

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

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Trio of Karen Hakobyan (piano), Levon Chilingirian (violin) and Suren Bagratuni (cello)

## St. Vartan Cathedral Concert Celebrates Armenian Music

NEW YORK – The joyous musical notes emanating in the sanctuary of the St. Vartan Cathedral served as a welcome to the new season during the “Celebration of Spring Concert,” on Wednesday, February 28, in an event presented by the Armenian Mission to the United Nations, in the spirit of friendship, dialogue and cooperation among nations.

**By Taleen Babayan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Performing to overflowing pews of United Nations diplomats and delegates, the internationally acclaimed and award-winning artists Levon Chilingirian (violin), Suren Bagratuni (cello) and Karen Hakobyan (piano) played works by Haydn, Beethoven, Khachaturian, Hovunts and Babadjanian as they kicked off their North American tour.

see CONCERT, page 11

## USC Shoah Foundation Adds Large Collection of Armenian Genocide Testimony to its Archive

LOS ANGELES – University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation has received one of the largest collections of testimonies from survivors of the Armenian Genocide that were recorded over decades by Dr. Richard Hovannisian, a leading scholar on the World War I-era genocide.

The Richard G. Hovannisian Armenian Genocide Oral History Collection was officially announced as a part of the Visual History Archive at a ceremony on Friday, March 9. The more than 1,000 interviews will constitute the largest non-Holocaust-related collection to be integrated into the institute's Visual History Archive. It will also be the archive's first audio-only collection. Initially, a pilot of 10 testimonies – seven in English and three in Armenian – will be available to the public in the Institute's Visual History Archive. The rest will be added as they are digitized and indexed to the high standards used by the Institute. In addition to the audiotapes recorded in a variety of formats, the new collection includes documents and photographs corresponding to each interview, transcripts and translations that Hovannisian and his students put together over the years. The vast majority of the collection was recorded in Armenian, but up to 20 percent of the testimonies are in English; there is a smaller portion of Turkish and Spanish language interviews.



Prof. Richard Hovannisian

The son of a Genocide survivor, Hovannisian believes deeply in the power of testimony as a tool to educate, combat denial, and communicate the magnitude of a criminal scheme that claimed an estimated 1.5 million Armenian lives. But numbers alone don't begin to tell the story. “The figure ‘a million and a half’ can roll right over our shoulders,” he said. “But it's different when you take those individual interviews and start listening to them one by one. And then it becomes a million-and-a-half individuals and the loss of a civilization, of a way of life, a space where people lived for more than 3,000 years, and everything that space contained.”

The institute also houses the Armenian Film Foundation's collection of Armenian Survivor testimony, which was fully integrated into the Visual History Archive in late 2016. “By adding more context to the Visual History Archive, we continue to

see SHOAH, page 20

## Armenian National Assembly Members Visit New York

**By Hagop Vartivarian**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

NEW YORK – A delegation of Armenian National Assembly representatives visited New York on Saturday, March 10, and held a meeting with representatives of the Armenian community at St. Vartan Cathedral hosted by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern). The delegation had previously visited

Washington, DC, where they met with Congressmen and other high-ranking American government officials.

The representatives spoke about their efforts at establishing state contacts during new political developments in the West, as well as the electoral changes in Armenia. They praised the participation of diasporan Armenians in Armenia's economic growth.

They talked about three important fields of cooperation with the United States and stressed the importance of the Armenian lobbying organizations in this country

see VISIT, page 10

## Good, Not-So-Clean Fun with Vahe Berberian

**By Taleen Babayan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

“Ooremn,” to great enthusiasm at sold-out weekend performances on March 3 and 4 at the Clinton Inn in an event hosted by the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of Greater New York.

Tying together generations through contemporary and cultural references, Berberian elaborated, through humor, on the themes of marriage, religion, current events and social media during his one-hour-and-forty-five minute set in the Armenian language.

see COMEDY, page 15



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Serbian Lawmakers Reject Armenian Genocide Bill

BELGRADE (news.am) – The Serbian parliament rejected the opposition's proposal to recognize Armenian Genocide on March 9.

Even though such motions have been submitted several times in the Serbian legislature over the past decade, they have always been rejected, according to RFE/RL Balkan Service.

The resolution recognizing the genocide of 1.5 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire was submitted by Serbia's former Prime Minister Zoran Zivkovic, who now heads the opposition New Party.

Speaking to the RFE/RL Serbian Service, Zivkovic underscored the need for Belgrade to clarify its position on this matter, and he recalled that both Russia and most of the US states have recognized this greatest tragedy of the 20th century.

According to various estimates, about 300 Armenians live in Serbia.

### Armenian Premier Meets Lebanese President

BEIRUT (news.am) – Armenian Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan met Lebanon's President Michel Aoun on Monday, March 12, at the residence of the Lebanese President, the press service of the Government of Armenia reported.

Karapetyan thanked for the warm reception and added that he is glad to be in Lebanon.

“Just two weeks ago we had the opportunity to exchange ideas in Yerevan over the multilayered relations between Armenia and Lebanon. We highlight the regular high level interactions and dialogue between Armenia and friendly Lebanon. As I noted during our previous meeting, the economic potential of our bilateral relations is rather huge and it should be maximally utilized,” Karen Karapetyan said.

The Lebanese president welcomed the visit of the Armenian premier to Lebanon, expressing conviction that it will foster the further development of the friendly relations between Armenia and Lebanon.

Aoun expressed his readiness to support the implementation of joint projects.

Karapetyan during his visit discussed the opportunities for establishing an Armenian-Lebanese fund.

Karapetyan later met with Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri.

“We stated that in all respects the relations between our two countries are at a very high level. We also noted that our economic relations lag behind the high level of political relations, and there is great potential to tap and develop,” Karapetyan said.

He added that he invited Hariri to visit Armenia.

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Nalbandian Presents Foreign Policy Priorities In Sweden

STOCKHOLM (Armenpress) – While on an official visit in Stockholm on March 13, Armenian foreign minister Edward Nalbandian met with leadership of leading analytical centers of Sweden, such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, the Center for Peace and Conflict Research at the Uppsala University, the Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation, as well as with high-ranking diplomats, the Foreign Ministry reported.

During the meeting Nalbandian presented Armenia's foreign policy priorities and the steps aimed at developing the Armenian-Swedish relations.

He appreciated the cooperation with Sweden both at bilateral and multilateral formats attaching importance to the mutual partnership within the frames of the Armenia-EU relations, and the Eastern Partnership in particular. In this context Nalbandian touched upon the Armenia-EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, as well as the cooperation prospects.

He introduced the meeting participants on the joint efforts of Armenia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group Co-Chair countries aimed at peacefully settling the Karabakh conflict, as well as Armenia's stances on a number of urgent regional and international issues.

The foreign minister also answered the questions of the meeting participants.

## Sargsyan Attends World Chess Tournament

BERLIN (Public Radio of Armenia) – President Serzh Sargsyan of Armenia, who is also president of the Armenian Chess Federation, attended the opening ceremony of the World Chess Candidates Tournament in Berlin on March 9. Sargsyan participated in the ceremony as an honorary guest in acknowledgement of Armenia's contribution to the development and popularization of chess.

Sargsyan delivered an address at the event.

At the end of the event, the eight world-famous participants were presented.

"Though Armenia is not one of the world's largest countries for its small size and population, many consider it a chess superpower, since the modest Armenian national team, which features current contender Levon Aronian, has triumphed three times in the last few years and once won the title of world champion," Sargsyan said in his comments.

"This year the world's first chess research institute was inaugurated in Armenia. We hope that the Institute's activities will help reveal the undiscovered aspects of the game of chess," he added.

Speeches were also delivered by President of the German Chess Federation Ulrich Krause, FIDE Vice President Georgios Makropoulos, as well as organizer's representatives – Ilya Merenson, President of the World Chess Organization and Andrey Gurev, Vice-President of the Russian Chess Federation.

## Ski Resort to Be Constructed in Lori

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The Government of Armenia has approved the construction of a ski resort in Lori Province of Armenia. Minister of Territorial Administration and Development of Armenia Davit Lokyan noted that Ecosign international company has been chosen for designing a master plan of the area.

Lokyan added that the project will be implemented in the Antarashen and Lermontovo communities of Lori Province and the investment will amount to 30 billion drams (around \$62 million).

"The project will foster the diversification of touristic entertainments in Armenia and will raise competitiveness. It will also prolong the touristic season," he said, adding that more than 1,500 new jobs would be created.

The resort will also be able to host international sporting events.



Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan on the new train

## Prime Minister Travels to Gyumri By New Electric Train Line

GYUMRI – Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan visited Gyumri on March 3, riding on the new electric train, which has started running between Yerevan and Gyumri.

After getting acquainted with the train, he welcomed the decision made by the South Caucasus Railway CJSC to operate it in Armenia.

Karapetyan was told that starting March 4, the new train will run twice a day, Fridays-Sundays at express regime without making stops. The trip's duration is two hours. The other Yerevan-Gyumri-Yerevan railway services are still being provided using the old rolling stock. Tickets cost 2,500 drams (\$5.20) each way.

The train complies with all necessary safety standards.

In Gyumri Karapetyan received a delegation led by Marie Lou Papazian, CEO of Tumo Center for Creative Technologies. The delegation comprised Herve Fleuri, executive vice president of the Paul Bocuse Culinary Institute (France), French-Armenian philanthropist Raffi Derderian and others.



Marie Lou Papazian, Herve Fleuri and Raffi Derderian meet with Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan.

The guests introduced the Prime Minister to the Gyumri Culinary School Project which will use the Paul Bocuse Institute's expertise and possibilities. Prime Minister Karapetyan welcomed the idea of implementing such a project in Armenia.

"I am convinced that it will be a successful, change-oriented project, which is so much needed in Gyumri," the Premier stressed, assuring that his government is ready to support the implementation of the project.

## Public TV Show Criticized for 'Ridiculing' Female Prison Inmates

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – A report aired during last week's evening show on Armenia's Public Television sparked criticism among human rights activists who insist that female prison inmates featured in the program became a target of unsolicited ridicule.

As part of the "Fine Evening" show broadcast on March 8, a public holiday marking Women's Day in Armenia, a young woman apparently posing as an ingénue reporter interviewed seven female convicts serving their sentences in a penitentiary in Abovian, a town some 15 kilometers to the northeast of capital Yerevan. The reporter asked some frivolous 'girly' questions, including whether there were any "cute guys among the guards", and the answers of the women were accompanied with off-screen giggles.

Zaruhi Hovannisian, a member of the public group engaged in prison monitoring, said the show raised some questions that needed to be answered by the Ministry of Justice.

"Were these women aware of how

their words would later be edited [for the report] and whether a laugh track would be added? Secondly, did these women have the opportunity to choose whether to answer or not or the prison administration itself chose the women who were to answer the reporter's questions?" she queried.

The show also raised eyebrows in the media community because dozens of journalists in Armenia are known to have difficulty in accessing prisons for filming. Some have to wait for months before their requests are likely to be rejected for some reason.

"It turns out that access to prisons for investigative journalists is banned and for those who film for entertainment purposes it is not," complained Grisha Balasanian, a journalist writing for the Hetq magazine.

Balasanian said he had been waiting for permission to film at the hospital for convicts for a year. "I have made a request to the chief of the establishment and have also turned to the minister of justice... During the year I have

periodically received rejections with the explanation that they are too busy," the investigative journalist said.

The daily Hraparak encountered the same attitude from the penitentiary department as its request for filming inside a prison located in a Yerevan suburb for the purpose of getting acquainted with the conditions of prison cells, the library and the canteen was rejected.

"We make a request to visit some convict at some penitentiary and get a cynical reply that they cannot let a journalist in because of the [administration's] being busy," Hraparak editor Armine Ohanian said, adding that the ombudsman officially confirmed to her that the refusal was unlawful.

RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am) asked the Penitentiary Department of the Ministry of Justice to clarify the situation and was still waiting for the reply to its written inquiry at the time of this posting. Neither the Public Television of Armenia has reacted to the criticism yet.





## ARMENIA

# Prime Minister Discusses Prospects of Investment Programs with Lebanese Business Leaders

BEIRUT – Within the framework of his official visit to Lebanon, on March 13 Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan met with Lebanese business leaders in Beirut.

The prospects of investing in Armenia were discussed at the meeting. Headed by Company Co-founder Romen Mathieu, the members of the EuroMena Funds' delegation presented the areas of their company's activities and the wealth of know-how they had built up. They noted that the Company is keen to cooperate with Armenia in the fields of insurance, information technology, services and construction.

Karapetyan presented Armenia's current economic position, stressing that a 7.5-percent economic growth was recorded in 2017. The other macroeconomic indicators, too, were positive last year. Karen Karapetyan noted that it is now the right time to invest in Armenia which benefits from different preferential trade regimes.

Welcoming the EuroMena Funds' willingness to get involved in Armenia, the Premier expressed readiness on behalf of his government to discuss the future steps in all detail.

Prime Minister Karapetyan next met with President of Future Group Concern Fouad M. Makhzoumi to discuss issues of investment cooperation. Fouad M. Makhzoumi presented his company's activities in a number of countries around the globe. The Premier invited him to visit Armenia in order to get acquainted with our country's opportunities, noting that the Armenian side is prepared to discuss the prospects of mutually beneficial cooperation.

The EuroMena Fund, L.P. specializes in high growth mid-market private companies. The fund typically invests in banking and insurance; maintenance and services; pharmaceutical, healthcare services, chemicals,

and cosmetics; production of food and beverages; and retail and consumer products. It mainly invests in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries and the Mediterranean countries.

Future Group was established in 1981 and

over the past decades has evolved from a regional concern to a truly global entity. Headquartered in Dubai with offices in London and New York and business hubs worldwide, Future Group today is a holding company that oversees 30 privately held companies across

four core sectors spanning five continents. The Future Group has divisions and subsidiaries in a wide range of different industries ranging from manufacturing and engineering services to real estate development.



Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan and his aides meet with Lebanese businesspeople.

## Armenian Opposition Marks 2008 Unrest Anniversary

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Hundreds of people rallied in Yerevan on Thursday, March 1, to mark the tenth anniversary of a deadly suppression of anti-government street protests that followed a disputed Armenian presidential held in February 2008.

The crowd led by top representatives of the opposition Armenian National Congress (HAK) marched to the site of vicious clashes between security forces and supporters of former President Levon Ter-Petrosian, the main opposition candidate in the ballot. Eight protesters and two police servicemen died in the violence.

Thousands of people barricaded themselves in downtown Yerevan on March 1, 2008 hours after riot police broke up non-stop demonstrations staged by the Ter-

Petrosian-led opposition in the city's Liberty Square in protest against alleged vote rigging. The police and interior troops tried unsuccessfully to disperse them before then President Robert Kocharian called a state of emergency and ordered Armenian army units into the capital. Scores of opposition members and supporters were arrested in the following weeks in a crackdown condemned by local and international human rights groups.

HAK leaders again charged that Kocharian rigged the election to hand over power to Serzh Sarkisian, his preferred successor, when they addressed the demonstrators in Liberty Square before the march.

Levon Zurabian, the deputy chairman of the opposition party headed by Ter-Petrosian, described the authorities' actions

in March 2008 as a "violent act of usurpation of power." He claimed that the crackdown prevented Armenia's Constitutional Court from invalidating the election results that gave victory to Sarkisian.

Zurabian also condemned the authorities for their failure to identify and prosecute any of the individuals personally responsible for the ten deaths. "They won't prosecute themselves and their murderers," said Aram Manukian, another senior HAK member.

The crowded applauded as Manukian read out the names of the ten victims. Sargis Kloyan, whose son Gor was among the protesters killed ten years ago, also gave a speech, alleging a government cover-up of the killings.

The demonstrators were escorted by riot

police officers holding white carnations as they walked towards an unofficial memorial to the unrest victims. The officers joined the organizers and participants of the rally in laying flowers there.

Ter-Petrosian did not take part in the annual commemoration. The organizers gave no clear reasons for the 73-year-old ex-president's absence.

The demonstrators also included several other opposition figures not affiliated with the HAK. One of them, Nikol Pashinian, was a key speaker at the opposition protest on March 1-2, 2008. Pashinian split from Ter-Petrosian's opposition movement after spending nearly two years in prison on charges stemming from the unrest.

### President Congratulates Pope Francis on Fifth Anniversary

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – President Serzh Sargsyan sent on March 13 a congratulatory message to Pope Francis on the fifth anniversary of being elected Pontiff of the Holy See of Rome, wishing the Pope robust health and every success in all his undertakings.

"Since the very first day of your tenure, you have sought to promote equity and justice across the globe and foster dialogue between conflicting sides. It is my pleasure to note that your deeds have been distinguished with great attention to the Armenian people," Sargsyan said in his message.

Sargsyan recalled his fond memories of meetings with Pope Francis at the Holy See and in Armenia.

## Armenia Slams Azerbaijan Over Large-Scale War Games

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – The Armenian government has accused Baku of failing to meet its obligations to an international organization after Azerbaijan launched large-scale war games on Monday, March 12.

"Azerbaijan began its military exercises without notifying in advance the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) member states and with a gross violation of its obligations before the organization," Tigran Balayan, a spokesman for Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, wrote on Twitter.

Azerbaijan's five-day war games involving about 25,000 troops and a large number of military hardware come weeks before the country's early presidential election scheduled for April 11.

The issue of Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-control region that broke away from Azerbaijan as a result of a war in the

early 1990s, is likely to feature prominently during the campaign leading up to the vote in which current President Ilham Aliyev is expected to win his fourth consecutive five-year term.

Military authorities in Azerbaijan do not specify the location of the current war games, only mentioning that they are unfolding "in the difficult conditions of the mountainous terrain."

Some 250 tanks and other armored vehicles, up to 1,000 artillery units of different calibers, multiple rocket launcher systems and mortars, as well as up to 50 units of army and front-line aircraft are also involved in the exercises, according to Azerbaijan's Ministry of Defense.

According to official sources in Azerbaijan, during the exercises "army units will repulse the attack of the conventional enemy and

will launch a counteroffensive."

During the five-day exercises, the Azerbaijani armed forces will also reportedly use a number of new types of weapons recently acquired from Russia, Israel and the Czech Republic.

Responding to the criticism coming from Yerevan regarding the conduct of the exercises, Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry spokesman Hikmet Hajiev insisted that the war games taking place "in the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan" correspond to "the OSCE's Vienna document of 2011."

