damages Commission paid only part of the claim. In the meantime, the church and parsonage deteriorated further. Local and visiting Armenians did their best to raise funds for renovations, their efforts augmented by generous donations from the Martin family and from church funds.

The last full service by a resident priest was held in 1938, although services were led by a deacon until the onset of the war in 1942. After the war ended, arrangements were made for priests to fly over from Australia, but these visits became more infrequent as the years. This did not mean the church lay idle. Since 1946, other Christian denominations have been allowed to worship at the Armenian church, while occasionally a visiting Armenian cleric would conduct a special service for the community.

Disappearing Community

By 1970, the congregation had diminished to about 10 people and the church was in dire need of repair. The government decided that the church was worth preserving and declared it as a National Monument in June 1973, thus securing its future. Augmenting this sense of permanence was the arrival of Armenian expatriates from America and Europe from the 1980s onwards who were posted to Singapore for work. Breathing new life to the small and ageing Persian-Armenian community, these newcomers took an active interest in the church. The church was spruced up for its 150th anniversary in 1986, and Archbishop Baliozian from Sydney and Armenians from the region took part in the celebration. Over the years, the church has remained in the public eye through articles in the media and postage stamps released in Singapore (1978) and Armenia (1999).

After the 1990s, the size of the congregation further increased as Armenians, especially from Armenia and Russia, began to settle in Singapore. In 2016, the church trustees arranged for a priest to regularly visit from Calcutta to conduct services. The church also organizes cultural events and has continued the practice of allowing weddings to be celebrated in its premises for a donation. All these activities, plus a steady flow of tourists, ensure that the church maintains a high public profile.

Unlike Penang's Armenian church which has disappeared from living memory, its counterpart in Singapore is a national monument and tourist icon. More importantly, it remains the functioning church of one of Singapore's smallest minorities.



Vahe Berberian Premieres 'Ooremn' Monologue in Greater Boston

ARLINGTON, Mass. — Los Angeles-based comedian Vahe Berberian presented the Boston premiere of his latest show, "Ooremn," on

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

December 3 at the Regent Theatre in Arlington hosted by the Armenian Relief Society (ARS)

Cambridge Shushi Chapter as a fundraiser for its varied philanthropic and educational activities.

Heather Krafian welcomed guests on behalf of the ARS.

"Ooremn" is a Western-Armenian-language monologue (sprinkled with English, Turkish and Arabic phrases) covering topics ranging from politics, religion, society to relations between men and women. No topic was safe from the observant mind of Berberian, much to the delight of the audience.

Berberian will bring the show back to the East Coast on March 3, 2018 for the Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York at the Clinton Inn Hotel and Event Center in Tenafly, NJ.

For more information about the March event, visit <https://www.facebook.com/pg/tekeyangreaternewyork/events/>

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Temelkuran Speaks on Turkish Politics and Her New Novel

TEMELKURAN, from page 13

rejects it, yet remembering is the cure for many social sicknesses, including the 1980 coup, which has almost been completely erased from Turkish social memory.

Temelkuran said that Evren had set the stage for Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the changes instituted by the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Turkey was forced into a market society, being forced to “descend to the nadirs of banality by encouraging the evil in human nature.”

The rest of the world also has endured the tribulations of a market society, she said, and reacts with a movement called “rising populism.” Though she did not like this nomenclature, because it disconnected the present with the economic and social changes of the 1980s, she felt that there was a global movement and Turkey had much to contribute to it because “unfortunately Turkey has a lot of experience when it comes to insanity.”

She concluded, “I don’t believe that words

through to the ignorant and indifferent, who today form a majority.

Temelkuran said that it was not possible to prove facts in a post-truth society. Instead, she said, one needs to come up with a solid counter-narrative, and to do this it is necessary to remember, and to think in literature. A socialist, Temelkuran placed her hope on collective thinking and progress in small steps.

An audience member asked about the identity of minorities like Armenians, Jews or Kurds in a society which keeps forgetting its history. Temelkuran said that as far as Armenians or Jews were concerned, they were feeling intimidated not only due to the hostile discourse directed against them from the highest levels of power, but also because they know that nothing will protect them. Temelkuran pointed out that with Turkish secularists now under attack, that suddenly they too learned how it felt to be a minority, and how horrible it was.

Temelkuran, a graduate of Ankara University’s Faculty of Law, began her career as a journalist

articles appear in the *Guardian*, *New York Times*, *Le Monde diplomatique* and *Bookforum* magazine. She has won many awards, such as PEN for Peace, Turkish Journalist of the Year, and in 2008 the Aysenur Zarakoglu Award for Freedom of Thought and Expression.

The BostonBul organization describes itself on its Facebook site as follows: “We are stu-

dents, academics, intellectuals, artists, workers, business people and citizens of Turkey and citizens of Boston. We are here to show our continued solidarity with our friends in Turkey who have been subjected to immense police brutality by the current administration as a reaction to their mass protests since the beginning of the Gezi Park demonstrations.”



