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NEWS IN BRIEF

UN Group Adopts Armenia-Initiated Genocide Resolution

GENEVA (Armenpress) – A Genocide Prevention Resolution initiated by Armenia was adopted at the 37th session of the UN Human Rights Council by consensus in Geneva on March 23. Nearly six dozen countries introducing all the regional groups of the Human Rights Council joined Armenia and co-authored the resolution.

The resolution will be open for the co-authoring for two more weeks.

The resolution reaffirms that fighting against impunity is a key factor for preventing genocides. It expresses concern over the attempts to deny or approve genocides, stressing that they undermine the fight against impunity, reconciliation of peoples and crime-prevention efforts.

The resolution pays special attention to the exposure of signs and reasons of genocides.

It welcomes the call of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide to for a universal adoption of the resolution ahead of the 70th anniversary of the Convention.

The document also expresses satisfaction over the declaration of December 9 International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime by the UN General Assembly.

Museum of Armenian Culture in Ukraine

KIEV (Armenpress) – The Navasard Museum of Armenian Culture opened at the Roerich Library in Kiev in February, AnalitikaUA.net reports.

Thanks to the joint efforts of the Committee of Women of the Armenian community of Kiev and library representatives, a great number of books, photos and other exhibits of Armenian cultural heritage have been collected.

The opening ceremony of the museum-hall was held on February 21. During the program remarks were delivered by Primate of the Ukraine Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church Bishop Markos Hovhannisyán who handed over a small cross-stone to the hall and blessed the event organizers for their initiative.

The Armenian community of Ukraine is one of the largest and organized communities. Armenians have played a significant role in the history of Ukraine. While living on Ukrainian soil Armenians have created huge material and spiritual heritage. At present thousands of Armenians live in Ukraine, there are national communities, NGOs and cultural organizations in different cities of Ukraine.

Armenians build churches, schools and develop national culture. The Union of Armenians of Ukraine chaired by Vilen Shatvoryan, is the only pan-Ukrainian organization that unites all Armenian structures operating in the country.

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New Form for Heritage Park

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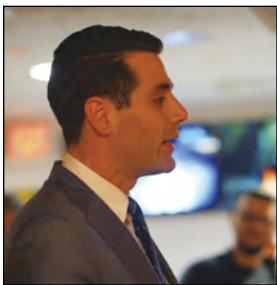
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Don Boyajian, center, with some of his Massachusetts supporters

ADL Endorses NY Congressional Candidate Don Boyajian

BELMONT, Mass. – The Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) Eastern District Committee announced its endorsement of Donald G. Boyajian (“Don”) for New York State’s rural northern 21st Congressional district, which includes the Adirondack Mountains and Thousand Islands regions. ADL Eastern District Chairman Kevork Marashlian praised Boyajian’s background in public affairs and his ability to serve the long-term interests of the American people well. He urged all Armenians to rally around Boyajian.



The endorsement was revealed at a Boston-area fundraiser on March 21 at Phinix Grill hosted by Sheriff Peter Koutoujian, Harry Haytayan, Raffi Festekjian, Steve Mesrobian, Judy Saryan and Victor Zarougian. Many elements of the American Armenian community have begun to promote Boyajian’s candidacy.

see BOYAJIAN, page 7

Official Unveiling of Statue of St. Gregory Of Narek at the Vatican on April 5

VATICAN CITY (Armenpress) – The official inaugural ceremony of the bronze statue of St. Gregory of Narek will be held in the Vatican on April 5, the Italian Catholic news service ACI Stampa reports.

The author of the article, Andrea Gagliarducci, writes that according to some non-official reports, the inaugural ceremony of the statue will be attended by Armenia’s President Serzh Sargsyan, Pope Francis and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II.

“The inaugural ceremony of the statue of St. Gregory of Narek will be another tangi-

ble sign of high-level relations of the Catholic and the Armenian Apostolic churches which further strengthened during Pope Francis’ visit to Armenia – the First Christian Nation, in 2016. Pope Francis aims at having excellent relations with the Armenian community,” Gagliarducci wrote.

The article also noted that during the discussion on erecting the statue the representatives of the Armenian Apostolic church had high-level meetings at the Vatican.

see VATICAN, page 4

Charges Dropped Against Most Turkish Officers In DC Clash

By Dion Nissenbaum and Del Quentin Wilber

WASHINGTON (Wall Street Journal) – Federal prosecutors have dropped charges against 11 of 15 members of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s security team who were accused in connection with the beating of protesters during their visit to Washington last year, the latest twist in a case that caused a diplomatic rift between the US and Turkey.

The decision by the US to prosecute the 15 men added to political strains as the Trump administration was trying to reset relations with Turkey, a key US ally in the fight against Islamic State. The move to dismiss charges against most of them stands to ease one source of tension between Washington and Ankara.