In 2017 Azerbaijan conducted several military exercises, causing the wrath of the Armenian side. The largest exercises last year were held in April and involved some 30,000 troops. Those war games came a year after the deadliest Armenian-Azerbaijani fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh since the 1994 cease-fire known as a four-day war.



## International News

### Azerbaijan Angry with US over Karabakh President Visit

STEPANAKERT (Public Radio of Armenia) — Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry has summoned the US Ambassador to the country Robert Cekuta in connection with Nagorno Karabakh President Bako Sahakyan's visit to Washington this week and an event expected to be held in the US Congress, Hikmat Hajiye, spokesman for Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry said, according to Azeri media reports.

Hajiye said that Ambassador Cekuta received a note of protest, sent by Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the U.S. Department of State.

Azerbaijan's ambassador to the US also held a meeting at the State Department to express the Azerbaijani side's protest, the spokesman added.

"As a response to such behavior of the US, Azerbaijan will proceed from the principle of reciprocity in relations with the US," Hajiye stressed.

### Three Armenians on Forbes Billionaires' List

MOSCOW (Public Radio of Armenia) — There are three Armenians on 2018 World's Billionaires List published by Forbes on March 6.

Founder and CEO of Magnit, Russia's biggest supermarket chain and owner of football team Krasnodar Sergei Galitsky (Arutyunyan) (550th) is the world's richest Armenian with an estimated net worth of \$4 billion.

Head of Tashir Group Samvel Karapetyan is listed 606th with a net worth of \$3.7. Argentinean Armenian businessman Eduardo Eurnekian is 887th with a net worth of \$2.7 billion.

Forbes has pinned down a record 2,208 billionaires from 72 countries and territories including the first-ever from Hungary and Zimbabwe. This elite group is worth \$9.1 trillion, up 18 percent since last year. Their average net worth is a record \$4.1 billion.

Americans lead the way with a record 585 billionaires, followed by mainland China with 373. Amazon's chief Jeff Bezos secures the list's top spot for the first time, becoming the only person to appear in the Forbes ranks with a 12-figure fortune.

Bezos's fortune leapt more than \$39 billion, the list's biggest one-year gain ever. He moves ahead of Bill Gates, who is now number 2. It is the biggest gap between no. 1 and 2 since 2001.

Warren Buffett is third with a net worth of \$84 billion. Bernard Arnault, with a fortune of \$72 billion, reclaims the title of richest European for the first time since 2012.

There are 259 newcomers including the first ever cryptocurrency billionaires.

### Intensive Armenian Language and Culture Course in Venice

VENICE — The 33rd session of the Summer Course of Armenian Language and Culture organized by the "Padus-Araxes" Association will take place July 30 to August 14. Examinations will take place on August 14th.

To apply, fill in the application form on the website: [www.padusaraxes.com/SummerCourse/ApplicationForm](http://www.padusaraxes.com/SummerCourse/ApplicationForm). Applications must be submitted personally in written form. Applications will be accepted up to the deadline of June 30.

Those applying must be at least 18 years of age.

### Turkish PM Binali Yildirimn to Visit Azerbaijan

ANKARA (Armenpress) — Turkey's Prime Minister Binali Yildirimn visited Azerbaijan on March 14, Turkish media report.

Yildirimn participated in the 6th Baku World Forum.

During the visit the Turkish premier also met with President Ilham Aliyev, Prime Minister Artur Rasizade and Speaker of Parliament Ogtay Asadov.

# Turkey's Syrian Offensive: Self-Defense or Violation of International Law?

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — Turkey's offensive in northern Syria is coming under growing censure throughout Europe. It will be high on the list of foreign policy challenges facing the German government which has just come into being. Under the leadership of Chancellor Angela Merkel, a new version of the grand coalition made up of her CDU and sister party CSU, together with the Social Democrats (SPD), was officially constituted in mid March.

Turkey launched its military offensive aimed at Afrin on January 20, and justified its massive deployment of military strength as "self-defense." But is the claim substantiated? If it were, Turkey would have the right to respond militarily, according to international law, as long as it did so in a "proportionate and measured manner," as NATO secretary general Stoltenberg put it. The reports of civilian casualties speak of hundreds of innocents, mainly women and children; and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has stated that over 3,000 Kurds, whom he defined "terrorists," have been "neutralized." Massive destruction of infrastructure has resulted from the bombardments. This does not look proportionate or measured.

In fact, not only is the claim to self-defense dubious; it is becoming evident that the Turkish action, cynically named "Operation Olive Branch," constitutes a violation of international law.

#### Bundestag Experts Raise Doubts

On March 7 the Wissenschaftliche Dienste (Scientific Service) of the German Bundestag (Parliament) issued a report on the matter, in response to the request of Alexander Neu, a parliamentarian from the leftist opposition party, Die Linke. The Scientific Service is an official group of researchers and experts who provide material in

#### What Strategic Aims?

Turkey has not in fact used the words "armed attack" to identify the perceived threat, but it has presented a list of its own military aims, which is extremely revealing. This was issued by the prime minister's office on January 21 and is quoted at length in the experts' report, in English, on page 16. The aims are:

"To ensure the Turkey-supported Free Syrian Army (FSA) takes control of a 10,000-square kilometer area

Following on from the Euphrates Shield Operation and the operation in Idlib, to completely prevent the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) from reaching the Eastern Mediterranean.

To eliminate the possibility of losing Turkey's geographical contact with the Arab world.

To ensure the security of Turkey's borders with Syria.

To prevent the infiltration of the Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the PKK into Turkey through the Amanos mountains.

To prevent a terrorist organization from opening to the Mediterranean and to the world from here.

To ensure the security and continuation of the Euphrates Shield Operation area.

To counter US support for a terrorist organization."

Such a detailed list of strategic goals is most useful. What indeed is really behind the operation? The experts sum it up thus: "The geostrategic interest of Turkey apparently aims to contain the Kurdish sphere of influence in Syria, and to prevent the emergence of a de facto Kurdish regime and simultaneously to use the opportunity offered by a collapse of Syria and the "Islamic State" to expand its own sphere of influence. From Turkey's viewpoint the takeover or siege of the Syrian city Afrin appears to be a geostrategically necessary step for reaching these aims."

In a footnote, one reads that in fact Erdogan already on February 20 announced that the siege of Afrin was imminent.

The experts argue that the "concept of self-defense

THE EXPERTS' REPORT QUESTIONS THE PROPORTIONALITY OF TURKEY'S RESPONSE, STATING THAT THERE ARE OBJECTIVE CRITERIA TO ASCERTAIN THIS AND ADDING THAT SELF-DEFENSE CANNOT JUSTIFY ACTS OF VENGEANCE.

support of the work of the parliamentarians, but it does not represent its political positions or those of the government.

The body examined the issue in great detail and published its findings online on March 7. The report was entitled, "Evaluation according to International Law of the 'Operation Olive Branch' of Turkey against the Kurdish YPG in Northern Syria" (WD2 - 3000 - 023/18, Völkerrechtliche Bewertung der "Operation Olivenzweig" der Türkei gegen die kurdische YPG in Nordsyrien, 7 März 2018, S. 1-18). The group first asked if Turkey had the right to act militarily "in self-defense." According to Article 51 of the UN Charter a state is authorized to respond to an "armed attack," but not every act of violence can be thus defined. Turkey argued in its declaration to the UN Security Council that it was responding to an escalation of rocket attacks from Kurdish forces near Afrin targeting Kilis and Hatay, but is it true? There were no reports of such in the international press. And if there were, would this constitute an "armed attack"? The report says the burden of proof is on the accuser, in this case Turkey, and says it may have presented a "substantiated explanation," but has not established the absolute certainty of the accusation or "convincing proof" that the threat merits military self-defense. An accurate evaluation would rely on "objective facts" and not only the "subjective perception of threat," perhaps the International Court at the Hague could determine this.

The experts' report questions the proportionality of Turkey's response, stating that there are objective criteria to ascertain this and adding that self-defense cannot justify acts of vengeance. Concrete doubts regarding the proportionality of its response have arisen as a result of the "scale, aims and duration of the military course of action in northern Syria."

appears in principle incompatible with a military action that pursues aims that could lead to achieving a permanent change of structures and zones of influence on the territory of a foreign state." And that is what one gathers must be the aim of Turkey's offensive.

The report shows that Turkey has presented no convincing proof that it has been subject to an "armed attack," or that the threat it sees coming from non-state armed groups warrants actions of self-defense. Turkey's geostrategic aims, furthermore, go way beyond the scope of self-defense. In conclusion, the experts declare that Turkey's case rests "on a shaky foundation." They recommend that NATO partners should call on Turkey to prove its case, and to desist from further pursuance of its military operation.

The appearance of this report has contributed to defining the agenda for the new government, regarding how to proceed with Turkey. Politicians in Ankara continue to lobby for a restoration of friendly ties, but with expanding coverage of civilian casualties, protest demonstrations are growing in numbers and intensity in Germany and elsewhere. Demonstrators have been denouncing Germany's continued delivery of military equipment to Turkey; opposition politicians have raised a hue and cry about continued economic support for trade relations. Criticism is getting louder, but no serious political steps have been taken by governments in Europe. How long will the NATO "partners" continue to look the other way?

(The author expresses her thanks to the Wissenschaftliche Dienste for the kind permission to quote from the report. Apart from the list of strategic aims, which appears in English on page 16 of the report, and the phrase by Stoltenberg, other quotes have been translated from the original German by the author.)





## INTERNATIONAL

# Members of Congress Commemorate Sumgait Pogroms' Anniversary

WASHINGTON — Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues Co-Chair Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues Co-Vice Chair Congressman Adam Schiff (D-CA), and Congressman Jim Costa (D-CA) issued statements in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of Azerbaijan's anti-Armenian pogroms in Sumgait, Kirovabad, and Baku, reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly). Invited by the Armenian Caucus leadership, a delegation from Artakh (Nagorno Karabakh), led by President Bako Sahakyan, are in Washington, D.C. for a week-long working visit, where they will be able to meet and speak with Members of Congress regarding strengthening the U.S.-Artsakh relationship.

Rep. Pallone said on the House floor: "On February 27, 1988, up to 200 Armenian civilians living in the city of Sumgait in Azerbaijan were indiscriminately killed, raped, maimed, and even burned alive for no reason other than their ethnicity. This senseless violence was instigated by hostile, anti-Armenian rhetoric from Azerbaijani citizens and officials against these innocent individuals. For three decades, Azerbaijan has taken steps to cover up these crimes against humanity and dismiss the atrocities at Sumgait. Even more disturb-

ing is that perpetrators of these events and similar violent attacks have since been lauded as national heroes." He added: "I will continue to work with my colleagues on the Congressional Armenian Issues Caucus to remember the victims of the pogroms at Sumgait and to condemn all acts of violence against people who are targeted simply because of their existence. I hope my colleagues will join me in rejecting violent rhetoric and intimidation by renewing our commitment to achieving a collective and lasting peace."

Beginning in Sumgait in 1988, and spreading to the cities of Kirovabad in 1989 and Baku in 1990, armed mobs of Azerbaijani citizens took to the streets targeting Armenian residences and destroying Armenian-owned businesses while Azerbaijan security services stood by. The Sumgait pogrom was widely reported and roundly condemned, but the violence was never contained. Increasingly, anti-Armenian forces acted with impunity and the pogroms spread across Azerbaijan, leading to the military campaigns of the late 1980s to 1994 to deport the Armenians of Artsakh, until a cease-fire agreement was signed by Azerbaijan, Artsakh, and Armenia. Since then, the cease-fire agreement has been violated on

a daily basis, and in April 2016 Azerbaijan resumed full-scale warfare for four days before it was prevailed upon to halt its aggression.

"Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the pogrom against the Armenian residents of the town of Sumgait, Azerbaijan. On February 27 1988, and for three days following, Azerbaijani mobs assaulted and killed Armenians. The violence left hundreds of Armenian civilians dead and injured, women and girls were raped, and some victims were burned alive. Thousands were forced to flee their homes, leaving behind their belonging," Rep. Schiff informed his colleagues on the House floor. "The pogroms came about as the result of years of vicious, racist anti-Armenian propaganda by Azerbaijani authorities, dehumanizing Armenians. Azerbaijan authorities made little effort to punish those responsible, instead attempting to cover up the atrocities in Sumgait to this day, and denying the government role in instigating the killings. Indeed, even today, racist propaganda against Armenia and Armenians is prevalent in Azerbaijan," he continued.

On February 28, Rep. Costa stated: "This week marks the 30th anniversary of the pogroms against people of Armenian descent

in Sumgait, Azerbaijan. Yet, the violence and hatred of the pogroms failed in suppressing the Armenian people. Their dedication to self-determination burned on, and their refusal to sacrifice their freedom inspired democratic movements across the Soviet Union. To the thousands of Armenian Americans living in our San Joaquin Valley - and to Armenian people living throughout the world, I stand with you. We must continue to advocate for the protection of human rights and democratic freedoms, for the Armenian people, and for all."

This year also marks the 30th anniversary of Artsakh's Liberation Movement that was sparked in 1988 by the spreading threat of the pogroms. Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Rep. David Valadao (R-CA), and Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA) and Co-Vice Chair Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) provided remarks to commemorate this anniversary and congratulate the people of Artsakh.

"On behalf of the Armenian American community, I thank the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues for its leadership and principled stand in sending a strong message of support for Armenians in Artsakh in the face of Azeri aggression," stated Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny.

# Diasporan-Armenian Community in Barcelona Rises

**By Aram Arkun**

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BARCELONA, Spain — When you ask Armenians about the Armenian community of Barcelona, the only name at best that comes up is that of Vigen Hovsepyan. Now a Yerevan-based singer, Hovsepyan lived in Barcelona with his family as a teenager, and sings Spanish and Armenian songs. However, there is an active community there that deserves to be better known.

The Armenians of Barcelona form the most organized segment of the Spanish-Armenian community. Most are recent immigrants from Armenia and other parts of the former Soviet Union, though there were scattered numbers of individuals coming to Spain from the Middle East and elsewhere even before this. Davev Soulian, president of the Associació Cultural Armenia de Barcelona (ACAB), estimates that there are around 3,000 Armenians in Barcelona, as well as more in surrounding areas. Though many initial immigrants went into construction and restaurant work, as accessible initial jobs, there are now many professionals in fields like law or business.

The association keeps in touch with many Armenians through email and social media. It has a website ([www.acab.es](http://www.acab.es)) and Facebook page. Founded in 2004, ACAB has a physical



International Mother Language Day March 4 presentation at the Casa Armenia Armenian teachers, including Tamara Karapetyan, Anahit Ghazaryan, Narine Kulikyan, Naira Madinyan, Narine Yerimyan and Marine Avanesyan, and their students at the Casa Armenia on Saturday, February 24

center called Casa Armenia or Hay Doun (Armenian House) which it established in cooperation with the Armenian General Benevolent Union in 2010. It is located in a central location in the upscale Eixample neighborhood. Although few Armenians actually live in this neighborhood, it is convenient because of the good public transportation network.

Every Saturday, the community gets together, with chess lessons, Armenian language classes, and dance lessons. Occasionally the students perform at events. The teachers are all volunteers, and textbooks are sent from Armenia. Students pay a nominal fee of 25 Euros a month, while parents and members of the association make

donations.

Every month or two there are lectures or other public events. Sometimes Armenian speakers from other parts of Europe and Armenia come and visit. Some events are intended more for a Spanish/Catalan audience than for the local Armenians. For example, on February 20, the Armenian ambassador to Spain, Avet Adonts, came from Madrid and participated in a panel at the Centre Internacional Escarré per a les Minories Ètniques i les Nacions (CIEMEN) devoted to the 30th anniversary of the Karabakh Movement along with journalist and director of VilaWeb Vicent Partal and Abel Riu, political scientist specializing in the post-Soviet realm.

On the other hand, on March 4, the children celebrated International Mother Language Day at the Hay Doun with a presentation primarily for the local community.

ACAB maintains good relations with the government of Armenia and its embassy in Spain and various diasporan organizations like the AGBU. Soulian pointed out that it strives to keep the Armenian cultural identity alive in Spain. Most families have relatives in Armenia and sometimes go back during vacations, so this identity is strong, but it is the new generations born in Spain which will require more support to combat assimilation. ACAB is working to create programs for their needs.

The community is a growing one and is welcoming to guests from other countries.



International Mother Language Day March 4 presentation at the Casa Armenia



# Community News

## Senate Select Committee holds Historic hearing On Armenia

SACRAMENTO – State Sen. Anthony J. Portantino convened a public hearing in Sacramento on California-Armenia trade agreements, civil rights issues, and University of California Divestiture from the Republic of Turkey on Thursday, March 1.

Senators Scott Wilk, Ben Allen and John Moorlach were also in attendance. The hearing, which was the first of its kind, provided updates on Portantino's ongoing efforts toward strengthening and formalizing ties between California and Armenia. Portantino Chairs the Senate Select Committee on California, Armenia and Artsakh Trade, Art and Cultural Exchange. Portantino convened a joint hearing of both committees he chairs.

"Yesterday, was a great day for California, Armenia and Artsakh relations and I was very proud to be a part of it. Our speakers and presenters made a passionate case for the recognition of human rights abuses and the benefits of signing a mutual trade agreement between California and Armenian. The UCLA students were particularly compelling with their passionate presentation on Divestiture. It made me excited to be in the Capitol," commented Portantino.

The hearing consisted of three panels of speakers, each discussing a different topic of Armenian importance. The first panel featured moving testimony by Armenian-American activist and author, Anna Astvatsurian Turcotte. Turcotte detailed her family's story of escape from the Nagorno-Karabakh War. Her presentation set the backdrop for the remainder of the hearing, as it highlighted how far Artsakh has come in the last two decades and



State Sen. Anthony J. Portantino

how far it still needs to go. By listening to the harrowing details of the war, which must not be forgotten, the State Legislature could better grasp the need for California to cooperate and help Artsakh thrive.