Ece Temelkuran speaking at MIT in Cambridge, Mass.

are strong enough to change the world. ...they are too fragile to do that kind of work. But I do believe that words can preserve beauty and remind people of their capacity to create beauty. It can also remind people that they can fly.”

The audience for the most part appeared to agree with Temelkuran’s analysis. In the question session, they peppered her with requests for guidance on the best way to resist in a world where, as one questioner said, there is no balance and things are tipped toward the powerful. Another audience member asked how to get

for the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* in 1993. She was a columnist for the Turkish newspapers *Milliyet* (2000-2009) and *Habertürk* (2009-January 2012), but lost her positions after being critical of the Turkish government. She is the author of many books, including *Deep Mountain: Across the Turkish-Armenian Divide* (first published in Turkish in 2008 and in English translation in 2010), which received a mixed reception among Armenians. Her most recent nonfiction book, *Turkey: The Insane and the Melancholy*, was published in English translation in 2016. Her

Ani Kassian-Howard Is in the ‘Nutcracker’

BALLET, from page 13

Boston Ballet Artistic Director Mikko Nissinen, Boston Ballet School Director Margaret Tracey, Children’s Ballet Master Miranda Weese, and Boston Ballet School’s faculty. Students auditioned and started rehearsing for the production in October. They will continue rehearsals through November, which includes rehearsals with Company dancers and costume fittings with Boston Ballet’s Costume Shop. They will experience the unique, backstage atmosphere at the Boston Opera House through technical and dress rehearsals, as well as performances accompanied by Boston Ballet Orchestra and attended by more than 2,000 audience members each night.

Participating in a full-length ballet is an important performance opportunity for students, exposing them to aspects of ballet they do not experience in a regular class. The students learn about the hard work and enjoyment that composes a live ballet performance, and have the unique opportunity to dance alongside Boston Ballet’s 66 inter-

nationally-acclaimed professional dancers from around the world. This season, Boston Ballet School students also have the opportunity to appear in other company productions: Marius Petipa’s “The Sleeping Beauty” and August Bournonville’s “La Sylphide.”

For a full synopsis and additional details, visit bostonballet.org.

All 44 performances of *The Nutcracker* will take place at the Boston Opera House (539 Washington St, Boston, MA 02111):

Kassian-Howard will appear in the following productions: Sunday, December 10, 2017 at 1:30 p.m.; Thursday, December 14, at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, December 16, at 1:30 p.m.; Wednesday, December 20, at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, December 23, at 1:30 p.m.; Sunday, December 24, at 11 am; Tuesday, December 26, at 7:30 p.m.; Thursday, December 28, at 1:30 p.m.; Friday, December 29, at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, December 30, at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets start at \$35. For more information, visit bostonballet.org/nutcracker/



Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

Easy Tortilla Lahmajoons

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 pounds ground lamb or beef
1 medium onion, minced
2 medium tomatoes, seeded and diced
2-3 cloves garlic, minced
1 medium green bell pepper, chopped fine
1/2 bunch flat-leaf parsley, chopped fine
1 6-oz. can tomato sauce (more to taste)
2-3 tablespoons tomato paste
2 tablespoons fresh chopped or dried crushed mint
Pinch of dried sweet basil
Sea or Kosher salt, black pepper, paprika, cayenne pepper, crushed red pepper flakes, ground cumin to taste
Fresh lemon wedges, sliced green and red onions and tomatoes
8-10 8" flour tortillas (any brand)
Olive oil

PREPARATION:

Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees.

Fully combine all ingredients except the tortillas in a large bowl and let set 10 minutes. (This meat mixture may be made 1-2 days ahead of baking and refrigerated).

Spread meat mixture thinly onto each tortilla and cook on baking sheets for 10-12 minutes or until golden brown and meat is fully cooked; do not burn the tortillas.

Remove from oven and serve with fresh lemon wedges, a tossed salad, and sliced green and red onions and tomatoes. If desired, lightly drizzle lahmajoons with olive oil.

Serves 6-8.

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



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ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

MASSACHUSETTS

DECEMBER 10 — Christmas Holiday Concert, Erevan Choral Society and Orchestra, 7 p.m., Sunday, Church Sanctuary, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. This year's concert, under the direction of Composer Konstantin Petrossian, music director and conductor, will open with the Arlington High School Madrigal Singers and feature the vocal quartet the Bostonians. The program will consist of traditional Armenian and Western sacred and holiday music. The public is invited to attend this complimentary concert which is a gift to the community. For further information, call the Church office, 617.354.0632.

DECEMBER 14 — NAASR Christmas Open House, with 7:30 lecture by Marian Mesrobian MacCurdy, "Operation Nemesis, Justice, and Inter-Generational Trauma: How Resistance Promotes Resilience," Thursday, 6-10 p.m. at the NAASR Center, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont. All items in the bookstore will be 35 percent or more off. Contact NAASR at hq@naasr.org for more information.