Prosecutors first asked a judge in November to dismiss charges against four members of Erdogan’s security detail. Then they dropped charges against seven others on February 14, the day before Secretary of State Rex Tillerson flew to Ankara for a meeting with Erdogan meant to ease tensions. Among those freed of legal jeopardy immediately before the high-level meeting was the head of Erdogan’s security team.

US officials said that no one pressured prosecutors to drop any of the charges for political reasons. Instead, the decisions were the result of investigators misidentifying some of the suspects and failing to develop enough evidence against others, according to the US officials and an attorney who provided some free legal advice to defendants in the case.

Tillerson, in his private talks with Turkish leaders, pointed to the decisions to drop charges – which hadn’t been publicized or announced – as an example of how the US had addressed Erdogan’s grievances, according to administration officials familiar with the talks.

The administration’s efforts to reset relations with Turkey have been buffeted by a series of challenges, including the prosecution of the guards and a decision by President Donald Trump to directly arm

see CHARGES, page 6

Sirusho Merges Traditional And Pop for New Style

NEW YORK – Sirusho Harutyunyan, better known by her stage name Sirusho, has left an indelible mark on the international music scene during the course of her two-decade career and recording of five award-winning studio albums. In addition to composing songs, filming music videos and performing live, Sirusho, 31, is the creator of PreGomesh jewelry line, with all pieces handmade in Armenia. Throughout her artistic career, Sirusho, who was born in Yerevan, has remained focused and determined, exhibiting a strong work ethic and constantly pushing boundaries.

By Taleen Babayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Armenian Whistleblower Appeals to ECHR

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A former employee of Armenia's electricity distribution network, who was fired in 2013 after accusing company executives of corruption, has filed a lawsuit in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

The 65-year-old Hrachya Harutiunian used a company hotline to allege a large-scale fraud scheme within the Electricity Networks of Armenia (ENA) operator which was owned at the time by Inter RAO, a state-owned Russian energy giant. The allegations were contained in a confidential letter which he sent to the company's special e-mail address.

The ENA management responded by accusing Harutiunian of defamation and firing him. It went on to file a libel suit against him.

An Armenian court of instance rejected that lawsuit. However, the higher Court of Appeals found Harutiunian guilty of defamation and ordered him to apologize for his allegations and pay ENA 5 million drams (\$10,400) in damages.

His lawyer, Ara Ghazarian, on Friday, March 23, condemned the latter verdict as illegal. Ghazarian argued that under Armenian law even false claims that are not publicized through mass media or otherwise cannot be deemed slanderous. He said his client never went public with the fraud allegations.

In Ghazarian's words, the ECHR has already started looking into the case filed by Harutiunian. He said he expects the Strasbourg-based court to rule against ENA.

"He reported corruption," the lawyer told RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am). "Instead of thanking him, they punished him for his civic activism."

Czech Airlines Launches Prague-Yerevan Flights

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Czech Airlines received permission from Armenia's General Department of Civil Aviation to operate regular Prague-Yerevan flights, the General Department of Civil Aviation told Armenpress.

The flights will launch on June 8. They will operate twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Former German Envoy Visits Karabakh

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL) — Germany's former ambassador to Armenia, Hans-Jochen Schmidt, met with senior officials in Stepanakert on Monday, March 26, during yet another private visit to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Schmidt, who headed the German diplomatic mission in Yerevan from 2009 to 2012, was reported to discuss with Arayik Harutiunian, Karabakh's state minister primarily responsible for economic policies, the socioeconomic situation in the Armenian-populated territory.

A Karabakh government statement said Harutiunian briefed him on recent economic developments and "a number of investment projects." The retired German diplomat, for his part, "presented details of his visit and forthcoming plans."

The two men also spoke about "prospects for cooperation between Karabakh and Germany in some sectors of the economy," the statement added without elaborating.

Schmidt also had a separate meeting with Masis Mayilian, the Karabakh foreign minister.

Schmidt has visited Karabakh on at least two occasions in the past, most recently in September 2016. Bako Sahakyan, the Karabakh president, awarded him a "medal of gratitude" at the time. Schmidt reportedly called for more political and people-to-people contacts between the European Union and Karabakh.

"I always thought that it is impossible to be informed about Karabakh without visiting it," he told the local Artsakhpress news agency. In that regard, he criticized Azerbaijan for blacklisting non-Armenian foreign dignitaries travelling to the region.

Schmidt, 70, is one of the founding members of the German-Armenian Forum (DAG).

Russian Official Visits Armenia, Talks up Fresh Arms Deliveries

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Russia has supplied Armenia with more weapons and other military equipment in response to the April 2016 fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh, a senior Russian lawmaker said during a visit to Yerevan on Monday, March 26.