The second panel was composed of two experts on trade agreements, one from California's perspective and one from Armenia's. Gordon Hinkle, Senior Vice President, Global Operations at Golden California Inc./California Center discussed how California has benefited from signing Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with China, including building trade, cultural, and business relationships between the two governments. Hinkle also expressed enthusiasm at the idea of working with Armenia in building those ties. Valery Mktroumian, Deputy Consul General of the Republic of Armenia, discussed the long and prosperous relationship California has had with Armenia. He testified that the California International Trade Office in Armenia (CITO), made possible with the

see HEARING, page 9



From left, Rep. Frank Pallone Jr., Edmon Marukyan and Arpine Hovhannisyan at United States Capitol

## Armenian Assembly Welcomes Armenia-US Parliamentary Friendship Group

WASHINGTON – This week, the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly) welcomed a delegation of the Armenia-US Parliamentary Friendship Group during their trip to Washington, D.C. The delegation was in Washington for a series of meetings, including a roundtable discussion with Assembly Board of Trustees Co-Chair Anthony Barsamian, Board Member Annie Totah, and Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, as well as Armenian National Institute (ANI) Director Dr. Rouben Adalian.

The delegation of Armenian Parliamentarians is led by Arpine Hovhannisyan, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Armenia and Chairwoman of the Armenia-US Parliamentary Friendship Group. She is joined by Parliamentarians Armen Ashotyan, Edmon Marukyan, Aghvan Vardanyan and Naira Zohrabyan. This working visit comes six months after US Members of Congress visited Armenia and Artsakh, as part of a US Congressional Delegation.

"We are thrilled that this first trip has been made by so many of the Members of Parliament, and we look forward to many more," said Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues Co-Chair Congresswoman Jackie Speier (D-CA), an Armenian American who participated in the US Congressional Delegation in September 2017.

Throughout the week, Members of Parliament met with Democratic Leader Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA), Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Ranking Member and Armenian Caucus Co-Vice Chair Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA), Armenian

see FRIENDSHIP, page 7



From left, Arpine Hovhannisyan, Armen Ashotyan, Rita Balian, Mariam Khaloyan and Bryan Ardouny at United States Capitol.

## 'Armenian Women: Leadership, Empowerment, Human Rights' at Tufts University

MEDFORD, Mass. – A panel discussion on "Armenian Women: Leadership, Empowerment, and Human Rights" will take place on Wednesday, April 11, at 7:30 p.m., at Tufts University, Alumnae Lounge, 40 Talbot Ave.

The program is organized by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) / Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues and hosted by the Tufts Armenian Club, with the co-sponsorship of the Armenian Bar Association, AGBU-YP Boston, Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA), all ASAs at Boston-Area Universities, and New Paths-Bridging Armenian Women.

The panel will be moderated by Dr. Anna Ohanyan, Richard B. Finnegan Distinguished Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Stonehill College, and will feature the participation of Dr. Denise Horn, associate professor and chair, political science and international relations, Simmons College; Nairi Krafian, past president, Tufts University Armenian Club, and founder of Oknooshoon animal therapy project in Armenia; via Skype, Nvard Manasyan, Gender Equality Officer, UNICEF; and Maro Matossian, executive director, Women's Support Center, Armenia.

Many studies have demonstrated that investment in women and girls strengthens democracy and weakens authoritarianism, makes families healthier, peace agreements more durable and societies less vulnerable to extremism, violence and terrorist recruitment.

Unfortunately, many studies also show that gender discrimination and physical assaults on women are global and systemic in nature. From the "Me Too" movement, women's marches in Washington, New York City and Boston, all the way to the City Council in Yerevan, it has become painfully clear that violence against women is a world-wide phenomenon.

The panelists will examine the causes, costs, and consequences of gender discrimination and violence against women in Armenia and the Diaspora. The conversation will draw from experiences in Southeast Asia with a focus on empowerment of women as it relates to development strategies, civil society development and democratization.

The program is free and open to the public. There will be a reception and refreshments immediately following the program and question-and-answer session.

Parking is available in the Dowling Garage at 419 Boston Ave. and in designated on-street areas.



Maro Matossian, executive director, Women's Support Center, Armenia.





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Armenian Assembly Welcomes Armenia-US Parliamentary Friendship Group

FRIENDSHIP, from page 6

Caucus Vice Co-Chair Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Foreign Affairs Committee Members Rep. David Cicilline (D-RI) and Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA), Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (US Helsinki Commission) Co-Chair Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), and House Democracy Partnership Program Commission Ranking Member and founder Rep. David Price (D-NC).

During their conversation with Members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, they discussed US-Armenia relations, the crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh, and Armenia's acceptance of refugees from Iraq and Syria. Chairman Royce stated: "Armenia and the United States enjoy a valuable and growing relationship. In particular, Armenia's contributions to counterterrorism efforts and its assistance to Syrian refugees have been crucial. But there are still many opportunities to further strengthen our relationship on security and human rights priorities in the region. I look forward to doing

just that."

On March 7, the Assembly joined the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues in co-hosting a reception on Capitol Hill welcoming the Armenian Parliamentary Delegation, alongside the Embassy of Armenia to the United States and other Armenian organizations. Armenian Caucus Co-Chairs Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Rep. Dave Trott (R-MI), and Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA) were in attendance, in addition to Reps. Judy Chu (D-CA), Jim Costa (D-CA), Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Brenda Lawrence (D-MI), Linda Sanchez (D-CA), Dina Titus (D-NV), and Paul Tonko (D-NY).

At the reception, Members of Congress offered remarks welcoming the Armenian Parliamentary delegation and sharing their thoughts on US-Armenia relations.

Pallone touched upon their earlier discussions on a number of priorities of the Armenian Caucus to help improve relations with Armenia



Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-CA), Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA), Armenian Parliament Deputy Speaker Arpine Hovhannissyan, Armenian Parliament Member Edmon Marukyan, Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI), and Armenian Parliament Member Armen Ashotyan



From left, John Evans, Tulsi Gabbard and Dr. Rouben Adalian at United States Capitol

and Artsakh. He described this visit as "an opportunity to talk about substantive issues that we can make a difference on." He continued: "I cannot overemphasize how important it is for us to go to Armenia, for them to come here, and for us to exchange ideas because that can really make a difference in terms of the future of the relationship between our two countries."

Trott spoke about the current House Resolution, H.Res.220, which reaffirms the Armenian Genocide. He proudly shared that this resolution currently has more co-sponsors than any Armenian Genocide resolution in the past seven years. He then went on to note the importance of strong US-Armenia relations.

"When President Trump talks about America First, I agree with that but for me, what that means is friends like Armenia. We need to have a strong relationship. We need to have you know that we are there to help you, and we are there to trade with you, and we are there to work with you to make sure that your citizens

have the best dream and life they can, because that will help America more than anything else. So, we want to make sure the Administration and State Department continue to understand how important this relationship is, and I'll do everything I can to accomplish that," Trott said.

Speier recalled their meeting earlier that day with Leader Pelosi, and the important dialogue between the legislators.

"We met this afternoon with the Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, and I said to her 'this is the new Armenia, and the new Armenia is all about moving to this parliamentary structure to create greater democracy and we want to be part of seeing Armenia succeed in this 21st century,'" Speier said. "We need to find a way to create an environment where all of those in Armenia can thrive and can succeed. One of the messages that our community from Armenia brought was one of finding a way to create greater IT opportunities. So we are going to look at how we can do that. We want to support this democracy. We are thrilled that this first trip has been made by so many of the Members of Parliament, and we look forward to many more."

Commenting on the United States' strong relationship with Armenia and Artsakh, Chu said: "I'm so happy to be celebrating the strong and enduring US-Armenia relationship. Ours is a true friendship, based on shared values and goals."

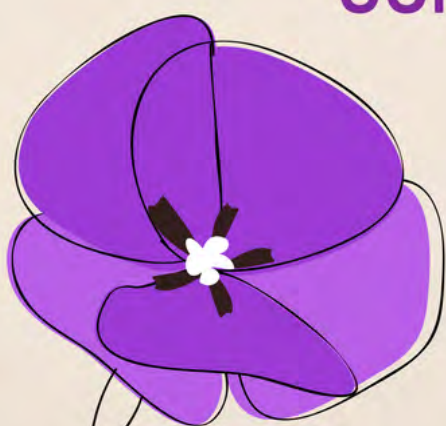


Edmon Marukyan and Dr. Rouben Adalian

That is why I'm proud to support economic and military aid to Armenia, and to support Armenians in Artsakh in their fight for peace. And it is my sincere hope that, through our continued efforts together, we can finally put the American government on the right side of history and acknowledge the reality of the Armenian Genocide once and for all. None of this would be possible without the support and hard work of the Congressional Armenian Caucus and groups like the Armenian Assembly of America."

The Armenian Assembly hosted a round table discussion, where its leadership exchanged ideas with the Armenian Parliamentary Delegation and Armenian Ambassador to the US Grigor Hovhannissian on a broad range of issues, including its work with Congress and the State Department. The Assembly referenced the first US Congressional Delegation to Armenia, organized by the Assembly, and the importance of this mutual exchange. ANI Director Dr. Adalian then discussed his work at the Institute, and the importance to educate Armenians and Americans on the history of the Armenian Genocide, and the resolutions and policies enacted as a result.

## 103<sup>RD</sup> ARMENIAN GENOCIDE COMMEMORATIVE WEEKEND



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## OBITUARIES

# Charles Sarkis, 78

## Built Restaurant Empire

By Bryan Marquard

BOSTON (*Boston Globe*) – During the 50 years he ran an expansive restaurant empire unlike any other in Boston, Charlie Sarkis strode through life as if it were one of his dozens of dining rooms. His eyes noticed everything: the cut of a steak, the quality of service, the bottom line.

Sarkis, who was 78 when he died Sunday, March 11, in Florida of complications from brain cancer, at one point presided over an abundant list of more than 30 dining destinations that included his flagship Abe & Louie's, along with Atlantic Fish Company, J.C. Hillary's Ltd., Charley's Eating and Drinking Saloon, and the Papa Razzi and Joe's American Bar & Grill chains.

Complex and unafraid to be combative while fighting to protect the 3,400 jobs at his establishments, Sarkis was just as well known for owning the Wonderland Greyhound Park in Revere and a harness racing track in Foxborough – gambling pursuits that even admirers found unusual in a man who made no secret of his wish to distance himself from the criminal reputation of his father, one of Boston's best-known bookies.

Though Sarkis chose very public ways to make his fortune, he was famously private. Yet when he opened up in an interview in 2005, it was to discuss the very personal challenges he had faced recovering from his first brain surgery in 1995 and his efforts to steer others with brain tumors to top-notch doctors. "I'm not as tough as you think, you know," he told the *Globe*. "Can I be a pain? All that and more. But I learned we don't control what we think we control. And you have to pass something on."

He cut an elegant figure in his dark tailored suits, silk ties, and crisp shirts, but he never ducked a fight to protect his life's work, whether in a courtroom, a regulatory hearing, or the pages of newspapers where his quotes could slice as sharply as a carving knife.

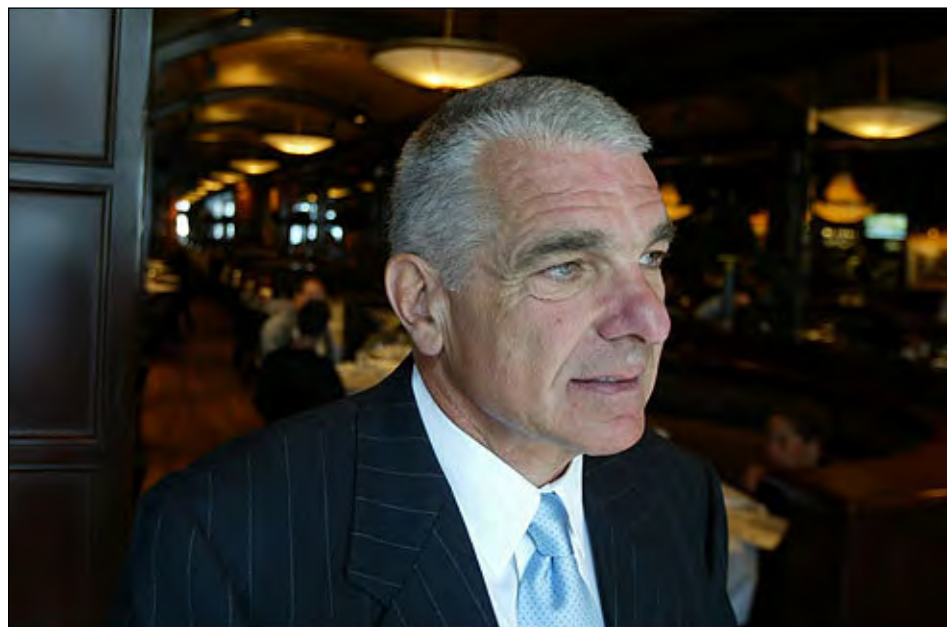
At times his commanding presence said most of what he needed to say, as was the case when he presided at Abe & Louie's on Boylston Street. With its dark wood, brass rails, and heavy cutlery, the steakhouse was a cut above the rest in the Back Bay Restaurant Group Sarkis headed, and it became one of the city's most successful restaurants, attracting top Boston sports stars or a visiting Warren Buffett to its elegant private dining room. As with his other restaurants, Sarkis kept a table for himself offering a view of the kitchen, the front door, and the bar. When the need arose, he pounded on the table to emphasize a point.

If a deferential waiter asked whether his meal passed muster, Sarkis would gesture to a nearby patron. "He would say, 'Don't ask me, ask him. I have to be here. He doesn't have to come back,'" recalled his wife, Jolene. "Charlie wanted everybody treated the same way. He wanted everyone to come and have a great meal."

Sarkis "had the real ability to affect people with his presence, and his presence lived

beyond his physical presence. I think that was one of the unspoken secrets of his success," said Ann Marie Escobar, chief operating officer of Legal Sea Foods.

"He was so consistent and so focused that people who worked with him wanted to be as



perfect-seeking," said Escobar, who worked for Sarkis for 30 years and was executive vice president of operations for Back Bay Restaurant Group. "His true life passion was this business and the hospitality part of this business. He knew in his soul how to do it right."

At many of his other restaurants, including Charley's on Newbury Street, Sarkis nurtured an appealing formula: attentive service, generous drinks, and good meals that avoided the pretentiousness of what he dismissed as "cheffy restaurants" with their complicated fare.

His gambling ventures were less simple. He waged and lost a legal battle with New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft in the late 1990s over property adjacent to the team's Foxborough stadium, which Sarkis operated first as a thoroughbred track and then for harness racing – all of which he was forced to let go when a judge ruled against his claims in a lease dispute.

With Wonderland, which he ran through his Westwood Group, Sarkis persevered through the ups and downs of the economy and through legislative fights over various gambling bills. The track closed in 2010, nearly two years after a state referendum banned greyhound racing.

All those battles seemed tame next to the upheaval in 1990, when 40 people, including his father and Wonderland's general manager, were indicted on charges of running an illegal gaming operation. Though Sarkis was not charged, he again found himself in the shadow of his father, Abraham, whom prosecutors called the mastermind behind the scheme to illegally arrange bets at off-track premises. Abraham Sarkis, who had been convicted in an unrelated bookmaking case years earlier, died in 1991, before the charges against him in the Wonderland arrest were resolved.

Though Sarkis made no secret that he loved his father, he said in a 1994 interview that he had decided early in life to keep his distance from Abe's unsavory career. "I wanted to be as far away from that life as I could get," he said then. "I just knew it wasn't right and I couldn't live that way. I didn't have the nervous system to do it."

The older of two siblings, Charles F. Sarkis grew up in Milton, the only son of Abraham Sarkis and the former Dorothy Rooney. His sister, Dorothy Morkis, became a successful rider and competitor in equestrian competitions.

In 1999, Sarkis married Jolene Sykes, who has served as publisher and president of Fortune magazine. In recent years they lived in Palm Beach, Fla.

In 2011 and 2012, Sarkis sold the bulk of his restaurants to the Tavistock Group and Newport Harbor Corp., his wife said. Two final restaurants, in New Jersey, are scheduled to close at the end of this month.

Because of how certain provisions in the Tavistock deal affected three of his children, who worked for the Back Bay Restaurant Group, family acrimony became public around the time of the sale and was detailed in the *Globe*. "I am selling my business due to my age, my serious health issues, and my business and personal financial situation," Sarkis wrote at the time in an e-mail to the *Globe*.

"I care very much about the business I built, and even more about my children," he added, "and I will continue – privately – to do the best I can for both."

Over the years, Sarkis "was most proud of the people he employed and how many he employed," his wife said. "He really felt he was a contributor to Boston and to Massachusetts because he hired and trained so many people."

Services will be announced for Sarkis, who in addition to his sister, of Dover, and his wife leaves three daughters, Nancy Corcoran of Walpole, Amy of Westwood, and Sarah of Honolulu; three sons, Charles Jr. of Canton, Paul of Los Angeles, and Patrick of Boston; his wife's daughter from a previous marriage, Katherine Henry of Dallas; five grandchildren; and three step-grandchildren.

"He was so fun and so funny," his wife said. "He was just so full of life and exuberance. He was always pursuing the best of everything, so it was always a fun ride with him."

Sarkis kept working for some 16 years after his first bout with brain cancer, in 1995, even though it affected his ability to recognize faces. "It's my little secret," he confided in 2005. The recurring illness was humbling. He said that a couple of days before undergoing surgery again, he walked into a healing service at a Holliston chapel. "I looked around and said: 'Everyone is here for hope. Why do I think I'm any better than anyone else?' And I stayed. It was one of those life-altering moments."

He added: "Sometimes I feel sorry for myself. Then I say, 'You're the luckiest guy in the world.'"

## Giragosian

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Knights and Daughters of Vartan Welcome Armenian Parliamentary Delegation to Washington

WASHINGTON — On March 6, the Knights and Daughters of Vartan of Washington, DC, hosted a community-wide reception to welcome five members of the Armenia-US Parliamentary delegation, visiting Washington DC for a series of meetings with US government officials, politicians and Armenian-American community leaders. The trip has been organized by the Armenian Embassy, in cooperation with the Congressional Armenian Caucus.

Edmon Marukhyan, Aghvan Vardanyan and Naira Zoorabyan.

(See related stories on the delegation's visit on pages 1 and 6.)

Sareen and Arya Balian sang the National anthems of America and Armenia. Parish council Chairmen of both St. Mary's Armenian Church and Soorp Khach Armenian Church, Onnik Sivaslian and Hrant Jamgochian, respectively, welcomed the dignitaries. Knights of

the government and the political parties, especially regarding the welfare of the people. Then he invited Ambassador Grigor Hovhannesyan, who thanked Knights and Daughters of Vartan for the event and presented the members of the delegation of the Armenian Parliament.