DECEMBER 17 — Candlelit Labyrinth Peace Walk, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston, 4:30 – 6 pm. Quiet holiday reflection and celebration. Tie a ribbon with your wish on the Wishing Tree. Hot Chocolate & Cookies, hosted by The Bostonian Hotel Boston All are invited. RSVP appreciated, please email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

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

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



The Christmas Holiday Concert by the Erevan Choral Society and Orchestra, will take place at 7 p.m., on Sunday, December 10, at the Church Sanctuary, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge, Mass. This year's concert, under the direction of Konstantin Petrossian, will open with the Arlington High School Madrigal Singers and feature the vocal quartet the Bostonians. The program will offer traditional Armenian and Western sacred and holiday music. The public is invited to attend this free concert. For further information, call the Church office, 617.354.0632.

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

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

RHODE ISLAND

DECEMBER 9 — The Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church is pleased to present "Silent Night, Holy Night" Christmas Concert with performances by the Nazeli Dance Groups, Students of the Arts Education Program, Arts Exhibit. Also featuring the Junior Choir of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church. Saturday, at 5 p.m. in the Egavian Cultural Center, 70 Jefferson St., Providence. Refreshments following concert. Donations greatly appreciated.

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

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

The Sins of the Fathers: Turkish Denialism and the Armenian Genocide

MISSION HILLS, Calif. — The Ararat-Eskijian-Museum and The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) present a lecture titled "The Sins of the Fathers: Turkish Denialism and the Armenian Genocide" by Siobhan Nash-Marshall, based on her book of the same name, on Sunday December 10, at 4 p.m., Ararat-Eskijian Museum/ Sheen Chapel, 15105 Mission Hills Road.



Author Siobhan Nash-Marshall

In 1915, the government of the Ottoman Empire began systematically to rip Western Armenians off the lands where their ancestors had lived since time immemorial. It ordered that Armenian men be murdered, and the Armenian women, children and the elderly be deported into areas of Syria declared unfit for human life. Most of the Armenians who managed to survive the death march were slaughtered there. In *The Sins of the Fathers*, the first part of which is titled The Betrayal of Philosophy trilogy, Dr. Siobhan Nash-Marshall connects the total disregard of fact and people, of lands and history that informed the Armenian Genocide and Turkish denial to what is today informing our world and culture.

Nash-Marshall holds the Mary T. Clark Chair of Christian Philosophy at Manhattanville College. Author of many academic books and articles on metaphysics and the problem of evil, she also has written books and articles for the general public: *Joan of Arc: A Spiritual Biography and What It Takes to be Free: Religion and the Roots of Democracy*. In recent years, Nash-Marshall has devoted a lot of attention to genocide and genocide negationism. *The Sins of the Fathers* is her first book-length treatment of the topic.

After the breakout of the war in Syria, Nash-Marshall and some friends founded the Christians In Need Foundation (CINF), through which they attempt to help the ancient Christian cultures of the world which are presently in peril.

For more information about the event, contact the Ararat-Eskijian Museum at eskijian@ararat-eskijian-museum.com, or NAASR at hq@naasr.org.

The Sins of the Fathers



Turkish Denialism and the Armenian Genocide
SIOBHAN NASH-MARSHALL

COMMENTARY

Armenia Straddles East and West Line

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Armenia did not sign an agreement with the European Union (EU) four years ago when it first had the chance, but an agreement was signed November 24 in Brussels, on the sidelines of the European Partnership Summit attended by delegations from 28 European Union countries and representatives from Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Belarus.

Despite the fact that Armenia made a U-turn at the time, the EU did not punish Armenia or treat it negatively. On the contrary, it continued friendly relations with Armenia because it was in pursuit of a greater goal; and as we see, this time around, several republics of the former Soviet Union are involved in this new deal, which officially is “not directed against the interests of any particular party” but everyone is aware that it is intended to isolate Russia.

At the signing ceremony, Donald Tusk, the president of the European Council, used the opportunity to criticize Moscow over its actions in Crimea. In addition, Prime Minister Theresa May of Britain did not mince her words in defining the role of the agreement as it pertains to limiting Russia.

The agreement will give Armenia less than what was offered in

who signed the agreement, announced that “the agreement reaffirms the stated commitments of the European Union to support the efforts and approaches of the co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group for the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, based on the norms and principles of international law, in particular the non-use of force or threat of force, equal rights and the principles of self-determination and territorial integrity.”

Just a week ago, the Black Sea Cooperation Council had adopted a similar declaration, omitting the principle of self-determination and no country came to Armenia’s defense and thus the Armenian delegation had to walk out of the conference.

In the second paragraph of the EU agreement, there is a reference to territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty, directed at Russia, to satisfy Georgia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine, once again leaving Armenia in limbo.