"We do realize that after the 2016 escalation, which was initiated by one of the parties, Armenian public opinion showed serious discontent with Russia

with state-of-the-art defense equipment which we had a chance to see at the [September 2016] military parade organized on the occasion of [Armenia's] Republic Day," said the deputy chairman of a Russian State Duma committee on relations with former Soviet republics.

Despite its military alliance with Armenia, Russia signed an estimated \$5 billion worth of defense contracts with Azerbaijan in 2009-2011. Many in Armenia feel that the resulting deliveries of hundreds of Russian tanks, artillery systems and combat helicopters to Baku encouraged the latter to launch the April 2016 offensive in Karabakh.

The four-day hostilities, which Moscow helped to halt, left at least 180 soldiers from both warring sides dead. It was the worst escalation of the Karabakh conflict since 1994.

Visiting Yerevan earlier this month, another senior Russian lawmaker,

Konstantin Kosachev, indicated that Moscow will scale down its future arms dealings with Baku. "Of course, we are reacting to what occurred in April 2016," said Kosachev, who chairs the foreign relations committee of the Federation Council, the Russian upper house of parliament.

The fresh Russian arms supplies to Armenia mentioned by Zatulin stem, in

part, from a \$200 million Russian loan allocated in June 2015. The Armenian military has used that money for buying, among other things, Smerch multiple-launch rocket system, thermobaric and anti-tank rocket systems and shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles.

At its September 2016 parade in Yerevan, the military also demonstrated medium-range Buk air-defense systems and, more importantly, Iskander tactical missiles. Armenia most probably received the precision-guided missiles shortly before or after the four-day war in Karabakh.

In October 2017, the Armenian government announced that Moscow will provide it with a further \$100 million loan that will be spent on the purchase of more Russian weapons at internal Russian prices set well below international market-based levels. Deputy Defense Minister Artak Zakarian said in December that the Armenian side has already finalized three defense contracts with Russian arms manufacturers as part of the loan agreement.

Zatulin, who is known for his pro-Armenian views on the Karabakh conflict, on Monday also denounced Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's recent pledge to "return Azerbaijanis" to Yerevan and other parts of Armenia which he called "historic Azerbaijani lands." "It's just not clear how anyone can take such a statement seriously," added the veteran lawmaker.

The Russian Foreign Ministry also criticized Aliyev's remarks last month. Nevertheless, the Azerbaijani leader repeated his claims last week.



Konstantin Zatulin, deputy chairman of a Russian State Duma committee, speaks to reporters in Yerevan, March 26.

regarding arms supplies to Azerbaijan on the part of Russia," Konstantin Zatulin told reporters. "We very much regret that Azerbaijan found no use for them other than violating the ceasefire agreement on the [Karabakh] Line of Contact reached in 1994 with our help."

"We have drawn conclusions regarding the breach of the military balance in the region and provided Armenia

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Foreign Minister Nalbandian Chastises Azeris for Setting Sights on Armenia

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian advises Baku to refrain from "linguistic exercises" and return to the constructive field, meet its commitments and respect the agreements reached during meetings.

The comments come after Azerbaijani claims that following presidential elections in the country negotiations will enter an active phase based on so-called "creative" ideas.

"Baku once said negotiations should be constructive and logical, as if they have been neither substantial, nor logical until now," Nalbandian said at a joint press conference with the visiting Foreign Minister of Luxembourg Jean Asselborn.

"Now they step from the phase of substantial and logical negotiations into a new phase that will proceed on the basis of some 'creative' proposals on the part of the co-chairs,"

Nalbandian said.

"Such 'creativity' was demonstrated when our 2,800-year-old capital Yerevan and other regions of Armenia were declared 'Azerbaijan's historic territories.' Azerbaijan's 'creativity' also finds its expression in the constant threats of force. Perhaps, they have found a new trick to explain why they are rejecting the principles and elements proposed reflected in the five statements adopted by the co-chairing countries on the highest level. Maybe, Baku considers these proposals primitive and simple, and lack creativity," the foreign minister stated.

He said "Baku reserves itself the right to assess the 'creativity' of the co-chairs' proposals."

Minister Nalbandian advised Baku to refrain from this "linguistic exercises" and return to the constructive field, meet their commitments and respect the agreements reached during meetings.

"During the recent Krakow meeting we agreed to expand the capacities of the team of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, and both Armenia and the Co-Chairs announced this. However, up until now Azerbaijan refuses to implement those agreements and even refer to them," Armenia's top diplomat said.

He said the same has happened on different occasions and added: "If Azerbaijan is unable to return to the constructive field, it should be forced to do so."



Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Luxembourg, respectively, Edward Nalbandian and Jean Asselborn



ARMENIA

AGBU Helps Launch the First University-Level Non-Profit Management Program in Armenia

YEREVAN – On March 13, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) in Yerevan and the American University of Armenia (AUA) signed an agreement to launch the first university program for training of non-profit management professionals in Armenia.

University-level courses for employees of civil society organizations (CSO) and for those who want to acquire professional education in the non-profit sector in Armenia is an essential component of the Bridge for CSOs program, which is financed by the European Union and overseen by AGBU, in cooperation with the Eurasia Partnership Foundation.

The opportunities to acquire professional knowledge in non-profit management are limited in Armenia. This certificate program, to be developed and implemented by the American University of Armenia, will equip its beneficiaries with theoretical knowledge and practical skills in CSO management.

The goal of introducing such a program at a local higher educational institution is two-fold: the program is expected to become self-sustainable and continuous, adding to the range of important educational programs offered by local universities.

“Employees’ professionalism and leadership is key to a strong civil society and social innovation. It will ensure sustainability of organizations, as well as better quality of services for the beneficiaries,” said Vasken Yacoubian, AGBU Armenia President, AGBU Central Board member.

“AUA Extension’s successful track record can ensure that CSO professionals, as well as future non-profit leaders, have continuous access to learning non-profit governance, strategic management, effective program evaluation, advocacy and communication, and use of technology in civil society organizations,” noted AUA President Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian.

The BRIDGE for CSOs program was launched in June 2017, the three-year, 2.2-million-euro program aims to help



Vasken Yacoubian, AGBU Armenia President, AGBU Central Board member, right, with AUA President Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian

Armenian civil society organizations (CSOs) enhance their skills and deepen their knowledge by tapping into the expertise of the diaspora.

“Armenian CSOs will have the opportunity to participate in thematic training and a university-based, non-profit man-

agement certificate program; benefit from free consultations, and apply for small grants. “Bringing the expertise of diaspora Armenians to Armenian CSOs is a win-win situation for all,” said Ambassador Piotr Switalski, of the EU Delegation in Armenia.

Armenia Honors Ozdemir, Kantian

BERLIN – The evening was both solemn and festive, as diplomats, German political figures and members of the Armenian community gathered at the Armenian Embassy on March 23. Ambassador Ashot Smbatyan presided over the ceremony, during which he presented the State Award of the Armenian Republic to two outstanding individuals. The order of merit, which is a high honor, was conferred on Cem Özdemir, Green Party member of the Bundestag (Parliament), and Dr. Raffi Kantian, chairman of the Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft (German-Armenian Society). Özdemir, bottom right, was selected “for his extraordinary services in the international recognition of the Genocide against the Armenians,” and Kantian, bottom left, for his “special services in deepening German-Armenian relations.” A full story will appear next week.

– Muriel Mirak-Weissbach



Francophonie Delegation Visits Armenian Genocide Memorial

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – A delegation of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie visited the Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan to pay tribute to the memory of the innocent victims on March 20.

The delegation members were accompanied by Armenian Member of Parliament Margarit Yesayan.

The delegation included representatives from parliaments of 27 countries.

They laid flowers at the Eternal Flame and then toured the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, got acquainted with the documents on the Genocide.

The delegation arrived in Armenia to hold the regular session of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie.



A delegation from the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie visited the Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide Memorial.

Armenian FM Receives New Ireland Ambassador

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Foreign Minister of Armenia Edward Nalbandian received on March 26 newly appointed Ambassador of Ireland to Armenia Michael Forbes (residence in Sofia) who delivered the copies of credentials to Nalbandian.

Congratulating Forbes, Nalbandian said he hoped that the ambassador will contribute to the further deepening and strengthening of Armenian-Irish relations.

Thanking for the reception, Ambassador Forbes assured that he will spare no efforts to

give new impetus to Armenian-Irish relations.

During the meeting Nalbandian and Forbes discussed issues of bilateral agenda, spoke about measures necessary for activating political dialogue and developing trade and economic relations and emphasized the importance of fostering inter-parliamentary relations.

Nalbandian presented the joint efforts of Armenia and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Minsk Group Co-Chair countries aimed at peaceful settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Eastern Armenian to Be Taught in U of Uruguay

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay (Armenpress) — The Center for Foreign Languages of the faculty of humanitarian and education sciences of the University of the Republic of Uruguay announces the launch of introductory courses on the Eastern Armenian language.

Teaching Eastern Armenian courses is being carried out within the framework of the cooperation agreement signed between the Yerevan State University and the University of the Republic of Uruguay in 2016. The agreement aims at assisting the spread of culture, education and scientific research.