Arpine Hovhannisyan reiterated the importance of the Armenian Diaspora and announced that this is the first visit of its kind to Capitol Hill by an Armenian delegation.

After a prayer by Fr. Sarkis Aktavookian, a traditional Armenian Lenten dinner was served

to the parliamentary delegation and the invited guests from the Washington community Armenian organizations, churches, along with Armenian advocacy organizations, the Armenian National Committee of America and the Armenian Assembly of America.

The dinner was followed by a lively discussion, during which the parliamentary members answered questions from the participants.

During the discussions, the group addressed the transition of Armenia to a parliamentary mode.



Parliamentary delegates third row with members of Daughters of Vartan of Washington, D.C.

The Armenia-US Parliamentary Delegation is headed by Arpine Hovhannisyan, deputy speaker of the National Assembly of Armenia and includes Parliamentarians of four major political parties of Armenia, Armen Ashotyan,

Vartan Commander Kevork Marshlian emphasized that the silent majority of Diaspora Armenians supports the foreign affairs of the country as well as the Armenian people, but that they are entitled to constructive critique of

## Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association to Sponsor Panel Discussion on 3D Printing

MEDFORD, Mass. — The Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA) has organized a panel discussion on 3D printing: the wave of the future. The event is co-sponsored by Tufts Armenian Club and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). This event is being held as part of the annual Cambridge Science Festival on Thursday, April 19, 7-9 p.m. at Tufts University's Paige Hall, Crane Room, 12 Upper Campus Road, Medford. The moderator will be Berge Ayvazian.

The distinguished panel of scientists will feature an expert from Armenia on 3D printing Hrayr Azizbekyan, head of engineering/researcher at Matter Wave Physics Lab, Institute for Physical Research, National Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, Armenia. Hrayr has been invited to Cambridge by CYSCA specifically for this event. The five other panelists will include local 3D experts: Jennifer Milne, Formlabs, Somerville; Adam Green, Einstein's

Workshop, Burlington; AJ Perez, NV Bots, Boston; Chris Templeman, Garage Makerspace (NERD), Microsoft, Cambridge. Jack Keverian, Peabody will offer an overview of 3D printing.

The discussion will cover the education, application, manufacture of 3D printers and is intended for the general public. Since its inception, 3D printing has been innovative in various industries such as biomedical, manufacturing, industry and socioculture. Learn about efforts being made both in the United States and Armenia, in terms of manufacturing and education.

Admission is free and the public is invited. Parking is available after 5PM in all spaces. Refreshments will be provided after the program. For questions or more details, contact Alisa Stepanian at [asteoanian@aol.com](mailto:asteoanian@aol.com).

For more information about the OW program contact Alisa Stepanian at [asteoanian@aol.com](mailto:asteoanian@aol.com) or Jack Medzorian at [jmedzorian@aol.com](mailto:jmedzorian@aol.com) or about CYSCA [www.cambridgeyerevan.org](http://www.cambridgeyerevan.org).

## Senate Select Committee holds Historic hearing on Armenia

HEARING, from page 6

leadership of former Senator Jack Scott and Governor Gray Davis, was of immense benefit to Armenia and articulated his support for a renewed trade office in Armenia. He noted how far Armenia has come in the decade since the trade office closed, with special focus on the booming tech industry Armenia boasts.

The third panel featured a discussion of the University of California's (UC) investments in the Republics of Turkey and Armenia and highlighted why divestment from the Republic of Turkey is particularly prudent moving forward. Jagdeep Bachher, Chief Investment Officer, Vice President of Investments spoke first, detailing what kinds of investments the UC makes, what risk factors it considers in making those decisions, and how under his leadership the institution's involvement with the American University of Armenia has grown. With that background in mind, members heard the impassioned speeches of two of the co-founders of the Divest Turkey campaign, Arev Hovespian and Razmig Sarkissian, as well as current member of the campaign, Aram Manoukian. They reminded the legislature of Turkey's ongoing human rights abuses against ethnic minorities and discussed why it is no longer financially wise for the UC to invest in Turkey given its recent descent into dictatorship.

"I was very honored to have had the opportunity to present on the importance of the UC divestment from Turkey before the first hearing of the Select Committee. I believe that our testimony made a compelling case to the CIO from the University and I felt he was being very respectful of our student perspective, going so far as to invite us to formally present in the future to the University Investment Committee Directly. We are grateful to Senator Portantino

for this opportunity and we are optimistic that it will lead to a positive outcome," commented Arev Hovsepien, Co-Founder Divest Turkey and former UCLA student.

After all speakers had made their presentations, Senator Portantino, together with his colleague, Senator Wilk, presented a Senate Resolution to members of Armenian grassroots organizations commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Sumgait Pogrom. The tragic event, which commenced on the eve of February 28th, 1988, resulted in the death of 200 Armenian men, women, and children and is considered to be the start of the Nagorno Karabakh War. Azeris planned and orchestrated the brutal massacres which targeted Armenians solely for their heritage following their peaceful protest calling for historic Armenian lands to be liberated.

The resolution, which commemorated all of the victims who perished in the Sumgait Pogroms, was read aloud during the televised hearing. The leaders of the Armenian National Committee - Western Region and the Armenian Assembly of America were present to accept the resolution.

During the public comment portion of the meeting, members of the greater Armenian and Azeri communities were afforded the opportunity to address the committee. Portantino gracefully handled the comments from Azeri Americans.

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.



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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# AMVETS POST 41 Reaches Out To Armenia's Front-Line Troops

WATERTOWN – On January 28, on the Army Day holiday in Armenia, Watertown-based Cpl. Paul S. Marsoubian Post 41 AMVETS reached out to front-line soldiers celebrating the 26th Anniversary of the Army of the Republic of Armenia. The post donated a commemorative holiday meal to front-line soldiers in the trenches defending the hostile border of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Tavush region of Armenia. Besides meat blessed by the clergy and cooked in a stew called “Khashlama,” soldiers were given tea, coffee, bread, chocolate, soda and cigarettes.

This project was conceived of and spearheaded by Jack Medzorjian an AMVETS Post 41, past post commander, trustee and charter member and under the leadership of George Haroutunian, present commander and trustee of the post. This project was a huge success thanks to excellent coordination by Gohar Palyan, Yerevan-based Knights of Vartan representative, and Rev. Aram Mirzoyan, the Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR), as well as local volunteers commandeered by Mirzoyan. Based in the front-line border town of Berd, Mirzoyan is the spiritual leader of the area 4-5 hours north-east of Yerevan called Shamsadeen, comprised of 16 front-line border villages where the troops are entrenched.

Post 41 has played an active role in national and international affairs, having produced a national AMVETS commander and a state commander over its 66-year history. The post has a monthly luncheon meeting at the Armenian General Benevolent Union Center, Watertown, during which dedicated members greet each other, enjoy lunch and continue to support worthy causes.

Recently, Post 41 donated \$10,000, split evenly between AMVETS District 5 and the AMVETS Department of Massachusetts with the proviso that the hard-earned money of these Post 41 veterans be used to help their comrades in need.

Besides defending its borders, the Armenian Army plays an active role in International Affairs. Todd Jacobus, life member of AMVETS Post 2008 in Belmont, MA recently retired as Deputy Commander of the United Nations peace-keeping forces in the dangerous regions of Kosovo reports that he commanded the Armenian Army and others who participated in peace-keeping in Kosovo. He cites the tremendous care and concern by the Armenian soldiers under his command. During his service, AMVETS Post 2008 donated scores of CARE packages to the troops under difficult conditions which



A popular veal stew called Khashlama being prepared for front-line troops defending the hostile border of Armenia and Azerbaijan in NE Armenia's Shamsadeen region (a group of 16 border villages) of the Tavush Marz. Meal hosted by the Armenian-American Veterans of AMVETS Post 41, Watertown MA on January 28, Army Day holiday in Armenia.

Commander A. Kirakosyan of the Defense Ministry of the Republic of Armenia was so impressed by this act of goodwill that he sent an official Certificate of Gratitude praising the AMVETS Post 41 for its generosity.

Armenia's army has been under attack by neighboring Azerbaijan in violation of a cease-fire agreement negotiated 24 years ago. In addition, Azerbaijan and Turkey, in defiance of International Law, have both blockaded Armenia. As a consequence, land-locked Armenia stands surrounded and cut off on both ends, with limited access only to Iran and Georgia for transit of vital goods. In spite of Armenia being a member of the United Nations, there seems to be little or no interest and efforts to mediate a peace treaty and efforts to date by the OSCE have had no success to date.

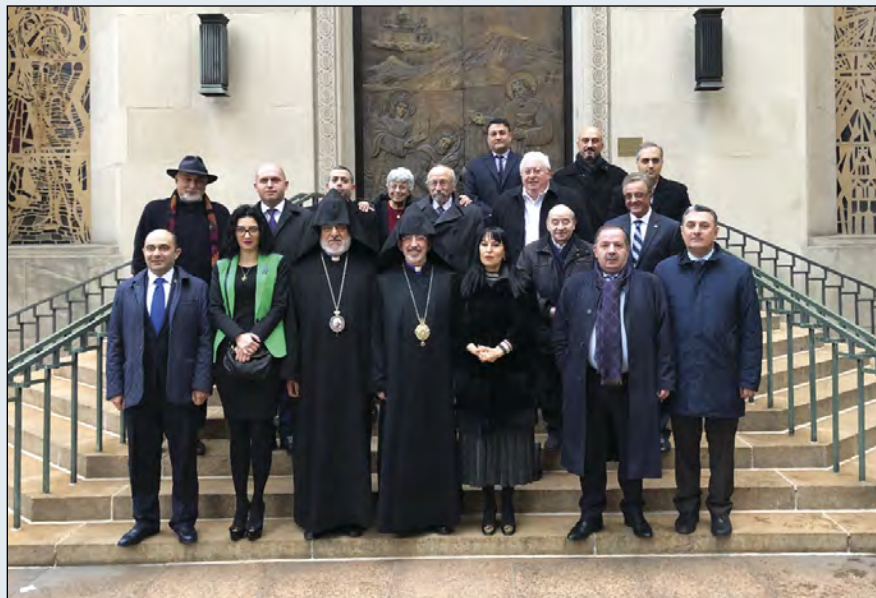
Post 41 was founded in 1952 in Watertown by American-Armenian veterans of World War II and named in memory of a local hero Corporal Paul S. Marsoubian who died in Germany in battle in WWII. Several veterans of AMVETS Post 41 have served in combat with courage and some have been awarded the Purple Heart and cited for bravery.

reached the Armenian and other troops under his command.

In addition, in another international sphere, Post 2008 AMVETS donated scores of CARE packages and sports clothing to troops under the command of Major Felix Gregorian, who served combat tours as an AMVET of Post 2008 with no less than five tours of duty in the Middle East before being retired last year.

Gregory Arabian, Esq., retired US Army Major, and former active member of Post 41, was moved by this story. He is currently commander of Post 2008 in Belmont and first vice-commander of AMVETS district 5. He has decided to recognize this goodwill project of Post 41 at the AMVETS National Convention, stating, “God Bless AMVETS Post 41 for their care, concern and generosity in tough times like these. AMVETS is involved, is alive, and is a body of veterans helping veterans and others in need, whether in the national or international sphere. I will report it everywhere. I will also address this year's AMVETS National Convention with this story of goodwill and sacrifice”

– Jack Medzorjian



The visiting delegation of National Assembly representatives with New York area clergy and community leaders.

## National Assembly Members Visit New York

VISIT, from page 1

While revealing their concerns about emigration from Armenia and economic improvement, they expressed the hope that the new government will quickly find solutions to these issues.

Barsamian called for cooperation and mutual confidence in an effort to fortify Armenia-diaspora relations and remarked that American Armenians were preparing to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of St. Vartan Cathedral in New York.

Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan voiced his wishes for their success.

The visiting delegation included Arpine Hovhannisyan, one of the deputy speakers or vice presidents of the National Assembly and member of the Republican Party of Armenia, Armen Ashotyan, member of the same party and chairman of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Foreign Relations, Naira Zohrabyan, member of the Prosperous Armenia Party of Gagik Tsarukyan, Edmon Marukyan of the Yelk opposition alliance, and Aghvan Vardanyan of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

Diplomats from the Armenian embassy in Washington and representatives of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation were present at the meeting.

(Translated from the Armenian)

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# St. Vartan Cathedral Concert Celebrates Armenian Music

CONCERT, from page 1

The culturally rich event, in partnership with the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, with the support of Nazar and Artemis Nazarian, also recognized the season when Armenia became a member state of the UN in March 1992, marking an opportunity for the Armenian Mission to invite the United Nations community to share in their nation's musical talents and traditions.

"Our primary targets were our international partners," said Ambassador Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, permanent representative of Armenia to the United Nations. "The whole idea of this concert was to combine all of the elements of our culture into one single commonality, just as we are here in New York City."

The predominantly international crowd, coupled with the global backgrounds of the performers, who have trained in Armenia, Russia, England, Cyprus and the US and who play both Eastern and Western composers, was shared with the entire UN community in an effort to "participate and share in diversity."

He continued, "The incessant applause demonstrated how exciting it is to showcase Armenia's rich cultural and musical heritage in one of the most beautiful churches located by the United Nations, which demonstrates the vibrancy of the Cathedral's architecture, faith and culture."

The hour-long concert captured various tones and moods of classical music, ranging from Haydn's lively piano trio to Hovnuts' rarely-performed Duo Sonata for violin and cello to Babadjanian's emotionally charged piano trio, culminating in an artistic and enriching performance.

"It was a great honor and pleasure to be invited by Ambassador Mnatsakanyan to perform in St. Vartan Cathedral," said Chilingirian, who had played there previously with his Chilingirian Quartet 40 years ago. The Cyprus-



Celebration of Spring concert at St. Vartan Cathedral

born violinist, who is professor of violin and chamber music at the Royal Academy of Music in London, remarked on the "wonderful acoustics" of the Cathedral, making it "an ideal venue to promote the music of Armenian composers in front of a truly international audience."

Each of the musicians was pleased to form a trio with their colleagues and fellow musicians, with whom they share mutual respect

and admiration.

"This concert gave me the opportunity to collaborate with two of the most prominent Armenian musicians," said New York-based pianist, composer and conductor Hakobyan, who is founder and artistic director of Pegasus-

pany, under the artistic guidance of founder and director Vasken Brudian, was originally established at the Tumo Center for Creative Technologies in Armenia and has grown into a contemporary design company in the country.

"Armenian artists and musicians are recog-



The performers with Ambassador Mnatsakanyan after the show

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The Orchestra. "The acoustics, beauty and spiritual richness of the Cathedral, combined with the warmth and enthusiasm of the audience, enhanced our performance."

For the Yerevan-born Bagratuni, this was his first visit to St. Vartan Cathedral, which he described as a "unique experience."

"I can't think of a better way to introduce Armenian music and musicians to the world community," said Bagratuni, a professor of cello at Michigan State University and artistic director of the International Music Academy in Italy. "The international and Armenian communities have to realize Armenian musicians are capable of performing music of all composers, not only Armenian."

Hakobyan echoed Bagratuni's thoughts, noting that events such as this concert "have the capacity to reach wider audiences by showcasing the music of Armenian composers alongside Western works."

Further highlighting the artistic abilities of the Armenian people was the artwork hanging on the walls by Ardean's designs. Inspired by Armenia's architecture, illuminated manuscripts and cross-stones, the Armenia-based design com-

nized worldwide not only because they are Armenian but also because their quality and talent," said Bagratuni. "This, I hope, was the message behind the Celebration of Spring concert."



Levon Chilingirian (violin) and Suren Bagratuni (cello) as they conclude Hovunt's Duo Sonata for violin and cello





# Arts & Living

## Armenian Entries Part of Socially Relevant Film Festival

NEW YORK – SR Socially Relevant Film Festival 2018 (SRFF 2018) brings in its Fifth Season with 70 international and local films, industry workshops and panels, and other events dedicated to social issues and the filmmakers that highlight them. SRFF 2018 will be held from March 16 to 22, 2018 at Cinema Village and neighboring venues.

This year's lineup of the growing Socially Relevant Film Festival has movies from 35 countries. Among those are two important and interesting Armenian films, a documentary, "Armenians of the World" by the Lebanese actress and filmmaker Carmen Labaki that shows Armenians in Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and Armenian with some new footage reflecting the recent upheavals, and a narrative feature film, "Hot Country Cold Winter," by David Sarafian, that deals with the important period of transition from Soviet to Independent Armenia.

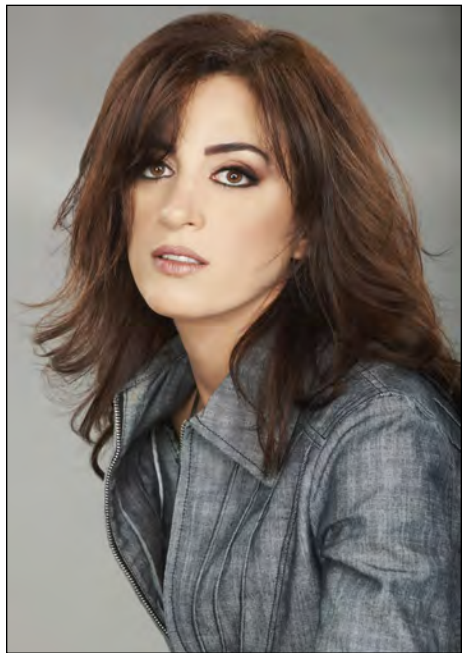
These two films will have their New York premieres.

Partner organizations in the film festival for these two films are the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, St. Leon Armenian Church and the Armenian General Benevolent Union Performing arts.

The rapidly-growing Festival, now in its fifth year, is a multi-faceted event that embodies the cultural values of New York and the world. SRFF 2018 showcases films across an array of platforms from emerging, international and local filmmakers. There will be several spotlight programs, industry workshops, and panels on different regions and issues. Previous editions of the festival have included a number of Armenian films. A percentage of the box office from the Armenian films will be donated to SOAR - Society of Orphaned Armenian Relief.

"Armenians of the World" by Carmen Labaki, Lebanon, Armenia, Syria, & Turkey, 2017 | 56 minutes, will be shown on Sunday, March 18, at 6 p.m.