On the diplomatic front, the general agreement seems to reign for all parties concerned. According to senior officials in Yerevan, Armenia’s landmark agreement with the EU will not complicate its close political and economic relations with Russia. Speaker of Parliament Ara Babloyan said during a hearing, “Armenia has never followed a path of pitting the interests of its partners, let alone friends, against each other.”

In his turn, Piotr Switalski, the head of the EU delegation in Yerevan, has reinforced Babloyan’s assurances by stating that “the agreement is not directed against any party. It does not contain any provisions which would undermine or influence negatively the interest of other countries that cooperate with Armenia.”

Most worrisome would have been Moscow’s reaction. And again, Armenia would never make the move to get close to the EU without clearing it with Moscow first. On the face of it, the Russian reaction seems to be reassuring in the statement of its Foreign Ministry, which says that Moscow “respects” Yerevan’s desire to forge closer ties with the EU. Russian Ambassador to Yerevan Ivan Volynkin, taking

his cue from its Foreign Ministry, has reaffirmed that as a “sovereign country, Armenia is free to form alliances and the CEPA provisions do not run counter to Armenia’s membership in the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union.”

But these official statements do not jibe well with the ugly attacks that the two state-controlled TV channels in Moscow have unleashed against Armenia. Many talk shows have been aired specially on NTV, where Armenia is portrayed as a woman married to Russia, asking for gifts from the husband while flirting with the European lover.

No Armenian commentator has been invited to those shows to provide any alternative views. Unfortunately, this Armenia-bashing campaign translates into abuses and even murders on the streets of Moscow, where Armenians, as well as other Caucasian immigrants, are singled out on the streets and routinely called derogatory names.

A senior representative of President Vladimir Putin’s United Russia Party visiting Armenia has disowned those scathing attacks, by stating that “such comments do not reflect Moscow’s position on the issue.”

Thus, Armenia, believing it to be its historical mission to bridge East and West, has taken a positive initiative but from all indication, that move is fraught with perils and risks.

Actually, Armenia’s foreign policy has become a multi-vector one. Assuming the chairmanship of the Francophonie organization of French-speaking nations will bring President Macron to Armenia while on the other hand hosting Iran’s Foreign Minister Jawad Zarif led to the signing of significant economic agreements.

And yet, all these activities have to translate into bread for the ordinary citizen’s table, and jobs and hope for the youth to remain in Armenia.

There are many counter currents against Armenia’s development and the government has been taking bold steps to break the isolation and assure all these agreements to yield benefits and now.



the previous deal, which was to become part of “deep and comprehensive free trade area.”

It would not be wise to delve into the legal implications of the agreement, without studying the 350-page document, but we can discuss the public fallout. By enlisting countries from the Russian sphere of influence, the EU is doing the US’s bidding as far as antagonizing Russia is concerned.

As a second-rate power, the EU cannot be weaned from the US, no matter what political differences it may have with Washington. President Emanuel Macron of France and Chancellor Angela Merkel have at times been openly critical of the US administration, in an attempt to demonstrate their sovereignty, but they have not gone as far as breaking relations.

The agreement Armenia came to sign assigns some commitments vis-à-vis the EU; the signatories have to fight domestic corruption, break up monopolies, render the courts independent, hold free elections and so on. One would ask why Armenia could not achieve any of these reforms on its own and has to enter into an association to be forced into implementing them. The reason seems to be that by association, Armenia is committing itself to upholding European values. The second, more valid reason, is that the EU is offering \$200 million to Armenia to carry out those reforms by 2020. It looks like the EU has to bribe Armenia to help it make some good decisions.

A respected journalist, Aram Aprahamian, writing in his editorial column in *Aravot* daily, seems to be skeptical, looking at the faces of those leaders who have been responsible for the current lackluster situation in Armenia.

Armenia came out of Brussels with less than it had bargained for. Thus, the EU had an official statement before the signing ceremony, addressing the Karabakh issue indirectly, by upholding on an equal footing the principles of territorial integrity and the right of self-determination. The second principle was deleted from the final declaration, in deference to Azerbaijan. But to put a positive spin on the situation, Armenia’s top diplomat, Edward Nalbandian,

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Turkish President Erdogan Embroiled In New \$15 Million Financial Scandal

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan came to power 14 years ago as a devout Muslim, announcing that he intended to eliminate corruption from Turkish politics.

As he consolidated his authority and moved from Prime Minister to an autocratic President, he forgot his promises and engaged in the very corrupt policies which he had condemned. As British historian Lord Acton has said... "power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely."

This week, I wish to cover Erdogan's fourth corruption scandal, starting by summing up the first three involving him and his family.

The first case is regarding Erdogan receiving an oil tanker worth \$25 million as a gift from Mubariz Mansimov, an Azeri billionaire, in 2008. At Erdogan's request, Mansimov later became a Turkish citizen and changed his last name to Gurbanoglu.