The courses will be taught by Armenian language and literature specialist Hovhannes Bodukyan.

Emmanuel Macron Congratulates Sarkissian

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — French President Emmanuel Macron has sent a congratulatory message to newly elected President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian.

Sarkissian's Office announced that the French President expresses his readiness to work with Sarkissian to further strengthen Armenian-French relations which are already close.

"The Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement recently signed between Armenia and the EU, in the negotiations of which France had an important role, gives new impetus which I hope will result in growth of investments and trade and economic relations between our two states," Macron said in his letter.

Referring to the summit of Francophonie to be held in Yerevan on October 11-12, Macron said that the summit gives an opportunity to deepen relations between Armenia and France. The French President added that he will be glad to visit Armenia to participate in Francophonie summit.

Australian MP Speaks About Armenian Genocide

CANBERRA, Australia (Public Radio of Armenia) — Federal Member for Goldstein, Tim Wilson, rose in the Parliament on March 27 and remembered the Armenian Genocide, paying particular attention to the relief efforts made by Australians to aid the survivors of the Armenian Genocide.

A delegation from the Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANCAU) was present in the Federation Chamber as Wilson, who is of Armenian heritage, started his 90-second Member Statement by stating: "Today we acknowledge the incredible contribution of Victorians and Australians toward the relief funds to aid the victims — the families, children and orphans — of the Armenian Genocide."

Wilson continued: "The marching of Armenians to their death started a mobilization of Australians for their lives. The then Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Sir David Hennessy, wrote to *The Age* newspaper of his opening of 'a fund for the relief of the remnant of Armenia.' The Lord Mayor trusted in 'a liberal response by the citizens of Victoria to this urgent appeal.'"

He added: "Today we honour the memory of Armenians who lost their lives and the Victorians and the Australians who rallied to the cause of their relief."

"Armenian-Australians take great pride in the research conducted by Professor Peter Stanley, Vicken Babkenian, Dr. Panayiotis Diamadis and the countless other academics and researchers involved in the Australian Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies chaired by Professor Colin Tatz," ANCAU Executive Director Haig Kayserian said.

"Their work has uncovered an important link between our history as Australians and the history of our Armenian origins," he added. "We know, because of this research, that Australians saved Armenian lives during the Armenian Genocide."

He thanked Wilson for shining a spotlight on the connection between Australians and Armenians.

Dozens of musicians have fled or been killed. Yet, in war-torn Syria, the orchestra plays on

By Nabhi Bulos

DAMASCUS (*LA Times*) — Linda Bitar sat up in her chair behind a pair of timpani and took a deep breath as the swell of the violins reached a climax.

"Ihkili, Ihkili, aan baladi ihkili," she sang, the lilt of the ney, a type of flute, blending with the words:

"Tell me, tell me, about my country, tell me. Tell me about my family, tell me about my house ... swear to me you'll tell me about the olive tree."

The song, a moving lament for those who've left their homeland behind, seemed a fitting choice for Bitar and the other musicians assembled one crisp morning at Damascus' opera house. As the last remaining members of the Syrian National Symphony Orchestra, they have watched seven years of civil war hollow out their lives and slowly mute the music they once played.

Dozens of musicians have left, escaping the growing violence that has steadily reshaped the calculations of daily life in Damascus, Syria's capital. Others fled to avoid being drafted, while some who were studying or working abroad abandoned any thought of returning to Syria, where their passion for the classics seemed increasingly irrelevant.

The exodus left a musical void in the orchestra.

"More than 74 musicians left us... Every absence was one we felt," said Missak Baghboudarian, the orchestra's conductor.

"We had reached a really good artistic level until 2010. Then in 2011 came the downfall — in numbers, in quality, in all details."

On Jan. 15, the orchestra celebrated its 25th anniversary by playing Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture," a bombastic work it had performed in its inaugural concert. But this time, there just weren't enough musicians to capture the full strength of the piece.

"We played a video recording of the first concert, and you could see the

orchestra back then was much larger than what we have now.... In the past, when we wanted a violinist, they would fight over who would play. Now we don't even have a dozen players," Baghboudarian said.

Wistfully, he listed works that were now out of reach.

"I can't imagine now Beethoven's Ninth, or doing a Bruckner or Mahler symphony.... Once we even did Kindertotenlieder," he said, referring to Mahler's ambitious song cycle that requires an expanded woodwind and percussion section.

Some of the first musicians to go were the Russians. A throwback to the days when the Soviet Union would dispatch musical "experts" to bolster the ensemble and mentor Syria's student musicians, they were paid roughly 120,000 Syrian pounds a month, which was then about \$2,500.

It was a princely sum in prewar Damascus, but as the violence grew the country's currency plummeted.