It is a documentary that relates the amazing story of a people that endured a lot of injustice



Carmen Labaki, director of "Armenians of the World"

and suffering. The pride they take in their identity, their sense of belonging and integration is second to none. Shot in Turkey, Syria, Armenia and Lebanon the film took a whole year of research to be completed. This is a recent edit with updated information. In Turkey: Scenes of desolation, ruins, and silence. In Syria: Tears and testimonies. In Armenia: Resistance, strong will, and a dream. In Lebanon: An entire destiny see FILMS, page 13



Vatsche Barsoumian led the Lark Orchestra, Lark Mastersingers, and musical artists Shoushik Barsoumian (Soprano), Garineh Avakian (Mezzo-soprano), Berj Karazian (Tenor), and Abdiel Gonzalez (Baritone)

## Lark Musical Society Celebrates AMAA Centennial With 'Faith and Love'

PASADENA, Calif. – The day after a gentle rain, sunshine in the crisp late afternoon lit the scene perfectly as guests arrived for Lark Musical Society's celebration concert, "Faith and Love" at Pasadena's Ambassador Auditorium, on Sunday, March 4. The program featured Anton Bruckner's tripartite *Te Deum*, a popular thanksgiving hymn and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* with the chorus *Ode to Joy*, a masterpiece expressing the human longing for brotherhood and equality.

By Elise Kalfayan

It was a joyful and inspiring celebration of the Armenian Missionary Association of America's (AMAA) 100-year legacy of mission and service.

The AMAA was founded in 1918 in Worcester, Mass. by the Armenian Evangelicals to send aid overseas to survivors of the Armenian Genocide in the Near East. Its work has continued and expanded since then, now providing humanitarian aid, education, youth programs, and support for churches and Christian outreach in 24 countries. AMAA Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian honored its founders and leaders in his program notes, citing Psalm 135:3 and writing, "Pleasant is the memory of the early visionaries, successive leadership and generations of unsung heroes whose gospel-illuminated path and selfless sacrifice led to miracles in the life of the nation."

AMAA board members joined directors and staff, supporters, Lark Musical Society members and supporters, local dignitaries, and a full-house audience at the magnificent concert with the express desire to celebrate the AMAA's work in musical tribute. Many of the guests came from local Armenian Evangelical churches, and have long-standing ties to the AMAA, and fervent appreciation for its mission. This was the final event of a busy weekend as the AMAA Board of Directors held meetings March 2-3 in the L.A. area, and five local churches hosted AMAA presentations Sunday morning.

Doris Melkonian, who holds a masters in musicology from UCLA, delivered a pre-concert lecture. Those arriving early learned that Bruckner named his work after an ancient hymn which begins "Thee, O God, we praise" and he based its text on the Apostles' Creed.

Beethoven's *9th Symphony* is considered one of the greatest works in the Western musical tradition. Melkonian pointed out that the 1st movement starts with "the void" of the book of Genesis; while the exuberant chorus of the 4th movement celebrates joy, life, and God's divine blessings. She concluded, "Tonight, as the contemplative music of Bruckner and Beethoven transport us upward, we join in this joyful chorus of praise and give thanks to God. We praise God for the miracles and the transformational work that have taken place through the programs initiated and sponsored by the Armenian Missionary Association of America."

Doors to the hall opened soon afterward and almost every seat was filled as Concert Committee Chair Ken Kevorkian welcomed guests and dignitaries. Rev. Dr. Ara Chakerian, minister to the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America blessed the concert with an invocation.

Dr. Nazareth Darakjian, president of the AMAA Board of Directors, patron of the Lark Musical Society, and a member of the Lark Mastersingers, stepped forward to provide a stirring reflection on the founding of the Armenian Republic and the founding of the AMAA in 1918, one century ago:

"For 100 years the AMAA served Armenian communities in the Diaspora, and after the disastrous earthquake that hit Armenia in 1988, the AMAA extended its activities to the Motherland also. Today, as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the formation of the AMAA, we are also celebrating the 100th anniversary of the rebirth of the Armenian nation, the rebirth of hope for a people who walked in the valley of the shadow of death, came face to face with the possibility of total annihilation, but survived."

see CENTENNIAL, page 13

## Berklee Middle Eastern Festival Celebrates Music From Around The World

BOSTON – Berklee College of Music presented the 10th annual Berklee Middle Eastern Festival as part of its Signature Series on Thursday, March 1. Founded and directed by associate professor Christiane Karam, the festival brings together guest artists, community musicians, Berklee students, visual artists, and dancers from all over the world to celebrate the music of the Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Mediterranean.

This year, the festival featured a stellar lineup of guest performers. Last year's Middle Eastern Festival headliner, the innovative Armenian pianist and composer Tigran Hamasyan, returned to the stage for another memorable performance. The concert included Berklee assistant professor and



Pianist Tigran Hamasyan

acclaimed Ukrainian pianist and composer Vadim Neselovskiy '04, who also performed with the Vadim Neselovskiy Trio.

Additional Middle Eastern Festival performers included Palestinian singer and post-modern musician Amal Markus, and acclaimed musical collective Women of the World, with principles representing India, Italy, Japan, Haiti and the United States. Rounding out the lineup was the Pletenitsa Balkan Choir, a primarily female chorus that encourages cultural exchange through choral and folk musical adaptations, and Berklee World Strings, which showcased the talents of Berklee musicians from Jordan, Spain, Ecuador, Turkey, China, Canada, and the United States, among other countries.





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## Armenian Entries Part of Socially Relevant Film Festival

FILMS, from page 12

beginning in ancient times and everlasting through history.

Today, the Turkish government is busy destroying whatever belongs to the Armenians: bridges, houses, churches...If you go to Turkey, you won't find the same images that were filmed some years ago.

(Trailer: <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6e6u4n>)

"Hot Country, Cold Winter" by David Safarian, Armenia, The Netherlands, Germany, 2016 | 104 minutes, will be screened on Sunday, March 18, at 7:30 pm.

In Armenian and Russian with English subtitles, it is the tale of a man and a woman suffering near-absurd circumstances during a total energy crisis right after the break down of the Soviet Union. Their narratives, recollections, imagination, and dreams are depicted in this powerful narrative feature film dealing with a period of modern history, not so far away from our times.

It received awards for Best Actress and Best Art Director National Film Academy of Armenia, 2016, Best Narrative Feature Film Director Award 19th ARPA International Film Festival 2016 Los Angeles, US, Best Screenplay Award and Special Mention of Jury 13th Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival, and Effulgent Angel Prize 13th Effulgent Angel International Film Festival, 2016 Moscow, Russia.

Visit = <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6dbdg0> for a trailer.

### 'Head Above Water'

Another film that will make its New York premier is "Head Above Water" by Eric Shahinian, US, 2017. A devoted husband is forced to confront his doubts about remaining the caretaker of his wife suffering from Alzheimer's disease. It won the Gold Remi Award Worldfest-Houston International Film



A scene from "Hot Country Cold Winter" by David Safarian



Eric Shahinian, director of "Head Above Water"

Festival, Best Actor Award Sulmona Film Festival and Golden Apricot Award for Best Short Film Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival.

The film will be shown on Wednesday, March 21, at 3:30 p.m. in the "Ageing Gracefully" collection of films.

Among the other 67 officially selected films to be screened in the heart of Greenwich Village, are a diverse mix of four narrative features, 12 documentaries, 40 shorts, 10 VR/360° films and more. There is also a script-writing contest and readings of excerpts from finalist scripts. The films represent 35 countries. Visit [www.ratedsrfilms.org](http://www.ratedsrfilms.org) for schedules, film synopses, and filmmaker bios.

The festival closes on the evening of March 22 with a glittering Awards Ceremony and screening of the winning films at Cinema Village, and party for the filmmakers at Doux Supperclub featuring appearances from International and NYC filmmakers, as well as industry guests and veterans.

Festival Founder and Artistic Director Nora Armani says "We are proud to reach

our fifth annual edition. Our dedication is first and foremost to the filmmaker whose work will otherwise not be seen on major screens. We advocate those filmmakers who choose to tell socially relevant stories instead of resorting to violence and commercial choices."

The festival is proud to be supported by the Left Tilt Fund, The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Fairways Law Firm - Paris, The Puffin Foundation, in addition to sponsorships from the German Consulate General of New York, The Dutch Consulate General, and Armenian organizations such as NAASR, St. Leon Armenian Church, AGBU Performing Arts, AIWA NJ and Armenian Network of America. Industry partners and sponsors include Cinema Libre Studio, Candy Factory, InkTip, Final Draft, Resolution rentals and more. Award trophies are by Michael Aram and Anet Abnous. Hospitality partners are Villanelle Restaurant, Doux Supperclub, and La Colombe Coffee.

For more information about SRFF 2018 events and sponsors, as well as past festival editions, visit [www.ratedsrfilms.org](http://www.ratedsrfilms.org).



## Lark Musical Society Celebrates AMAA Centennial with 'Faith and Love'

CENTENNIAL, from page 12

Conductor Vatsche Barsoumian led the Lark Orchestra, Lark Mastersingers, and musical artists Shoushik Barsoumian (Soprano), Garineh Avakian (Mezzo-soprano), Berj Karazian (Tenor), and Abdiel Gonzalez (Baritone) in a tremendous and moving musical program that exceeded even the high expectations set by the evening's speakers.

The Lark Musical Society, formed and supported by true artists, routinely excels in its beautifully curated and produced programs, and this was no exception. The performance was a wonderful achievement as well a fitting centennial tribute to the AMAA. Multiple ova-

Chamber Series, and other successful musical and artistic endeavors. The first of many collaborations with the Lark Musical Society and the AMAA initiated in 1996 when the Lark Choir was invited to Paris, France to perform during the 150th Anniversary Celebration of the founding of the Armenian Evangelical Church.

In his concert notes, Barsoumian wrote that Lark has a focus on the cultural work of the Armenian people, but drew in this concert from the full canon of Western music. "This seems a fitting emulation of the truly global scale of the AMAA's mission, with its charitable efforts rendered worldwide to communities in need, even as it maintains a focus on enriching the lives,



Doris Melkonian delivers a pre-concert lecture.

tions that followed the finale were well-deserved by all the outstanding artists and musicians who played in this program.

Barsoumian founded the Lark Musical Society, which includes a conservatory, musical education program for children, the Dilijan

both spiritual and physical, of Armenians wherever it can." He concluded, "The spirit of these masterpieces is the spirit behind the good works of the Armenian Missionary Association of America. Long may they continue to serve. Long may they spread their Faith and Love."





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# The Irreverent Genius of Vahe Berberian

By Taleen Babayan

Special to the Mirror Spectator

NEW YORK — It is a challenge to describe Vahe Berberian in one word: playwright, comedian, writer, painter, actor and director have all been used to depict this creative spirit, who has carved a niche in contemporary Armenian theater and art. His scope, however, stretches much further.

Berberian embraced his passion for the written word and the blank canvas from a young age in 1950s Beirut and further sharpened his craft in Los Angeles over the last three decades, where he continues to create art on his own terms. Whether it is his plays, monologues, films, or paintings, his astute observations take center stage, as does his love for the Armenian language.

Entertaining with ease and smarts, Berberian is currently on tour with his sixth monologue, “Ooremn,” which he recently performed to great fanfare for the Greater New York Armenian community. (See related story on Page 1.)

He gave an exclusive interview over breakfast at Café Angelique in Tenafly, NJ, about his latest show, his artistic process and why the arts are more important than ever. His eyes are ever observing — of the bright hue of red hair, of the artwork in the railroad station turned café — but above all, of the mind, heart and soul of the Armenian.

**Taleen Babayan:** Your monologues are humorous, culturally relevant and always receive joyous laughs. Aside from the entertainment aspect, what do you want audiences to take away from performances?

**Vahe Berberian:** First and foremost the entertainment is very important. Second I want to make them think. I believe that it is possible to be intelligent and entertaining at the same time.

**TB:** How does it feel to share your work with audiences? Is it more fulfilling to write or to perform and see the audience reaction?

**VB:** Of course it all depends on the medium. For example, if I’m writing a novel, I really love being on my own and writing at a café. But when you write plays and monologues, it all comes to life only while performing because you can never really assess the work until it is performed. Sometimes while I’m writing I think maybe this isn’t funny at all and then I do it in front of an audience and they roar and then I realize it’s good. When you have an audience, it takes on another dimension.

**TB:** Do you first practice your material in front of people you trust?

**VB:** Very informally. I never tell them because it’s difficult when people sit in front of you in a judgmental state because their acceptance is completely different. No matter how good something is, when you’re asking someone to judge, the mental state is a completely different one than someone who is there to enjoy. But when I do informally practice the material, I don’t tell them. If I have something new and I’m surrounded by friends, I try it out on them and I can tell from the reaction how good or bad it is. Funnily enough, some of my very close friends can tell if I’m trying my material out on them or not. They’ll tell me if it’s funny or inappropriate.

**TB:** Do you sometimes feel like you want to push the envelope further but have to keep an eye on the material because of the more conservative Armenian audience?

**VB:** You know I do. As much as I want to say I don’t. But when I’m performing in front of my own audience in Los Angeles, that’s my hardcore audience. They are there only for me and I can really push the envelope much further than any other community.

**TB:** Do you enjoy meeting Armenians from all around the world? What is a commonality or difference you find within the various communities?

**VB:** The commonalities are always there. This is the

funny thing about us. We constantly harp on the differences, [whether we are Barskahye or Beirutzi or Hayasdantzi] but in the end you realize that what is funny is the fact that we are seriously the same. The differences are so superficial. And the ironic thing is that we think we are different. Probably psychologically we do that to create some kind of distinction. Humans are like that. Person comes from the Latin word Persona, which means mask in theater. So we all wear masks and communities and groups are like that too. We want to wear a mask that differentiates us from others in order to make us feel special.

**TB:** Your parents’ home in Beirut encouraged the arts, theatre and literature. What are your earliest memories of artistic influences in your home?

**VB:** I have to say that our house was always packed with books, paintings and drawings. Both my parents were avid readers and books were everywhere. I used to play hooky from school in order to read. My father was a draftsman and my mother loved painting so I was always surrounded by art.

**TB:** Was it encouraged by your family to pursue the arts?

**VB:** Definitely. We weren’t well off but my mom bought me my first guitar. As I said the books were always there. I had a godfather who was a fascinating man and he used to get me paints and brushes, so from a very young age the arts were in my life. The only thing that my father kept saying was you keep doing many things at the same time, you have to choose one or the other, but I could never do it. I think what it comes



down to is that every art is a form of entertainment. Every art. You’re telling a story. There has to be some kind of narrative in whatever you do. I remember when I was maybe 6 years old I would write a story and then on the other page I would draw and sketch in case you didn’t understand my story.

**TB:** You mentioned working on a novel, what is it about?

**VB:** This is a very new experience for me because although I’ve worked on novels before, this is a period piece and more than half of it happens in 1877 so I had to do a lot of research both about the period and Romania, where it takes place.

**TB:** I read about your family’s tragic experiences during the Armenian Genocide. Do you feel that somehow your comedy is rooted in this inherent despair?

**VB:** Look, I’m not a very happy person. I’m a pessimist in general and I think the reason I do comedy is that I feel the need to do comedy. It’s funny because people ask me in interviews how I find these topics [in my monologues and writing] or when I was a kid I would tell stories that happened to me and people would ask how does this only happen to you? Because you have chosen to do this, your eyes see situations and sometimes it’s not really comical but you see the possibilities for comedy. For example, my wife early on started as a costume designer for theater and we would walk into a used clothing store and I would say there’s nothing. But

she would point things out I didn’t see because that’s her métier; she knows the possibilities if she alters or dyes something. The way she perceives things are different than what I perceive, just like how she won’t see the comical situations that I do.

**TB:** What is your process like not only to write monologues but also for your paintings and playwriting? Do you tackle each medium depending on your inspiration of each project?

**VB:** Most of the time, I work on a few different things at the same time. When I’m in Los Angeles, if you look at my schedule you’ll see studio, writing, performance, but there comes a point where it is almost time for the baby to come out then I don’t do anything else but that certain thing. That’s the moment I know the water has broken and the baby is coming out so I have to leave everything else aside. It’s impossible for me to do anything but this.

**TB:** Do you have a certain level of discipline you adhere to?

**VB:** Absolutely. This whole idea of the bohemian artist is bullshit. Because nothing will get done if you don’t have discipline. Especially with someone like me, who is surrounded by people all the time. When I paint, my studio is full of people, my friends, my theater company. We drink, we smoke, we have fun.

**TB:** It’s interesting you have chosen to write and perform in Armenian, even though you could easily do so in English. Is there a specific reason?

**VB:** Oh yeah. I find performing in Armenian orgasmic. The language turns me on. I love it because when speaks to me in Armenian, I feel like they know my secrets. As Armenians, we have a sense of family no matter where we are because being of the same ethnicity and speaking the same language removes barriers.

**TB:** Did you ever see yourself here? Did you have set goals as an artist or did you remain open to the opportunities you created or that came your way?

**VB:** That’s a very good question. Where I am now, I honestly cannot remember where I thought I would be. I always knew I would write or paint but because I grew up in a fatalistic culture in my mind, success was never an easy thing. So when I thought of a successful painter I always thought of someone who struggles all his life and then he dies and his paintings are sold for astronomical figures. I really couldn’t perceive the idea that it’s possible to be a successful living artist until I started selling and I thought something’s wrong here because it doesn’t work with my concept of the tortured artist. Sometimes you ask yourself, am I a fake? Because that’s not how we were brought up. Hagop Baronian died a poor man. Van Gogh committed suicide. Every single artist I loved and revered, all of them died poor.

**TB:** But you didn’t waver. You knew what it was you wanted to do and you forged your own path.

**VB:** One of the most profound quotes I have read is by Oscar Wilde when he said “I put all my genius into my life. I put only my talent into my

work,” meaning that the most important creation is myself. The rest is nothing compared to yourself, that self you have created.

**TB:** I read you said once, “fall in love with the project..fall in love with the person. Don’t be afraid of pain...it makes you feel alive.” Have emotions always been the driving force behind your creativity and artistry?

**VB:** Absolutely. I have always used this following analogy. Life is a cocktail party. You eat, you drink, you consume to the point where you become sick. The moment of throwing up is the moment of your creation where it’s impossible to keep anything inside you anymore. You know you’re going to get very sick if you don’t throw up. So the artist throws up on the canvas. The writer on the paper. The actor on the stage. It’s emptying everything inside you to the point where you’re cleansed, you’re cathartic then you have to drink again in order to create again.