The second case occurred in December 2013, when Erdogan and four of his Ministers were implicated in a multi-million dollar corruption probe. Faced with litigation, all four Ministers resigned. However, Erdogan interfered in the trial, dismissing the lawsuit and firing the prosecutors and

policemen who had exposed his Ministers' corrupt practices. The private phone conversations between Erdogan and his son Bilal had been recorded, revealing their discussions on how to hide the hundreds of millions of dollars in cash they had received mysteriously.

The third case of corruption is the ongoing trial in New York City regarding a billion-dollar scheme to smuggle gold for oil from Turkey to Iran in violation of U.S. sanctions on Iran. Reza Zarrab, a Turkish-Iranian gold dealer pleaded guilty last week to all seven charges, exposing the participation of a Turkish banker, Mehmet Hakan Atilla, and seven other defendants, including Turkish Economy Minister Zafer Caglayan, who was accused of receiving millions of dollars in bribes from Zarrab in exchange for arranging the illegal scheme. Zarrab also implicated President Erdogan for having authorized the illegal gold for oil trade.

The fourth and latest corruption scheme involves members of Erdogan's family who reportedly transferred \$15 million to an off-shore company called Bellway Limited in the tax haven of Isle of Man, United Kingdom, in December 2011 and January 2012. This accusation was made by Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu. The Isle of Man is a self-governing British Crown dependency in the Irish Sea between England and Ireland.

Party Chairman Kilicdaroglu recently announced that a company was established on August 1, 2011 on the Isle of Man with a founding capital of 1 British pound. He revealed the bank statements and copies of the \$15 million wire transfers to the Bellway Limited company:

– On December 15, 2011, Erdogan's brother-in-law Ziya Ilgen transferred \$2.5 million, and on December 26, 2011, \$1.25 million.

– On December 15, 2011, Erdogan's brother Mustafa transferred \$2.5 million, and on December 26, 2011, \$1.25

million.

– On December 27, 2011, Erdogan's father-in-law Osman Ketenci transferred \$1.25 million, and on December 28, 2011, \$1 million.

– On December 27, 2011, Erdogan's former executive assistant Mustafa Gundogan transferred \$1.25 million, and on December 28, 2011, \$250,000.

– On December 29, 2011, Erdogan's son Ahmet Burak Erdogan transferred \$1.45 million, and on January 4, 2012, \$2.3 million.

Kilicdaroglu filed a parliamentary motion requesting an investigation of the transfers. However, the majority dominated by Erdogan's AK Party voted down the measure. When Kilicdaroglu was addressing the Parliament regarding the allegations against Erdogan, the State TV cut off the live transmission.

Turkish prosecutors announced last week that they are investigating the charges against Erdogan. However, as is widely known, no judge would dare to rule that Erdogan is guilty of any crimes, given the fact that many judges are dismissed or jailed for not complying with the Turkish President's wishes.

As expected, Erdogan was furious at the allegations against his family. He declared that he would resign from his post if it is proven that he has a bank account in a foreign country. Ahmet Ozel, a lawyer for President Erdogan stated that the bank documents publicized by Kilicdaroglu were "fake" and described the allegations as "lies." Erdogan threatened that Kilicdaroglu "would pay a price," and filed a lawsuit against him seeking \$500,000 for defamation.

These scandals may have an adverse effect on President Erdogan's re-election in 2019, assuming that he would permit a fair election. We hope that President Erdogan remains in office as he persists to undermine Turkey's reputation worldwide.

Send Off Loved Ones With Services From The Heart

By Harut Akopyan

I'M WRITING this as a personal manifesto intended first and foremost for myself, but also for the sake and memory of the dead and the eulogy of the living ignorant. To clarify, I am convinced that these two groups are one and the same as far as critical thinking is concerned. What I'm interested in is for myself as well as the Armenian community to separate itself from the shackles of mindless tradition. How treasonous it is to treat the dead with a meaningless copy of something you've witnessed a hundred times before, intended merely to clear your own conscience. Here I'm speaking about the routine treatment of the Armenian wake services, otherwise known as *tesaktsutyun*. To clarify further, this is not a criticism of the wake services itself but the way with which it is practiced today.

Before I go on about what I believe is one of the most monotonous events most Armenian-Americans willingly and unwillingly participate in whenever a loved one passes, I would like to leave my own will in this essay. When I am no longer a breathing and living mass of blood and bones, my one and only wish is for the service, if one is even provided, not take place in a church with priests directing the service in some religious/spiritual fashion which I find absurd. I have no qualms with people getting together to console themselves and remember the dead by paying their last "respects" so to speak. Anywhere else; a basketball court, a warehouse, even a banquet hall. But not a house built on ancient ideas and the oppression of the body and mind (especially for women), both of which it intends to control to this day.