Guest conductors stopped arriving, and invitations for the orchestra to play elsewhere in the region or abroad — once a signature feature every season — evaporated.

By late 2012, the Russian experts had all left and the rebel forces trying to overthrow President Bashar Assad's government had pushed within a few miles of downtown Damascus. The opera house, a landmark on the city's grandiose Umayyad Square, was suddenly within range of the missiles and mortars.

Showing up to rehearsal became a deadly prospect. At least five musicians were killed and others were wounded. Last month, Lama Fallouh, the program coordinator at the opera house, was killed in a mortar attack as government forces stormed the rebel-held enclave of Ghouta, outside Damascus.

For a while, there was thought of suspending the orchestra's already reduced season.

"But then people started calling, sending us messages on social media ... and we still had a full house in concerts, and this is what made us continue," Baghboudarian said. Defiantly, the orchestra even performed a January concert in 2015 as some 150 rockets rained down on Damascus.

"The performance was at 5 p.m. and we had people attending. So someone looks at death in the eye and is here to watch your concert. How much does he have to believe in it? And only one musician couldn't show up."

Still, the orchestra's season has now been reduced to about eight concerts, along with occasional performances at children's shelters, an effort to keep alive an interest in music in the next generation.

Of those who left the country, many still play professionally in orchestras in the U.S., Europe or neighboring Lebanon and Jordan. Others, though, put music aside and focused simply on survival.

Some traded off the global attention on the Syrian refugee crisis to extend their careers, while others abandoned the music profession altogether and tried to reinvent themselves in a new land.

One horn player hopped on a train after a concert in France and requested asylum once he crossed the border into Germany. Another fled by boat to play a concert in Bremen, Germany, and arrived without shoes, tuxedo or an instrument.

One of the last to leave was Athil Hamdan, a former principal cellist of the orchestra and the dean of its conservatory. His wife, Rawan Kurdi, was the concertmaster, the lead violinist who essentially serves as the quarterback of the orchestra.

They had a good life in Damascus, but

when their house in the suburb of Qudsaya was shelled in 2012 they moved to Kurdi's parents' apartment in Dummar, another suburb then out of mortar range. But working in the opera house was still dangerous.

"We would rehearse and then hear a sound of explosions," Kurdi said. "We would have to run to the corridor and wait for it to stop."

Their fears grew when their daughter, Rona, was about to enter preschool. Hospitals and schools were increasingly being hit by the erratic shelling.

"It was clear this wouldn't change, and we didn't want to wait for a moment of regret, where you go to rehearsal and a mortar falls on you," Hamdan said.

So he began to groom his replacement, a cellist named Mohammad Nameq, a talented musician with an air of melancholy.

"He would drop hints: 'You have to get used to giving signals to the section, soon you'll be principal....' At times I would lead instead of him," Nameq said.

In the summer of 2015, Hamdan and Kurdi took a month of unpaid leave from the orchestra, grabbed a taxi to neighboring Lebanon and caught a plane to Germany, where Kurdi already had residency.

"On the plane, Rawan and I looked at Rona," Hamdan said, "we felt that our mission was completed. We had taken her away from the danger of war and that mutilated environment."

When they landed in Berlin, Kurdi remembers feeling relaxed for the first time in years.

"I couldn't believe there were people living on the same planet that I was, people who were living in happy circumstances, with regular water, with electricity," she said.

Back home, the orchestra carried on with two fewer musicians, two more instruments silenced.

"It was a loss for the orchestra, and for me," Nameq said. "He was a friend."

But when it comes to thoughts of returning home, Kurdi confessed she was surprised that she had none. The couple's daughter is enrolling in school; Kurdi is learning German and planning to return to school. And Hamdan still plays the cello.

"Since I came here I never felt I wanted to be back there. It's strange even for me," Kurdi said. "Now we have a life here."

For Thaer Eid, a Syrian violist living in Hanover, Germany, the only way to move forward with life as an immigrant was to give up his dream of returning to his homeland. Instead, he threw himself into academics, earning a bachelor's and then master's degree in music at the University of Hanover.

"So you can really start your life without trouble, you have to cut all these links or even the possibility of returning to Syria, because as long as you think of this possibility, you won't develop and improve," he said.

But Maias Yamani feels the tug to go back home.

A former member of the Syrian orchestra and now principal violinist with the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra in Doha, Yamani said he awaits the day the fighting in his homeland finally ends.

"At some stage, the conservatory and the orchestra were a full life in music, but they also taught us the tenets of life," he said.

"We can't be passive. It's important to me that I return to do something there, to return to the little society we once had."

(Bulos is a special correspondent. He is also a concert violinist who has played with several members of the Syrian national orchestra.)