**TB:** What advice do you have for the next generations of Armenians who want to embrace and pursue the arts but are reluctant to do so since it’s not the most practical vocation?

**VB:** Right now what we need is culture. There are enough people out there who are feeding our stomachs and our pockets. I think we really need people who will nourish us and our brains and feed us culturally. Otherwise no matter how affluent you are, when you have no identity, who cares? Who cares?





ARTS & LIVING

# Narine Tikhikyan-Khachaturyan Lecture at Fresno Museum

FRESNO — Narine Toukhikyan-Khachaturyan, director of the Hovhanness Tumanian Museum of Yerevan, Armenia will be the guest speaker at the Armenian Museum of Fresno on Monday, March 26, starting at 7 p.m.

Toukhikyan-Khachaturyan, was the curator of Eclipse Exhibit in Armenia. Being under pressure from the old guard, the exhibition was shut down in fall 2017 after being on display for only three weeks.

She will provide new findings about the renowned author, nicknamed “The Poet of All Armenians,” Hovhanness Tumanian, and reflect on his four sons; one of them was killed in Van, and the other three were exiled and murdered during Stalin’s Purge.

A revised addition of Eclipse, with its impact on diaspora and the Armenian Church will be on display in Armenian and English languages.

Tumanian is considered one of the foremost writers of the Armenian literature. Through his writings he was able to immortalize some of the most ethnographic customs and traditions of the Armenian culture. As the 9th, and the youngest child of a village priest, he grew up in a one-room-house in the highlands of Lori region of Armenia. During and following the Genocide he and his family were very active in providing shelter to the refugees and orphans. He associated closely with our national heroes, such as General Antranik Ouzanyan in their struggle for independence in 1918.

Toukhikyan-Khachaturyan was born in Yerevan. She is a graduate of the Philological faculty of the Yerevan State University. She has worked in TV productions and is the author of different TV projects. Her hobby is translations. She is the author of many articles published in

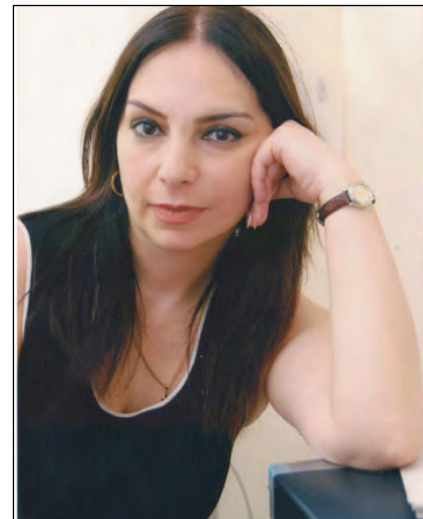
Armenian and international journals and newspapers. Several books are edited by her. Since 2007 she is managing the Tumanian Museum. Since 2011 member of ICOM. In 2013 she was one of the 5 winners of ICOM- CECA ‘best practice’ awards. The museum educational project that won the world competition was called “Three apples fell from heaven.”

This is the first museum in Armenia that invested new technologies in its activity.

After this event, on Wednesday, April 4, at 6 p.m. the museum will host a talk by William C. Rempel, about his new book, The Gambler: How Penniless Dropout Kirk Became The Greatest Deal Maker in Capitalist History.

Rempel is a veteran investigative reporter and editor with 36 experience at the Los Angeles Times.

For more information, visit [www.armof.org](http://www.armof.org)



Narine Tikhikyan-Khachaturyan

# Good, Not-So-Clean Fun With Vahe Berberian

COMEDY, from page 1

Conveying his astute ability to grasp observations of even the simplest everyday circumstances and situations, Berberian analyzed human relationships and interactions through the lens of comedy, relating to both Armenians and the world at large. (See interview with Berberian on page 14.)

Hilda Hartounian, chair of the TCA, welcomed guests and gave an update on upcoming TCA-related events and activities, before introducing Berberian to the stage.

“Vahe, who has many talents, is someone very familiar to all of us,” said Hartounian. “We are so happy he is here among us today to perform his latest monologue.”

Berberian debuted “Ooremn,” his sixth monologue, last September in Glendale. He is currently on tour with his show, delighting audiences across the country and overseas. Fresh off performances in Lebanon and Canada, Berberian will continue to present his show to Armenian communities around the globe.



Guests enjoying the Vahe Berberian show

“I appreciate Vahe Berberian’s good humor and his jokes,” said guest Jirair Khoroizian. “His comedy is hilarious and daring.”

“I enjoyed a lot of laughs,” said Andrew

Saganda who attended the performance with his family. “It’s a wonderful time and perfect to watch with your parents as well.”

The Beirut-born Berberian, a Los Angeles resident for the past three decades, has pursued the arts through various channels, including writing, painting, acting and directing, among many other modes of creativity. His earlier popular monologues, aptly named, “Yevaylen,” “Nayev,” “Dagaveen,” “Sagayn” and “Yete,” each probe into man’s existence, all the while entertaining his international audience.

“It was honor to host a multi-talented artist as renowned as Vahe Berberian,” said Hartounian after the show. “It’s always a privilege to organize events such as this that make us proud to be Armenian.”

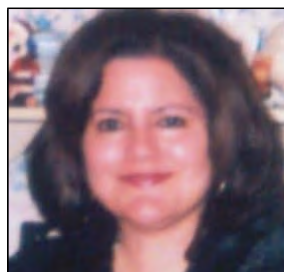
Photos by Anahid Kaprelian



Some members of the TCA Executive Board with Vahe Berberian at the Clinton Inn, from left, Harout Chatmajian, Marie Zokian, Vahe Berberian, Hilda Hartounian, Hagop Vartivarian and Barkev Kalayjian.



Taleen Setrakian, Anoush Gulian, Zarig Baghdadlian and Jirair Khoroizian



## Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

### Roasted Cauliflower, Lemon and Onions

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1 large head cauliflower, cut into florets or wedges (about 8 cups)
- 2 large lemons, thinly sliced
- 1 medium red onion, diced or sliced
- 1/4 cup olive oil or grape seed oil or 5 tablespoons melted unsalted butter
- 4-5 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 tablespoon grated lemon rind
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon kosher or sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon each white or black pepper, paprika, and crushed red pepper flakes (to taste)
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 cup fresh bread crumbs or Panko bread crumbs (optional)
- Chopped fresh parsley and thyme leaves
- Crumbled feta cheese, blue cheese or grated Parmesan cheese

#### PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.  
Toss cauliflower, lemons and onions with the oil, garlic, lemon rind, lemon juice, and spices in a large bowl.  
Place on a greased baking sheet lined with foil and roast until golden, about 25 to 28 minutes, tossing, or until tender when pierced with a knife. Add the bread crumbs, toss, drizzle with olive oil, and roast 3-5 minutes longer, if desired. Remove from oven.  
Transfer to a bowl or platter, top with fresh chopped parsley and thyme, and sprinkle with cheese. Serve with Italian vinaigrette dressing or yogurt on the side.  
Serves 4-6.

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





ARTS & LIVING

C A L E N D A R

CALIFORNIA

**MARCH 16-17 — Conference, “Celebration of 400 Years of Armenian-American Heritage, 1618-2018,”** at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, Mission Hills. Co-sponsored by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum (AEM), the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (AGMI) in Yerevan, Armenia, and the California State University Northridge Armenian Studies Program.

FLORIDA

**APRIL 8 — St. David Armenian Church of Boca Raton will celebrate the 30th Anniversary** of its Consecration on Sunday, with a Celebratory Banquet in the Church Mardigian Hall at 1 p.m., presided by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian. All are invited to this special occasion. Donations for adults \$45, children under 14, \$10 Contact the church office 561 994-2335, or Sonig Kradjian 607 727-8786 and Emma Pilikyan 561 414-1182.

**JANUARY 20-27, 2019 — Armenian Heritage Cruise XXII Western Carribean Cruise aboard Royal Caribbean’s** Allure of the Seas. Traveling to Nassau/Cozumel/Roatan/Costa Maya. Cabin rates starting from \$949 per person based on double occupancy, including port charges and ACAA registration fee. Government taxes of \$137.45 are additional. Armenian entertainment, cultural presentations, festival day, tavlou and belote tournaments and much more. Call Travel Group International 561-447-0750 or 866-447-0750 ext. 108. Contact person Jaïne.

ILLINOIS

**APRIL 15 — Book presentation by Adrienne Alexanian (editor) on her father’s memoir Forced into Genocide:** Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army, Sunday, 3 p.m. sharp. The Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center 9603 Woods Drive Skokie, Il. 60077—RSVP (847) 967-4800. There are no other books in literature on this aspect of the Genocide. The book also contains rare documents and pictures which will be shown during a power point presentation. Book signing during reception.

MASSACHUSETTS

**MARCH 18 — Book Presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian, Forced into Genocide, Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army,** Sunday, 12:30 p.m., Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. This book is a riveting memoir of Yervant Edward Alexanian, an eye-witness to the massacre and dislocation of his family and countrymen in Ottoman Turkey during WW I, while he served as a conscript in the Turkish Army. Reception and Book Signing to follow Presentation. All are welcome! Log onto <http://www.htaac.org/calendar/event/527/> for further information.

**MARCH 22 — 7:30 p.m.: Siobhan Nash-Marshall, “The Sins of the Fathers: Turkish Denialism and the Armenian Genocide,”** Thursday, at the NAASR Center, 395 Concord Ave., Belmont. The program is open to the public. Contact: [hq@naasr.org](mailto:hq@naasr.org) or 617-489-1610.

**MARCH 23 — Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston (SNDC) is honored to share the stage with world renowned and beloved singer from Armenia Sirusho,** appearing live for the first time in Boston, at the prestigious Berklee Performance Center, 136 Mass. Ave., Boston. Start time: 8 pm. Tickets may be purchased online at [www.berklee.edu/events/Sirusho](http://www.berklee.edu/events/Sirusho) or by calling 617-747-2261. To avoid online fees, you may also purchase your tickets in person at the Berklee Box Office, 10 am – 6pm. For more info or questions, email [sirusho-boston@gmail.com](mailto:sirusho-boston@gmail.com) . You may also follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/events/162986714315959/](https://www.facebook.com/events/162986714315959/) Reserve your tickets for this memorable cultural evening of Armenian song and dance.

**APRIL 8 — Annual Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture,** Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway,

Boston, Sunday, 7 am Rain Date: Sunday, April 15

**APRIL 10 — Armenian Business Network (ABN) Winter Business Networking event.** Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. The Sheraton Commander, Cambridge. Stephen Demirjian, guest speaker from the Achieve Institute shares methods on creating greater personal and work life success. This event is free of charge. RSVP: [armenianbusinessnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:armenianbusinessnetwork@gmail.com)

**APRIL 11 — A recap on the status of the documentary project “Neighbors in Memory,”** accompanied by a panel of community members shedding light on the state of Armenian-Turkish relations as they live and witness it. Wednesday, 7 p.m., Capitol Theatre, 204 Mass. Ave., Arlington. Screenings, discussions and refreshments. For more information: [gonca59@gmail.com](mailto:gonca59@gmail.com)

**APRIL 14 — Saturday, St. James Great Gatsby Gala! A Roarin’ 20s Celebration!** Live Jazz & Armenian Music, Passed Hors D’oeuvres, Mezza and Dessert Stations and more. St. James Armenian Church – 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, 8 p.m., Tickets \$100. Purchase online at [www.stjameswatertown.org](http://www.stjameswatertown.org) or contact [info@stthagop.com](mailto:info@stthagop.com).

**APRIL 20-21 — Commemorating the 103rd anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, first at the State House,** on Friday, April 20, 9 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., Boston. A free reception will follow. Then on Saturday, April 21, a Commemoration at the Park, 3 to 5 p.m. Further details will follow. For more information, visit [bostonagcc@gmail.com](mailto:bostonagcc@gmail.com).

**APRIL 21 – Annual Procession and Raising of the Armenian Flag** at Lowell City Hall in commemoration of the 103rd anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Procession to be led by the Lowell Armenian-American Veterans Honor Guard. Participants should meet at the corner of Merrimack and John Sts. in Lowell at 9:30 a.m. Sponsored by the Armenian National Committee, Merrimack Valley (ANCMV) with the participation of all area Armenian Churches and Organizations.

**MAY 5 — Saturday, Kentucky Derby Watch Party,** Fun and festivities to support Armenia Tree Project, At the elegant/historic Gore Place in Waltham. Details to follow.

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

**May 5 — Celebrate Public Art during Artweek on Saturday at the Park, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston,** 1 p.m., World Labyrinth Day: Walk As One in peace & harmony with people in cities and towns worldwide including the labyrinth in Gyumri. At 12:45 p.m., introduction to Walking a Labyrinth, 1:30 pm - Reception to View the 2018 Configuration of the Abstract Sculpture. Remarks: Sarah Baker, editor-in-chief, Art New England magazine. Introduced by Lucas Cowan, Public Art Curator, Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy. Tea & Desserts, hosted by MEM Tea Imports & Eastern Lamejun Bakers. RSVP appreciated. [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**MAY 6 — “Celebrating 400 Hundred Years of Armenian American Heritage: 1618-2018” Exhibition and the launching of Armenian Legacy in America: A 400-Year Heritage** by Dr. Hayk Demoyan in an illustrated talk. Other speakers include Robert Mirak, Barbara J. Merguerian and Nubar Afeyan. Sunday, 3 p.m. Admission free and open to the public. Book sale and reception to follow. Organized by Armenian Cultural Foundation, co-sponsored by the Amaras Art Alliance, and National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, 441 Mystic Street (Route 3), Arlington. Tel. (781)-646-3090 [armeniancultural.fdn@gmail.com](mailto:armeniancultural.fdn@gmail.com)

**MAY 11 — Welcome His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians,** to Celebrate with Rev. Father Mampre A. Kouzouian on the 60th Anniversary of his Ordination to the Priesthood. Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Hrashapar Service in the Sanctuary followed by a Celebration in the Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall. Details forthcoming.

**MAY 19 — Hai Guin Scholarship Association Annual Luncheon & Fashion Show,** Saturday, 11:30 a.m., at Montvale Plaza, Stoneham. Fashions by Soft Surroundings of Chestnut Hill, MA. Tickets: \$60 per person. Please call Lisa at 781-729-6333; Becky at 508-651-8893;or Marilyn at 978-818-9098 for tickets.

**JUNE 6 — Tea & Tranquility, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston, Wednesday, 5-6:30 p.m.** Meet &

Greet! Enjoy Tea & Desserts hosted by MEM Tea Imports and The Bostonian Hotel. Walk the Labyrinth. For first-time walkers introduction to walking a labyrinth at 5:30 p.m. RSVP appreciated. [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**JUNE 28 — Under a Strawberry Moon, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston, Thursday,** 8:30– 9:30 p.m. Meet & Greet! Moonlit Labyrinth Walk. Enjoy chocolate-dipped strawberries, hosted by Vicki Lee’s and Ice Teas, hosted by MEM Tea Imports. RSVP appreciated. [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**JULY 18 — Tea & Tranquility, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston. Wednesday, 5- 6:30 p.m.** Meet & Greet! Enjoy Tea & Desserts hosted by MEM Tea Imports and The Bostonian Hotel. Walk the Labyrinth. For first-time walkers introduction to walking a labyrinth at 5:30 p.m. RSVP appreciated. [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**AUGUST 15 — Tea & Tranquility, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston, Wednesday,** 5-6:30 p.m. Meet & Greet! Enjoy Tea & Desserts hosted by MEM Tea Imports and The Bostonian Hotel. Walk the Labyrinth. For first-time walkers introduction to walking a labyrinth at 5:30 p.m. RSVP appreciated. [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

**SEPTEMBER 16 — Sunday Afternoon at the Park for Families & Friends. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway.** 2-4 p.m. Enjoy Boston Hye Guys Ensemble with Ron Sahatjian, clarinet; Joe Kouyoumjian, oud; Art Chingris, percussion. RSVP appreciated. [hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org](mailto:hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org)

MICHIGAN

**MARCH 22 — Talk by Adrienne Alexanian on her father’s memoir, Forced into Genocide: Memoir of an Armenian** Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army. Thursday, 7 p.m., Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus, 28123 Orchard Lake Road Farmington Hills, MI 48334. The book presents a unique account of the Armenian genocide and was translated from the Armenian and edited by Adrienne Alexanian. RSVP by March 20. 248-553-2400x112 or [rsvp@holocaustcenter.org](mailto:rsvp@holocaustcenter.org). Free with admission or membership. Book signing during reception.

NEW JERSEY

**SEPTEMBER 30 — Save the date! Armenia Fund USA and Ardzagang Armenian TV** are proud to present Artash Asatryan and Band, guest singer Grisha Asatryan, from Armenia! The concert is dedicated to the Armenia’s and Artsakh’s Independence Celebration. Don’t miss the performance by the son and grandson of the legendary Armenian singer Aram Asatryan. Proceeds will benefit Fruitful Artsakh Project. 4 p.m. Location: Bergen PAC, 30 N Van Brunt St, Englewood.

NEW YORK

**MARCH 18 — 6 p.m.: Armenian film screenings in Socially Relevant Film Festival, “Armenians of the World”** (Director: Carmen Labaki) and Hot Country, Cold Winter (Director: David Safarian). At Cinéma Village 22 E 12th St, NY, NY. Co-sponsored by AGBU Performing Arts, NAASR, St. Leon Armenian Church, and SOAR. For more information visit [www.ratedsrfilms.org](http://www.ratedsrfilms.org).

**MARCH 28 — Taner Akçam, “Killing Orders: Talat Pasha’s Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide,”** at Columbia University. 6:00 p.m. Co-sponsored by the Columbia Armenian Center and NAASR. (Venue TBA.) Further details to follow.

**APRIL 21 - MAY 13 — Off-Broadway production by Pan Asian Repertory Theatre of Joyce Van Dyke’s play, DAYBREAK:** the lyrical story of two Armenian women friends, survivors from 1915, who are transported with their families into the 21st century future. Performances at the Beckett Theatre (on Theatre Row), 410 W. 42nd St., New York, Tuesdays through Sundays; weekend matinees. Discount tickets for seniors, students and groups. For tickets and information: [www.telecharge.com](http://www.telecharge.com) or call (212) 239-6200. For discount tickets: [www.telecharge-offers.com](http://www.telecharge-offers.com) or call (212) 947-8844. Or contact the theatre: [info@panasianrep.org](mailto:info@panasianrep.org), (212) 868-4030.