Why then write this? The answer lies not in some diatribe against the church but in the revelation of a hypocrisy in the collective minds of our communities. Although this hypocritical snake has many heads, I will only speak of one of them today: the banal treatment of the *tesaktsutyun*. In my opinion, hypocrisy is the single most poisonous obstacle that has tar-

nished the will and consciousness of today's Diaspora Armenians. I can only speak of the Diaspora (more specifically Los Angeles) because I have lived most of my life there. Though many things are shared with the people in the Republic of Armenia, my conscience cannot allow me to freely criticize a cultural phenomenon of a country and a people whose land and water I don't share.

I find it surreal that in the "house of God," many of the attendees solemnly bow their heads and ritually make a cross with their hands to their foreheads, while only ever stepping foot inside this building during funerals and weddings. That in itself is fine if you are merely an attendee. After all, incredulity doesn't give you an excuse to be socially reclusive or not respect the "other" if the other is an honest churchgoer. By honest I mean to say one who is active in the church and knows his verses and follows them rationally. Surely everyone cannot be an honest churchgoer.

How is it then that everyone with a dead family member ends up doing the same exact service and everyone else ends up attending it? I think it is because there are very few, if at all, honest churchgoers left. What we have today are echoes and reflections of a past. These attendees have never set their eyes on the pages of a bible nor do they pray (with the exception of praying for miracles, the lottery, or safety when in danger). The laziness of thought and the lack of courage invites them to continue with a tradition which they do not care for. Most of them sit through the service, without understanding a word in the liturgy that the priest is hymning or talking about (for good reason some would argue). What's more is that this doesn't bother them and they will freely admit their lack of connection with the church. Starting Monday, they will go right back to consuming porn and greedily chasing more money.

Mind you, I don't attach a code of conduct or moral equivalence to any of those things nor am I against them. The difference is that I admit it while they don't. Although virulent in nature, this criticism is not a pipe dream. I acknowledge the fact that these words aren't meant for our grandparents or our parents. You can't teach an old dog new tricks just as much as you can't strip away meaningless tradition out of what's left in the creative mind of the baby boomer. This is more or less directed at the millennials and the generation that will inherit their wisdom. There is still time for you to do as you wish with your own legacy.

But it doesn't end there. Where there is hypocrisy, there will undoubtedly be mind-numbing clichés. There is a certain trend that has taken over these services where a known "orator" within the community will deliver the eulogy. There are a few of these orators who are famous within the community and can regularly be seen on Armenian television. Their talents include their haunting voices and their ability to recite poetry in spoken-word fashion, a unique and beautiful Armenian tradition. Leave it to the living ignorant to take something independently creative and distinct and make it into a market for the dead. There is nothing inherently wrong with someone of stature eulogizing the dead. But when everyone else feels obligated to do this, as if to claim some kind of inclusiveness and class status, then it makes something (the eulogy) that is meant to be a personal and beautiful recollection of one's sig-

nificant and insignificant time on earth into something that can be purchased. How do you not see this? If you care for the memory of your dead so much, why not speak about them yourselves and kick the priests and the orators out of the building? One way could be to invite others to speak about them and make their memory a living and relatable act of affection. Because once gone, the dead will slowly but surely be forgotten. And you, the living ignorant, will slowly but surely forget that you have repeated yourselves until you are no longer living but still ignorant.

When challenged with this hypocrisy, the living ignorant defend themselves by holding on to this thoughtlessness as if it is their foundation. They sit across their dead loved ones and allow a man in cloak to lecture them and reassure them merely by his presence and much less by what he says (though there are exceptions). The living ignorant are too ignorant or lack the will to care about or ask themselves if in fact their loved ones are going to live indefinitely among saints. There is no reflection or constraint in lavishness when dealing with the sinners, wife beaters, horrible fathers, oppressors, cheaters, etc. All the living ignorant care about is not rocking the boat.

There are some who are conscientious but unwilling still because they value what they perceive as tradition to be above all else and think changing it translates into a loss of identity. To those people, I'd like to point out the progression of thought, art, and culture have always undergone a process of novel introductions, followed by cultural adaptations to those novelties. The famous twentieth century poet, playwright and critic, T.S. Eliot, wrote scathing criticism against the poet who ignored tradition when he said "...we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, their ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously." However, he went on to say, "Yet if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, 'tradition' should positively be discouraged." A devout Christian, Eliot wrote several famous essays on the dangers of blind tradition and I think we would be better off if we reconsider how we think of tradition.

To be clear, this is not an attack on faith or belief. And although I am not religious, it is not an attack on religion either. It is rather a criticism of the carrying out thoughtless traditions in and of themselves. I prefer that one care for the memory of their dead to the extent that they don't follow a prescribed ceremony, instead building a personal and thoughtful one. As pointed out earlier, this isn't a chicken or egg dilemma. Careful consideration must come hand-in-hand with tradition. Therefore, if one has come to the conclusion that that is the best way to celebrate the memory of the dead and provide a vessel for their afterlife (provided that is what the dead person and/or their loved ones believe), then I cannot criticize them in good conscience. However, one thing is certain: this is not how most of these ceremonies are conducted today. In other words, these empty and heavily clichéd prone services are not dying out and neither are the living ignorant.