Official Unveiling of Statue of St. Gregory Of Narek at the Vatican

VATICAN, from page 1

On March 21 Armenia's Ambassador to the Vatican Mikayel Minasyan released details over the works on erecting the statue of St. Gregory of Narek.

Minasyan said on Facebook that during Pope Francis' visit to Armenia in June 2016 Sargsyan gave a small statue of St. Gregory of Narek to the Pope as a symbol of his pilgrimage to the first Christian country. While handing the statue to Pope Francis, Sargsyan expressed hope that its bigger version would be erected at the Vatican. The Pope liked the statue, thanked the President and gave his approval.

"After a short period of time the creative team led by People's Artist of Armenia, sculptor Davit Yerevantsi started the work. Architect Mikayel Hasratyan and project manager Vardan Karapetyan actively engaged in the process, and my friend Artur Janibekyan, who is a true devotee, joined me by becoming the second benefactor of the statue. Thanks to the hard work of the creative team the two-meter bronze statue of St. Gregory of Narek was created in the Czech Republic and its placement in Vatican's parks completed today," the ambassador said.

Community News

Dr. Ümit Kurt to Speak on *Heroic Battle of Aintab*

FRESNO – Dr. Ümit Kurt will give a presentation on, “A Farewell to Arms: Broken Hopes and Total Departure from the Homeland, in *The Heroic Battle of Aintab*,” at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, April 6, in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, Room 191 on the Fresno State campus. The presentation is part of the Spring Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program and is funded through the Leon S. Peters Foundation.

The Turkish-French war of 1920-1921 took place between the Turkish-Kemalist Nationalist forces and French troops in Aintab, modern day Gaziantep. The war started on April 1, 1920 and ended with the city's surrender to the French military forces on February 9, 1921.

There are ample amounts of archival materials, memoirs, diaries and various other sources written in Turkish and Ottoman Turkish on the Turkish-French War. Furthermore, individuals who themselves witnessed or participated in this war wrote down the history of the city within this particular period.

In this lecture, Kurt will explore how this war was narrated based on an original source written in Armenian by Kevork Baboian, titled *The Heroic Battle of Aintab*. Kurt will present his English translation of this important book with the detailed history of the Armenian struggle for survival in Aintab between 1918-1922. It is a unique and significant work because it is based on detailed eye-witness accounts of real people who were in the city at that time.



Dr. Ümit Kurt

Kurt earned his PhD in history at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Clark University in 2016. He is currently a Polonsky Fellow in the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem. His research is centered on examining the transfer of Armenian wealth, transformation of space, elite-making process, ordinary perpetrators, collective violence, microhistories, inter-ethnic conflicts, the Armenian genocide and early modern Turkish nationalism.

He worked as a postdoctoral fellow in 2016-17 in the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University.

He is the author of *The Great, Hopeless Turkish Race: Fundamentals of Turkish Nationalism in the Turkish Homeland, 1911-1916* (Istanbul: letisim Publishing House, 2012) and the co-author of *The Spirit of the Laws: The Plunder of Wealth in the Armenian Genocide* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015).

The lecture is free and open to the public. Free parking is available.



The Abstract Sculpture

Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway: Coming Together on Common Ground

BOSTON – “In the heart of Boston, there is a fantastic and creative little park...The features of the park are, simply put, works of art...the shape-changing split dodecahedron, like memory is constantly changing... a living piece of art, celebrating life...the embodiment of living memory...” as Wanderlust Americana describes Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway.

To herald the beginning of spring, on Sunday, April 8 beginning at 7:30 a.m., a crane will lift and pull apart the two halves of the Park's Abstract Sculpture, a split rhomboid dodecahedron made of steel and aluminum and reconfigure the two halves to create a new sculptural shape. This annual reconfiguration is symbolic of all who pulled away from their country of origin and came to these Massachusetts shores, establishing themselves in new and different ways. “The Abstract Sculpture shows how public art becomes a part of the city...an example of public art that is both permanent and alive,” wrote Joanna Weiss in the *Boston Globe*.

The Park's Charles and Doreen Bilezikian Endowed Fund supports the annual reconfiguration.

A&A Industries, Anahid and Aurelian Mardiros, fabricated the Abstract Sculpture, their generous gift-in-kind. The rain date for reconfiguration is April 15.

The Abstract Sculpture sits atop a Reflecting Pool with its etched inscription read even by those just passing through. “The Abstract Sculpture is dedicated to lives lost during the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923 and all genocides that have followed” one reads also that the Park and its endowed funds is a gift from Armenian-Americans to the City of Boston and the Commonwealth.