## COMMENTARY

## COMMENTARY

# Is a Political Storm Gathering over Armenia?

By Edmond Y. Azadian

As Armenia's Parliament continues to strip the newly-created office of the president of any and all meaningful powers and as the media and the opposition forces continue to debate when Armen Sarkissian gave up his British citizenship, one is reminded of the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to the Ottoman forces of Turkish Sultan Mohamed II. According to legend, the capital fell while the Byzantine Court was debating a very crucial topic: how many angels could stand on the point of a pin.

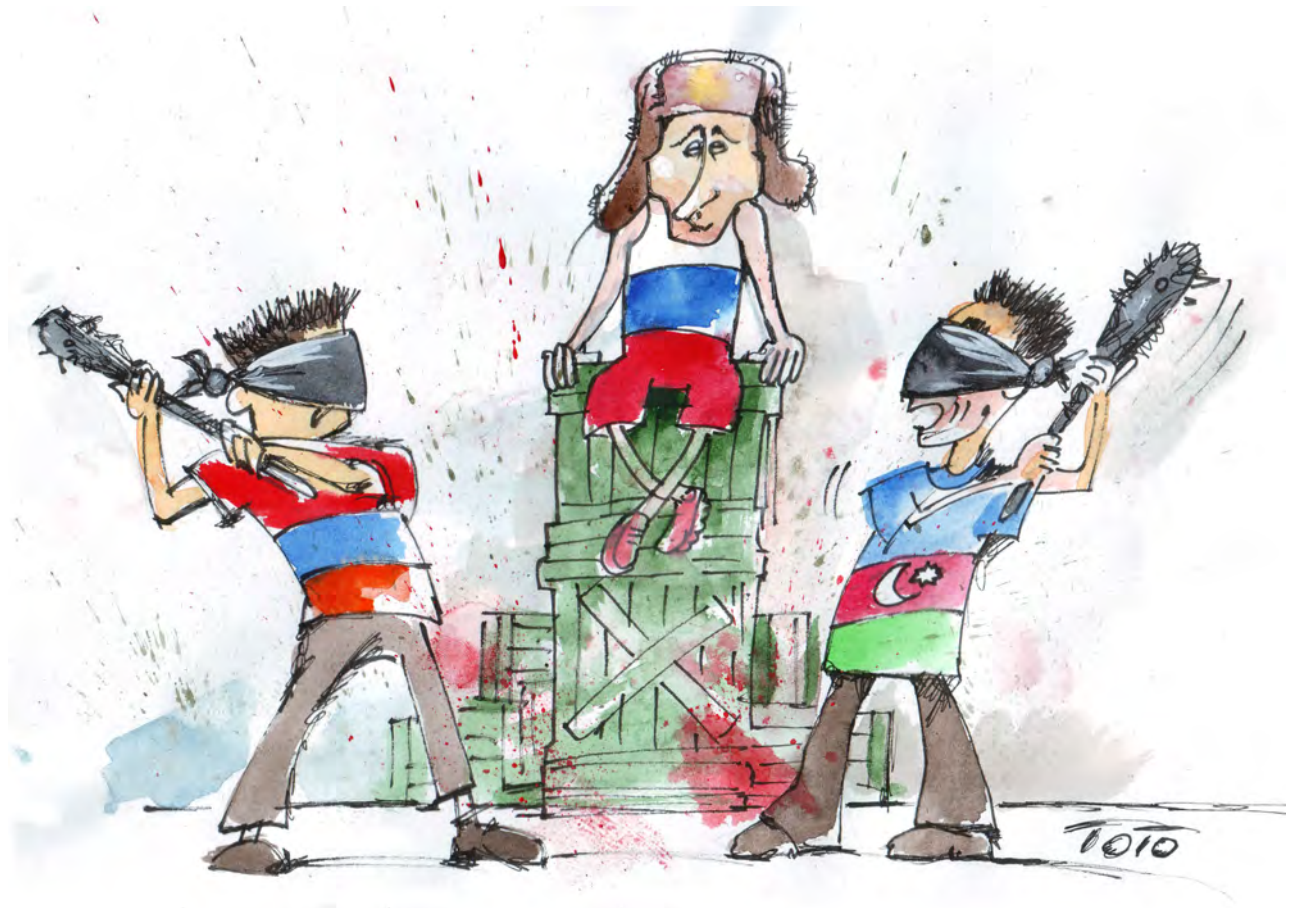
While the story might serve as a very effective metaphor, it sounds as if it is an apocryphal one, because that analogy is more relevant to 17th-century theology and also, because Byzantine Emperor Constantine and his courtiers were in a struggle to save their lives, as the Turks had given enough warnings by bombarding the city for a long time. To this day, there is scant evidence about the fate of the emperor; some believe he was killed during fighting while other witnesses vouch for his suicide.

ations will be conducted. Pundits are wondering if this is a war strategy or whether Baku has finally realized that there may not be a military solution to this thorny issue.

Armenia's Maj. Gen. Asdvadzadour Petrosyan is wondering what is behind Azerbaijan's war games. "Under the guise of war games, a concentration of forces may take place. The second state is the formation of those forces in preparation of an eventual war. We should leave no stone unturned and be ready," he said.

On the heels of Aliyev's war rhetoric and actual military buildup, an announcement from Moscow renders the situation more alarming. Indeed, Russian Colonel-General Anatoly Sidorov, who is the chief of the allied Staff of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), made a stern announcement to Tert.am, that Nagorno Karabakh or Artsakh is not a member state of CSTO; hence that body does not have the authority to offer any aid to that country in case of renewed military operations.

Why was this announcement made at this particular moment? Is it a coincidence or does it indicate a confluence of factors towards the development of a dangerous situation down the road?



Continuing with the deviation from our own topic, it is interesting to remember how the Ottoman army succeeded in breaking the defenses of the city. A Hungarian engineer called Urban or Orban, perhaps one of the ancestors of Hungary's current Prime Minister Victor Orban, who delivered Azeri murderer Ramil Safarov into the loving arms of Azeri President Ilham Aliyev to a hero's welcome in Baku, had designed a new and powerful cannon and had offered it to the Byzantine ruler, who refused to buy it because of a lack of funding. Engineer Orban then sold his invention to the Ottoman army, where it played a fateful part in its victory.

Returning to our metaphor, while Armenia is furtively engaged in minutiae, the world around it is becoming more ominous. A rapid succession of events does not favor the country at the moment.

The Russian-Turkish rapprochement is at Armenia's expense inter alia. It has global ramifications. Turkey, as a major power, can play a balancing act. Its membership in NATO is a valuable asset for the West, which cannot afford to sever its ties no matter how strained they may become. And using that situation as a point of leverage, Turkey can move towards the West's adversaries, namely Russia and Iran, with impunity.

Eli Lake, in an opinion piece in Bloomberg, warns Turkey that "the US should make clear to ersatz allies that betrayal has consequences," to no avail.

On the other hand, Russia, which is suffering from the NATO squeeze and Western sanctions, would compromise many issues just to draw a wedge in the ranks of NATO members. Among the compromises may be Armenia's fate. Developments are indicating that it may be the case even as an unintended consequence.

After Aliyev's threatening speech staking his claim on Yerevan and Sevan, Azerbaijan is engaged in war games on Armenia's borders. To quell suspicions, Azeri Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov has announced that after the elections in Armenia and Azerbaijan, more concrete and substantive negoti-

As Armenia leans towards Europe to the chagrin of Moscow, this may serve as a message to Yerevan.

Turkey has the leverage to carry its balancing act between the two antagonistic camps but Armenia has limited choices to emulate that policy.

The general also made some remarks regarding Russia's arms sales to Azerbaijan, bordering on cynicism. Addressing the issue of Russian-Azerbaijan arms trade, Sidorov said that he is confident that Azerbaijan will purchase weaponry from another state should Russia suspend sales. That being true, whether Moscow sells arms to Azerbaijan or not is a policy statement. And that policy is very clear for everyone to see.

President Serzh Sargsyan declared the Protocols drawn up between Armenia and Turkey in 2009 null and void. It is a significant question whether that move was coordinated with Moscow or not in light of Russian-Turkish cooperation in the region on many critical issues. The answer can cut both ways. If it was coordinated, then Moscow would have one extra political asset to deal with Turkey. If it was not, then that move would aggravate the situation more and thus lead General Sidorov to make his announcements at this point in time.

The upcoming Francophonie conference in Yerevan and Armenia's intensifying relations with the European Union and individual European countries may be developing at the expense of Moscow's patience with Armenia, which it considers a vassal state. At what point would Moscow's patience run out and thus give the green light to Baku to another skirmish with Armenia?

Sidorov's message has political connotations. Why make a statement on an obvious situation? And the statement sounds hollow within the context of the Armenia-Azerbaijan standoff. It is obvious that if war breaks out, it will start from Karabakh and it will be because of Karabakh. Excluding that potential in the strategic partnership between Armenia and Russia is a very ominous development which casts a dark pall over the Russian military presence in Armenia.

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## COMMENTARY

# New Constitution: The Promised Democracy Is Yet another Defeat



By Philippe Raffi Kalfayan

Recent news from Armenia is rather distressing. We witnessed the selection of a single candidate and his election as President of the Republic of Armenia by the sole will of the Prince. Choosing the prime minister will take place only after April 9, when the current president's term will end, and Parliament will have eight days to propose candidates and elect one. Already, the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) has announced that it supports the principle of an open and nominal ballot, which is a considerable means of pressure on the deputies. The votes of the Republican Party and those of its ally, the Dashnak Party, form a majority at the Parliament and that leaves little doubt about their candidate's election. In the run-up to joining the coalition, the ARF insisted on the necessity to reform the constitution and strengthen democratic governance through transition from a semi-presidential regime to a parliamentary one. The present scenario comes to prove that democracy has once more been defeated. In addition, it perpetuates the contempt against the citizens, weakens the image of Armenia on the international arena, and weakens its leaders, including the new president, domestically and abroad.

## A president with a considerably affected legitimacy

The Minister of Justice, who led all the legislative drafting efforts to comply with the new constitution, says Armenia considers credible the statement of President-elect Armen Sarkissian that he renounced his British citizenship in 2011 and adds that no further confirmation would be needed, in any case, from another country because Armenia is a sovereign state. This statement is not only an affront to the good sense of the whole Armenian nation, it is also characteristic of the opacity of political life in Armenia, and it is, above all, a thinly-veiled admission that the elected president does not satisfy one of the requirements of the new Constitution: to have been a citizen only of the Republic of Armenia for the last six years. A quick analysis supports that assertion: (1) in 2011, it is unlikely that Armen Sarkissian could foresee that the new Constitution would be adopted in 2015 and that it would be chosen by President Serzh Sargsyan in 2017; (2) who can believe for a moment that he renounced his British citizenship in 2011 and convinced Prince Charles to visit Armenia in 2013, a chain of events that would have been shocking to say the least for the British Crown? (3) Having lived in Britain for the last 30 years (with the exception of the period when he was Prime Minister), he is likely to return to live in the UK sooner or later.

A coalition of NGO's also reacted on March 5 to the news about the failure of new president "to dispel the doubts about his citizenship" (Read Transparency statement).

Lawyer Vahé Grigoryan supports a more daring analysis, which relates to the process of electing the new president (see <http://www.ilur.am/news/view/66500.html>; <http://www.ilur.am/news/view/66627.html>; <http://www.ilur.am/news/view/66818.html>). He considers that the new Constitution is not yet in force, and that consequently the election of the President should have been in accordance with the terms of the 2005 Constitution, namely by the direct vote of the population, and not by not by Parliament, which would have exceeded its constitutional powers as defined in 2005.

Whatever the angle of analysis, and whatever his personal qualifications and skills, which are not in question, the new president starts his mandate with a handicap: an illegitimate election. Moreover, Britain's diplomatic silence on the status of his citizenship can become a weapon that can be used against him. Domestically it can reduce his ability to maneuver compared to his predecessors while internationally, in terms of foreign policy, it poses an even bigger threat.

## Sovereignty for the People, not the State

Despite the continuously alarming diagnosis that has been repeated throughout the last 25 years of the Third Republic of Armenia, the population hemorrhage continues and endangers the foundations of the state. In the wake of constitutional reforms adopted in December 2015, the distressing spectacle of the election of a single candidate for the presidency, under questionable eligibility conditions, by the Armenian Parliament, the concentration of all executive and legislative powers in the hands of the future prime minister, the hidden control of the judiciary. For example, is it conceivable in a lawful state for an attorney, a member of the Bar Council, to be a partner in a company with a High Magistrate of the Court of Cassation and a Bankruptcy Judge? Lawyers defending political prisoners are caught between multiple disciplinary measures instituted by their Chamber's President and the new law that allows judges to directly sanction lawyers, making the performance of their duties all the more challenging economic and technical wise, with the aim of discouraging them. The overwhelmingly harsh treatment of the most radical political opponents, such as the members of the Founding Parliament, manifests the political sickness of Armenia. The propaganda of Armenian organizations and media in diaspora cannot change this cruel reality.

The disregard for the citizens is total: the economic and social conditions are such for the vast majority that everything is for sale, including the ballot papers, whether on national elections [see the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) reports for the last legislative elections and Public Forum Armenia (PFA) report for the constitutional referendum of December 2015 or on professional [the website of the Bar of Armenia mentions the financing by an Armenian sponsor of the diaspora of annual fees of hundreds of registered lawyers; this measure is unbecoming of a lawyer because it is an attack on his independence and on the very foundations of the profession. In countries where lawyers cannot fund their fees, the bar grants exemptions] or partisan elections. The clientelism in such a social environment is another form of contempt for human conscience.

The state of war with Azerbaijan and the aggressive and hateful behavior of the latter towards Armenia seems to be an effective argument to silence the diaspora on the domestic political life by brandishing its threat to national security, but it no longer interferes with the families' willingness to leave the country and protect their children as they approach the age of conscription.

The famous French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789 noted in its preamble that "ignorance, oblivion, or contempt for human rights are the only cause of public misfortune and of government corruption." It was not until 1948 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that the community of states, through the United Nations, established conventions and international pacts. They have become essential legal and political instruments. They are the foundation of the rule of law. The state is recognized as the legally obliged subject and guarantor of their implementation, but the universal principles belong to the citizens and become weapons against the abuses of those who hold the powers.

It is worth remembering, as does the Constitution of the United States of America, that the people are sovereign and not the state: "We the People of the United States ... do ordain and establish this Constitution ..."

The Universal Declaration went further and gave birth to the right to rebellion. The preamble "considers it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law."

## Virtuous Yet Flawed UN Discourse

The absence of democracy and respect for human rights refers to a certain form of structuring and formation of the state, which reflects the balance of forces and the assertion of arbitrariness.

The temptation of relativisation with Turkey and Azerbaijan in terms of human rights records is easy but not acceptable because the issue at stake is neither more nor less than the political survival of the country and its security. Some denounce human rights as a weapon used by Western states and international NGOs, and complain that there are double standards. There are many both in Armenia and in the Diaspora who regard human rights as superfluous and prefer a priority focus on economic development. The first statement contains some truth and is debatable, but is this the essential? The second statement shows an unawareness that economic, social and cultural rights are "inseparable, interdependent, and interrelated" with civil and political rights. The World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 enshrined this principle. Thoughtful observers know, as an example, that an Armenian entrepreneur, from Armenia or from the Diaspora, has no chance to defend his rights fairly if he is confronted with an adversarial dispute with one of the oligarchic clans that reign over the economy.

As a result of a total mistrust in the institutions and indifference to political life, citizens developed a survival reflex that is deeply individualistic and materialistic. These injustices and disparities generate individual and collective violence. The small size of the country adds to the political, economic and social pressures as well as fears of violence, especially in the provinces. The individual prefers to negotiate rather than confront. Human life has a price in prosecutors' offices, even if this subject is taboo in Armenia. This observation is certainly dark but it is reality. And finally, there is the issue of emigration.

International aid does not solve corruption, but on the contrary, in its current form, feeds it. Tens of millions of dollars and euros are being invested unabated in justice reforms, human rights training and the establishment of the rule of law, by USAID and EUROPAID, did not help reversing the trend but just enrich Armenian civil servants and some offshore consulting companies under the tolerant eye of these international institutions.

## Create National Cohesion to Better Deal with External Threats

The recent speeches of the Armenian Foreign Minister and President before the UN and European Assemblies promoting human rights principles are noteworthy and laudable, but what about their effective application in Armenia itself?

There is no alternative to the establishment of the rule of law in Armenia and the restoration of the sovereignty of the people. It is a small state, without energy resources, heavily indebted, without prospects for economic development at the current rate

of emigration. Armenia is under the influence of the great powers; the question of Nagorno-Karabakh and its latent conflict is weighing on its diplomatic relations and on foreign investments. It is the vital interest of the Republic of Armenia to mobilize and hold together its citizens and the Diaspora around a democratic, just and sovereign society project. Domestic peace, based on values to which the whole nation adheres, is the unique remedy to economic welfare and effective ability to counter external threats.

Successive country leaders failed in this mission for different reasons and circumstances. Today it is no longer possible to ignore it. The organizations of the diaspora as well as some personalities selected as interfaces by the Armenian government turn a blind eye, hiding behind the principle of non-interference in the domestic politics of Armenia. We also witness indifference, complacency and even complicity, not to mention the personal interests of some.

The good will of associations and individuals in the diaspora, who engage selflessly, without waiting for any reward of their actions, is not questioned, but those people must face the obvious: bright projects and good intentions are not enough to stem the emigration of the population.

The actions of the commando group Sasna Tzrer and its deadly results are in itself regrettable [the circumstances of the deaths of the three police officers are still unclear], it is nonetheless understandable. It was an expression of rebellion, although one may question if the undefined criteria of tyranny and oppression were met or not. Armenians of the diaspora who have allowed themselves to judge these men, many of whom are veterans or heroes of the Karabakh war, had absolutely no right to do so; only the people living in Armenia can express themselves on this subject and they did it either by expressing their sympathy or by keeping quiet for the majority. The repression of the government was all the more strong and arbitrary against the political leaders of this movement and its supporters.