(Harut Akopyan studied film and screenwriting back in college and is an aspiring writer. He was born in Yerevan and moved to Los Angeles at age 7.)



Analysis: Face-to-Face With Rohingya, Pope Ditches Diplomacy

By Nicole Winfield

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) – Pope Francis has gotten into trouble before for ditching diplomatic protocol and calling a spade a spade, most famously when he labeled the Ottoman-era slaughter of Armenians a “genocide” from the altar of St. Peter’s Basilica.

Francis took the hit – Turkey recalled its ambassador to the Vatican in protest – for the sake of standing up for an oppressed people who were nearly wiped off the map a century ago.

Given the opportunity to do the same in Myanmar, where the military has launched what the U.N. says is a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya Muslim minority, Francis opted instead for diplomatic expediency. He not only avoided the contested term “Rohingya” in his public remarks, he ignored Asia’s worst refugee

crisis in decades entirely and didn’t call out his hosts for launching it.

Human rights groups complained. Rohingya complained. Journalists and pundits asked if Francis’ legacy as a fearless crusader for the world’s most marginal – the poor, homeless, refugees and prisoners – wasn’t now in question.

By Friday, Francis’ heart won out.

In an emotional encounter with 16 Rohingya refugees, Francis said what he probably wanted to say from the start. His voice trembling after he greeted the men, women and children who had been forced to flee their homes in Myanmar for wretched camps in Bangladesh, Francis begged them for forgiveness for what they had endured and the “indifference of the world” to their plight.

“The presence of God today also is called ‘Rohingya,’” he told them.

COMMENTARY

And with that one word, Francis erased days of speculation that the tell-it-like-it-is, protocol-be-damned pope had sold out to the professional diplomats at the Vatican who were willing to deny a persecuted minority their very identity for the sake of global and local church politics.

The Vatican had defended Francis’ initial silence as necessary for the sake of “building bridges” with Myanmar, which only established diplomatic relations with the Holy See in May.

“Vatican diplomacy is not infallible,” spokesman Greg Burke told reporters in Yangon. “You can criticize what’s said, what’s not said. But the pope is not going to lose moral authority on this question here.”

Burke added that the Catholic Church is a minority in Myanmar. The implication was clear: Catholics are already discriminated against in predominantly Buddhist Myanmar, and certainly didn’t need any blowback from the vast majority of Burmese who recoil at the term “Rohingya” because it implies an official recognition of them as an ethnic group. The local church had urged Francis to refrain from using the term, and Francis obliged.

A pope is first and foremost a shepherd to his flock.

The Vatican also wanted to back its local church in supporting Aung San Suu Kyi, who many Burmese see as their only hope for forging a more democratic, inclusive society where basic rights are guaranteed for all minorities – Christians included.

And so when he arrived in Yangon and joined Suu Kyi at an official welcome ceremony, Francis behaved like a true diplomat.

He called for all ethnic groups in Myanmar to have their basic rights guaranteed – an important message to be sure but one that was clearly written by committee.

Francis upped the ante when he arrived in Bangladesh, where he acknowledged the “immense toll of human suffering” under way in the squalid, overcrowded refugee camps that are now home to more than 620,000 Rohingya who have poured across the border from Myanmar’s Rakhine state.

In his official arrival speech, Francis demanded the international community take “decisive measures” to not only help Bangladesh provide for the refugees, but to resolve the underlying political causes in Myanmar that set off the exodus.

But he didn’t say “Rohingya.” Until he met them.

And when he did, when he clasped their hands in his and listened to their tragedies, he not only acknowledged their identity, he assumed responsibility for all the suffering they had endured.

“In the name of all those who persecute you, who have persecuted you, and those who have hurt you, above all in the indifference of the world, I ask you for forgiveness,” he said. He repeated the word: “Forgiveness.”

Francis was back.

Erdogan’s Underhanded Diplomacy

By Miran P. Sarkissian

Recep Tayyip Erdogan will, finally, become the first president of the Republic of Turkey to visit Greece after 65 years when, in 1952, Mahmut Celâl Bayar (1883–1986) the third President of Turkey from 1950 to 1960, made a visit to Athens. Erdogan’s visit will take place on December 7 and 8. He is to spend the first day in Athens meeting with high Greek government officials and then travel to Northern Greece where, the next day being Friday, he is scheduled to conduct afternoon prayers at the Eski Tzami, allegedly built in the 17th century, in

the city of Komotini.