Remarkably, the murderers of March 1, 2008 demonstrators have still not been arrested and the commissioners of the attack on parliament on October 27, 1999 were never brought to justice. Meanwhile, the public prosecutor demands that Jirayr Sefilyan, Garo Yeghnyukian, Gevorg Safarian, be prosecuted, seeking long prison sentences for their vehement criticism of the regime and their desire to put an end to it by organizing mass protests in 2015 or resisting the police (Safarian case).

Whichever scenario is to be played in April, this article is an appeal to the current and future leaders of Armenia and to all political forces to reconsider the mode of governance, to bring new political leadership from inside and outside Armenia, and to free, on the occasion of the implementation of the new constitution, all political prisoners.

(Philippe Raffi Kalfayan is a columnist for the *Mirror-Spectator*. He is an international legal expert, the former secretary general of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), an associate researcher at the Paris Human Rights Center at the University of Paris 2 Pantheon Assas.)

## LETTERS

### A Quandary or Amot Eh?

To The Editor:

Thank you for highlighting the vital issue of gender selection abortion in Armenia, "We Lose 1,400 Girls a Year. Who Will Our Boys Marry?: Armenia's Quandary" (Suzanne Moore, 3/3/18). This article presents some "progress" in gender equality, expressing the efforts made to engage the church and social services to decrease abortions of female babies. Allow me to differ.

Exhorting Armenian priests, "You are clergymen...The word is your weapon" sounds potent. But the word of God has no power for you, unless you are surrendered to the Lord, and it is only a sword if God wields it through you. If Armenian priests really believed that they are accountable to God, they would fall on the floor and repent of betraying the most basics in the faith. "Thou shalt not kill" would be their heart cry to the people, prompted by God Himself.

"Getting the church on your side, along with the government and civil society is quite something." The true "church" stands to represent God, calling others to believe and join into the Body of Christ. Would Jesus Christ work alongside the Armenian government and social groups to equalize abortion? Is the Holy Spirit present in abortion clinics hoping that the operation is 'gender neutral'?

It is a lost and darkened society that strives to improve and qualify sin. "Everyone stresses this is not being for or against abortion....The right to abortion is an achievement of civilization." An epidemic in Armenia for many years, it is not uncommon for Armenian women to have 20 abortions during their lifetime.

Armenian clergy working toward gender neutral abortions and, moreover, believing as the world does that this is a real accomplishment, are most depraved.

Lisa Stepanian  
New York, NY





## COMMENTARY



## My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## International Legal Expert Affirms Artsakh's Right of Self-Determination

A colloquium was held on February 27, 2018, at the European Parliament in Brussels on the legal right of self-determination for Nagorno-Karabagh (Artsakh). It was hosted by European Parliament deputies Michèle Rivasi (Verts/A LE) and Lars Adaktusson (EPP); and co-organized by the Armenian Legal Center for Justice and Human Rights, Tufenkian Foundation, and the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy.

The speakers at the colloquium were: Dr. Alfred de Zayas, a UN Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; Dr. Paul Williams, Professor of Law, American University Washington College of Law and co-founder of Public International Law & Policy Group; Dr. Sergey Markedonov, Associate Professor at Russian State University; Armine Aleksanyan, Deputy Foreign Minister of Artsakh Republic; and moderator Giro Manoyan, Board Member of the Armenian Legal Center for Justice and Human Rights.

Prof. Alfred de Zayas started his legal argument by quoting from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which stipulate that “All peoples have the right of self-determination.”

Furthermore, de Zayas emphasized that according to the two UN Covenants, “duty bearers of the right of self-determination are all States parties to the Covenants, who are not merely prohibited from interfering with the exercise of the

right, but ‘shall promote’ its realization proactively.... They must not only respect the right, but implement it. Moreover in modern international law, self-determination is an erga omnes [towards everyone] commitment stipulated in numerous articles of the UN Charter and in countless Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The empowerment of peoples to enjoy human rights without discrimination and to exercise a degree of self-government is crucial for national and international stability. Otherwise, a significant potential for conflict remains.”

Significantly, Professor de Zayas stressed: “Even though self-determination has emerged as a jus cogens [compelling law] right, superior to many other international law principles, including territorial integrity, it is not self-executing.” Among “legitimate claimants to the right of self-determination,” Professor de Zayas included the Kurds, Sahraouis, Palestinians, Kashmiris, Igbo of Biafra, and Tamils of Sri Lanka. He also mentioned as examples “the Russian-Ukrainian entities of Lugansk and Donetsk, the Republic of Pridnestrovia (Transnistria-Moldavia), the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh), Abkhazia, and Southern Ossetia... among peoples that have achieved self-determination through effective separation from State entities with which they had hitherto been associated, but their international status remains inchoate because of the political bickering among the great powers and consequent lack of international recognition.”

Professor de Zayas added that people seeking self-determination “are entitled to the full protection of the International human rights treaty regime. A solution to the impasse can only be through peaceful negotiation, since the use of armed force against self-determination would violate numerous international treaties, including the UN Charter, the human rights Covenants, and the Geneva Red Cross Conventions.”

“If there is a compelling demand for separation,” de Zayas insisted, “it is most important to avoid the use of force, which would endanger local, regional and international stability and further erode the enjoyment of other human rights.” In addition, “The implementation of self-determination is not exclusively within the domestic jurisdiction of the State concerned, but is a legitimate concern of the international community.”

Prof. de Zayas explained that the principal of territorial

integrity is only valid in the case of an external attack: “The principle is not intended for internal application, because this would automatically cancel out the jus cogens [compelling law] right of self-determination. Every single exercise of the right of self-determination that results in secession has entailed an adjustment to the territorial integrity of the previous State entity. There are too many precedents to count.”

There should be no discrimination among people who seek self-determination, according to Prof. de Zayas: “The independence of the former Soviet republics and the secession of the peoples of the former Yugoslavia created important precedents for the implementation of self-determination. These precedents cannot be ignored when modern self-determination disputes arise. It is not possible to say yes to the self-determination of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, but then say no to the self-determination of the people of Abkhazia, Southern Ossetia or Nagorno Karabagh. All these peoples have the same human rights and must not be discriminated against. As in the case of the successful claimants, these peoples also unilaterally declared independence. There is no justification whatever to deny them recognition by applying self-determination selectively and making frivolous distinctions that have no base in law or justice.”

For those who juxtapose the principle of territorial integrity to self-determination, Prof. de Zayas countered: “The principle of territorial integrity is not sufficient justification to perpetuate situations of internal conflict that may fester and erupt in civil war, thus threatening regional and international peace and security.”

Finally, Professor de Zayas suggested that “In order to ensure sustainable internal and external peace in the twenty-first century, the international community must react to early warning signs and establish conflict-prevention mechanisms. Facilitating dialog between peoples and organizing referenda in a timely fashion are tools to ensure the peaceful evolution of national and international relations. Inclusion of all stakeholders must be the rule, not the exception. In conclusion, let us celebrate the implementation of self-determination of peoples as an expression of democracy, as indeed democracy is a form of self-determination.”

# Erdogan Has Released the Genealogy of Thousands of Turks – But What Is His Motive?

By Robert Fisk

Only in Turkey is the identity of a citizen a matter of national security. That's why the population registry in Ankara was until now a closed book, its details a state secret. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's definition of “Turkishness” was “anyone who is attached to the Turkish state as a citizen”. Turks came from a clear ethnic identity, untainted by racial minorities or doubtful lineage. That's one reason why the Nazis lavished praise on Ataturk's republic, their newspapers mourning his death in black-bordered front pages.

After all, as Hitler was to ask in several newspaper interviews – and to his generals before he invaded Poland – who now remembers the Armenians? Ataturk had supposedly inherited an Armenian-free Turkey, just as Hitler intended to present his followers with a Jew-free Europe. The Armenian genocide of 1915 – denied by the Turkish government today – destroyed a million and a half Christian Ottoman citizens in the first industrial holocaust of the 20th century. Almost the entire Armenian community had been liquidated. Or had it?

For the stunned reaction of Turks to the sudden and unexpected opening of population registers on an online genealogy database three weeks ago was so immediate and so vast that the system crashed within hours. Rather a lot of Turks, it turned out, were actually Armenians – or part-Armenians – or even partly Greek or Jewish. And across the mountains of eastern Anatolia – and around the cities of Istanbul, Izmir, Erzurum, Van and Gaziantep and along the haunted death convoy routes to Syria, ancient ghosts climbed out of century-old graves to reassert their Armenian presence in Turkish history. For the registry proved that many of them – through their families – were still alive.

Until now, for at least two decades – at least before Sultan Erdogan's post-coup autocracy – thousands of Turks spoke freely, albeit in private, about their ancestry. They knew that amid the mass slaughter and rape of the Armenians, many Christian families sought sanctuary in conversion to Islam, while tens of thousands of young Armenian women were given in marriage to Turkish or Kurdish Muslim men. Their children grew up as Muslims and regarded themselves as Turks but often knew that they were half-Armenian. Tens of thousands of Armenian orphans were placed in Muslim schools, forced to speak Turkish and change their names. One of the largest schools was in Beirut, organized for a time by one of Turkey's leading feminists who wrote of her experience and was later to die in America.

The Armenian diaspora – the 11 million Armenians living outside Turkey or Armenia itself, and who trace their ancestry back to the survivors of the 1915 genocide – were the first to understand the significance of the newly-opened population registers, noting that some information dated back to the early 1800s. Up to four million Turkish citizens were reported to have sought access to their family tree within 48 hours – which is why the system crashed – and in the days since it was re-established, according to retired statistician and Armenian demographer George Aghjayan, eight million Turks have requested their pedigrees. That's 10 percent of the entire Turkish population.

The documents can be vague. And they are not complete. There are examples of known Armenian ancestors listed as Muslim without reference to their origin. The names shown for those known to have converted during the 1915 genocide are Muslim names – but the Christian names of their parents are also shown. There will always be discrepancies and unknown details. Many Ottoman registrars did not give accurate details of birthdays: Turkish officials might travel to a village once a month and simply list its newborn under the date of

their visit. There are still centenarians alive in Lebanon and Syria, for example, who all possess the same birth date, whatever their origin.

So why has Turkey released these files now? Erdogan is quoted to have once complained that Turks were “accused of being Jews, Armenians or Greeks.” Tayfun Atay, a columnist for the Turkish newspaper Cumhuriyet, wrote that he was “advised in a friendly matter not to admit that I am a Georgian...What about those who risk learning that they are of Armenian ancestry or a convert? Just think: you think you are a red-blooded Turk but turn out to be a pure-blood Armenian.”

Journalist Serdar Korucu told Al-Monitor that “if they had done this a few years ago when we were [becoming more tolerant], conspiracy theories would not have been as strong as today, when the state believes we are in a struggle for existence. This is how Turkey reinvigorates the spirit of the Independence War” – to inspire patriotism and pro-government thinking.

In 2003, the Armenian newspaper Agos, whose editor Hrant Dink was assassinated outside his office in 2007, reported that the Turkish government was secretly coding minorities in registers: Greeks were one, according to the paper. Armenians were two. Jews were three. Korucu recalled how the director of the Turkish Historical Society threatened minorities in 2007. “Don't make me angry. I have a list of converts I can reveal down to their streets and homes.” The director later became a politician in the rightist Nationalist Action Party.

Ethnic Armenian columnist Hayko Bagdat placed this in a story he told the Al-Monitor website – including an individual family tale which might be humorous if it was not so charged with tragedy. “During the 1915 genocide, along with mass conversions, there were also thousands of children in exile...The society is not yet ready to deal with this reality.” Imagine, Bagdat said, that Lutfi Dogan, who

had served as Turkey's director of religious affairs, was the brother of someone who was the Armenian patriarch, Shnorhkalustyan.

“Kalushtyan, who returned to Turkey from Beirut in 1961, was remembered as a saint in the Turkish Armenian Patriarchate and as someone who had served in the most difficult times after 1915. During the genocide, his mother sent the children away and converted to Islam. Later she married [a man called] Dogan, who was of high social standing, and had two girls and a boy. The boy was Lutfi Dogan. When the mother, who was then with the Nationalist Action Party...died, his uncle came in priest garb from Beirut to attend the funeral. Nobody could say anything.”

This predicament was eloquently conveyed in Fethiye Çetin's memoir of her grandmother, a respected Muslim housewife in the small Turkish town of Maden, who revealed to her granddaughter that she was Armenian. Most of the men in her village were slaughtered, Seher (her real Armenian name was Heranus) said. A Turkish gendarme had adopted her. Fethiye Çetin, a human rights lawyer who acted for the soon-to-be-murdered Hrant Dink, posted her grandmother's death announcement in Dink's paper, Agos: “Heranus lost her entire family and never saw them again,” she wrote. “She was given a new name, to live in a new family. She forgot her mother tongue and her religion...she never ever forgot her name, her village, her mother, her father...She lived until the age of 95.” Relatives in America read the death notice and Heranus' sister – still alive – called Çetin in Istanbul. A family reunited.

Perhaps two million Turks have Armenian grandmothers. But they are supposed to believe that the genocide never happened.

(Robert Fisk is the chief Middle East correspondent for the Independent (UK) daily. This column originally ran in the March 1, 2018 edition of the paper.)





# Ex-Justice Minister Named Chair of Armenian Constitutional Court

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Less than two weeks after being elected a member of the Constitutional Court, Armenia’s ex-Minister of Justice Hrair Tovmasian has been named as a candidate for the post of the Court’s chairman.

The nomination of the 47-year-old co-author of Armenia’s Basic Law was made on Tuesday, March 13, by Armenian Parliament Speaker Ara Babloyan.

Earlier, Babloyan terminated the powers of Gagik Harutiunian as chairman of the Constitutional Court following his resignation and election as chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, a new body established under Armenia’s reformed Constitution.

The post of the chairman of the Constitutional Court became vacant before April 9, which means that the 2015 Constitution will not apply to the election of the new chairman. Accordingly, under the 2005 Constitution, it is the National Assembly that will elect the new chairman of the Constitutional Court within a period of 30 days.

If the elections were to be held in accordance with the Constitution reformed in 2015, the Constitutional Court would elect its chairman from among its judges for a period of six years without the right to be re-elected. Meanwhile, under the provisions of the Basic Law passed in 2005, the chairman of the Constitutional Court, who shall be elected by the National Assembly, will serve until he or she attains the age of 65.

Artak Zeinalian, a member of the parliament’s opposition Yelk faction, thinks that the authors of the Constitution, including Tovmasian himself, have foreseen such a development. “The goal is to ensure that Tovmasian will serve as chairman of the Constitutional Court until 2035 when he turns 65. Formally, there seems to be no problem... But I think that with this trick the logic of the new Constitution is blocked. Under the new Constitution, the members of the Constitutional Court are replaceable and a more democratic mechanism is to be applied. But I think this was done specifically to neutralize it and for the chairman of the Constitutional Court to carry out the political will of the political majority. That is, it was done so as to turn the Constitutional Court into a politicized body,” he charged.



Hrair Tovmasian

# 9th Wounded Soldier in Artsakh Receives Home from Tufenkian Foundation

STEPANAKERT – Ararat Avanesyan, a soldier wounded in the Artsakh Liberation War in the early 1990s, celebrated his housewarming on March 13 in the Patara village of Askeran region, Artsakh. The house was purchased and renovated by the Tufenkian Foundation, with shared funding from Ralph Yirikian, General Manager of VivaCell-MTS and the New York St. Illuminator Cathedral’s Zarukian Fund recently established by Azaduhi Zarukian.

Askeran Administration Head Sergey Grigoryan, Patara Village Mayor Karen Arzumanyan and Tufenkian Foundation Executive Director Raffi Doudaklian attended the event.

Avanesyan was one of the first freedom fighters to join the liberation movement, and was heavily wounded in battle, losing one leg and facing a number of health difficulties since. Today, at the age of 47, he lives in Patara with his wife and three teenage daughters. Until recently, the family did not have a home of their own and had to take up temporary residence at a relatives’ house.

This is the ninth housewarming celebrated in

Artsakh in the framework of Tufenkian Foundation’s “Housing for Wounded Soldiers” initiative. The initiative was launched in April 2016, in response to the Four Day War. Since then, with funds raised during the 2016 emergency appeal and through additional support from individual donors, nine houses have been built, reconstructed or purchased for Artsakh’s



Ararat Avenesyan and his wife at the unveiling ceremony

wounded soldiers.

Though initially intended to assist soldiers of the April War, the project was later expanded to include Artsakh’s wounded soldiers with urgent housing needs, regardless of which war or battle they were injured in. Ararat Avanesyan is the 3rd soldier of the 90s Liberation War to benefit from the project. The geography of the initiative was also expanded during the past two years, ranging from large towns like Stepanakert and Hadrut to small, remote villages in Artsakh’s borderlands.

All nine soldiers so far included in the initiative faced socio-economic struggles and lived in deplorable housing conditions. Moreover, due to their battle injuries, they were unable to renovate their current homes or work to purchase new ones.

The house in Patara was purchased last November and has been renovated to ensure that it provides dignified living for Ararat’s family. In addition to general improvements and repairs, a kitchen and a bathroom have been built. Also, through specific adjustments, the house has been adapted to Ararat’s mobility needs (Avanesyan walks with crutches).

Although the 2016 emergency has ended, the housing needs for Artsakh’s soldiers is ongoing. With many wounded soldiers requiring similar assistance, the Foundation will continue this work indefinitely.

## USC Shoah Foundation Adds Large Collection of Armenian Genocide Testimony to its Archive

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honor the memories of those whose lives were needlessly taken,” said USC Shoah Foundation Vinci-Viterbi Executive Director Stephen Smith. “These voices will help ensure future generations will learn from those who experienced the horrors of the Armenian Genocide.”

The Armenian Film Foundation’s collection of testimonies was recorded by J. Michael Hagopian for the purpose of making documentaries about one of the earliest genocides of the 20th century. By contrast, Hovannisian, a professor emeritus of Armenian History at UCLA, had a more academic approach. His testimonies typically exceed an hour and feature a wide range of questions about the survivor’s entire life history. Hovannisian, who collected the testimonies from 1972 to the 2000s, also interviewed some children and grandchildren of survivors in the later years of the project.

Hovannisian was one of the founders of Armenian Studies as a discipline in the United States, producing numerous articles and books that are considered foundational, while also training young scholars who went on to become experts in the study of Armenia from ancient to modern times. He is currently professor emeritus at UCLA, adjunct professor at USC and presidential fellow at Chapman University.

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