It was announced in Greek media yesterday that he will be accompanied by some 200 bodyguards while his companion travelers will be his wife, five ministers, 47 journalists and 11 newspaper editors. Heavy security measures will be in place for this visit from both the Turkish and Greek sides to ensure a visit without any incidents given that last week Greek police arrested eight people of Turkish origin preparing home-made bombs in apartments located in the center of Athens.

The Turkish president put his Greek counterpart in difficulty when he announced his desire to visit Northern Greece where there is a substantial population of Turkish origin people.

OPINION

Parliament Majority Blocks Debate on Eurasian Union

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The Armenian parliament on Tuesday, December 5, refused to debate on a pro-Western opposition alliance’s calls for Armenia’s withdrawal from the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

A parliamentary declaration drafted by the Yelk alliance says that membership in the EEU, effective from January 2015, has hurt the country’s economy and security. Deputies representing the pro-government majority in the National Assembly spoke out against the document when it was first circulated in September.

Nevertheless, Yelk continued to press for a full-fledged parliamentary debate on the issue. The parliament committee on foreign relations discussed and gave a negative assessment of the Yelk motion on November 29.

Only six deputies, all of them from Yelk, voted for the issue’s inclusion on the parliament agenda. Seventy-six others voted against. The latter represent not only the ruling Republican Party (HHK) but also its junior coalition partner, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, and businessman Gagik Tsarukian’s alliance.

Just before the vote, the HHK’s Samvel Farmanian addressed fellow lawmakers and defended the Armenian leadership’s foreign

policy which aims to complement Armenia’s alliance with Russia with closer ties with the West. He implicitly referred to the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed by Armenia and the European Union on November 24.

“An artificial juxtaposition of the EEU and the EU is not in the interests of Armenia, and I am sure that the faction sitting on our left [Yelk] is utterly conscious of that,” said Farmanian.

Yelk’s Edmon Marukian rebutted that claim. He insisted that the EEU is to blame for rising consumer prices and other economic problems facing Armenia.

According to official Armenian statistics, Russia and other EEU member states accounted for about 28 percent of Armenia’s foreign trade in January-October 2017. The EU’s share in the total stood at just over 24 percent.

Immediately after refusing to discuss the Yelk initiative, the parliament began debating a new uniform Customs Code which is due to be adopted by the EEU member states. The draft code calls, among other things, for solely electronic filings of customs declarations and other documents starting from 2020.

Earlier this year, Hakan Cavousoglou, vice president of the Turkish government and originally from Northern Greece himself, had visited the area and made totally incendiary statements about the Turkish ‘minorities’ of the region being suppressed by the Greek government which, in turn, reacted negatively to such undiplomatic behavior.

Prime Minister Tsipras of Greece is cautiously optimistic about this visit and hopes it will yield concrete results on matters such as the refugee crisis from Syria, Turkey’s relations with the European Union, the latest incidents with NATO and Cyprus.

On the other hand, Erdogan, being the deft politician he is proving to be, has a high interest in making this visit succeed as he wishes to illustrate to the West that he is a player useful to them despite the tangled situation in Syria, his continuing verbal abuse of the United States on supplying arms to the Kurds against ISIS and his unravelling involvement in the breaking of the US embargo against Iran and corruption scandal as it is currently being reported by Reza Zarrab in New York these very weeks.

It is rather obvious that the ‘strong man of Turkey’ wants this visit to Greece in order to send a message to his audience in Turkey that he is not in a ‘diplomatic quarantine’ by the West. Although he had telephone discussions with President Trump and German Chancellor Merkel, it is well known that there is a truly unfavorable feeling shared by these two leaders against Erdogan. The latter’s recent summit meeting with Russia and Iran annoyed Western Allies and NATO countries to a high degree.

What is currently an issue at the US State Department, however, must be whether the movements recently adopted by Erdogan in distancing himself from the US are borne from his

own anger or a mature strategic choice. If it is his anger, Washington probably thinks the gap can be bridged. If, however, it is a strategic move, then Erdogan is on the way to his own demise.

(Miran P. Sarkissian resides in Athens, Greece.)

Development Foundation of Armenia Helps Attract \$15 Million in Investments

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – During 2017, the Development Foundation of Armenia (DFA) was instrumental in attracting \$15 million in investments, as well as signing export agreements worth 5.9 billion drams, DFA Director Armen Avak Avakian told reporters on December 5.

“This year we have recorded very good results... During the year 23 times more output was provided against any 1 USD spent for boosting export,” he said.

Avakian stated that the foundation has undergone three global changes this year which also changed the structure’s activity nature.

“In 2017 three global changes were made in the Development Foundation of Armenia: the DFA mandate changed from general development foundation to a structure directed for business,” he said. The next change is that the tourism development component has been removed from the Foundation’s functions, and instead of that the list of the DFA services has been supplemented by a project platform and back-up service. “We receive orders for investment projects from the government, package them, distribute and find a funding,” he said, adding that the Foundation has also undergone structural changes.

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