Beginning with the annual reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture, programs are held at the Park during the year, free and open to the public. On Saturday, April 21, the Commemoration at the Park, a program of the Boston Armenian Genocide Committee, will take place 3 to 5 p.m. The two-day commemoration of the 103rd Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide also includes the annual State House Commemoration on Friday morning, April 20. On Sunday, April 22, the Walk Against Genocide, a program of the Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur, begins at the New England Holocaust Memorial at 1:30 p.m. followed by the walk to Heritage Park.

Celebrate Public Art at the Park, a featured program during ArtWeek Boston on Saturday, May 5 at 1 p.m., begins with the celebration of World Labyrinth Day: Walk as One at 1 p.m., an international initiative of The Labyrinth Society with more than 20 countries world-wide “walking together as one at 1 p.m.” in peace and harmony. For the first time, Armenia is participating, walking the newly-built labyrinth in Gyumri.

The reception to view the 2018 Configuration of the Abstract Sculpture follows at 1:30 p.m. Sarah Baker, editor-in-chief, *Art New England* magazine, will offer brief remarks. Baker will be introduced by Lucas Cowan, public art curator, Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy. Tea and desserts are hosted by MEM Tea Imports and Eastern Lamejun Bakers.

Under a Strawberry Moon, a first-time event, is being held on Thursday, June 28 at 8:30 p.m. to meet and greet, network, walk the moonlit labyrinth and enjoy chocolate-dipped strawberries and ice teas, hosted by Vicki Lee's and MEM Tea Import. Tea & Tranquility, the late afternoon summer series on Wednesday, June 20, July 18 and August 15 from 5 to 6:30 p.m., is again offered in collaboration with Age-Friendly Boston and the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy with ice tea and desserts hosted by MEM Tea Imports and The Bostonian Hotel.

This year's Sunday Afternoon at the Park for Families & Friends on September 16 from 2-4 will feature the music of Boston Hye Guys Ensemble: Ron Sahatjian, clarinet; Joe Kouyoumjian, oud and Art Chingris, percussion. Each year the generosity of the musicians who perform continue to inspire as does the sharing of the talents, time and treasure of so many during the year

see RECONFIGURE, page 9

Male Babysitter Receives Century-Long Sentence For Raping Two Children

NEW YORK (*Daily Mail*) – A male babysitter who raped two children and filmed the assaults before setting some of the videos to music has been jailed for 100 years.

Milton Narvaez, 36, from Manhattan, assaulted a girl, thought to be as young as 7, inside the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America where he worked as a janitor.

He abused his other victim, a boy who he was paid to look after, from the time he was 6 to when he turned 12, starting in February 2008.

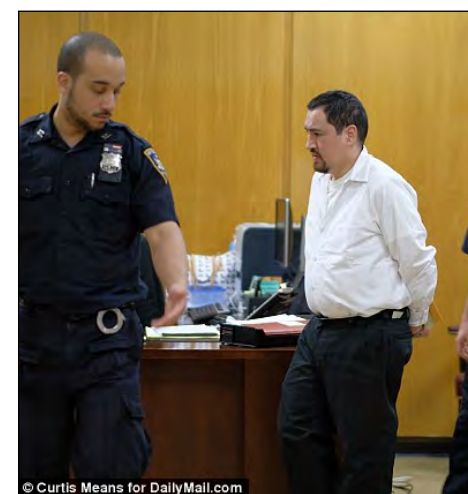
Narvaez's lawyer, Glenn Hardy, had pushed for a sentence of only 10 years, telling the court his client was the victim of childhood sexual abuse at the hands of his father.

But on Friday, March 23, a judge at Manhattan Supreme Court sentenced him to 100 years to life.

He was convicted in November last year on 98 criminal counts including predatory sexual assault against a child, sexual abuse and dozens of counts of promoting and possessing child pornography.

Narvaez was employed as a babysitter by several Manhattan families, and also worked as a custodian at the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church in Midtown.

Beginning in February 2008, Narvaez, who also used the name Milton Gomez, repeated-



Milton Narvaez, 36

ly raped a boy who was in his care, and the abuse continued for six years, from the time the victim was 6 to about 12 years old.

Then on October 15, 2011, Narvaez also raped a little girl in a storage room of the Armenian Church.

The years-long sexual abuse was uncovered in 2015 in the course of a routine investigation into online child pornography that was carried out by the DA's office's Cybercrime and Identify Theft Unit.

Milton's conviction at trial was announced in a written statement released by Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance, released on November 28, 2017.

“There are few acts more horrific than the long-term sexual abuse of a child,” Vance said.

“As a babysitter and custodian with access to children, Milton Narvaez abused his position to rape two children, before further exploiting them by recording video of the acts.”

He added: “The children of this City will be safer with Milton Narvaez out of our homes and churches.”

Vance said that Narvaez shared and possessed dozens of images depicting children performing sexual acts.



Charges Dropped Against Most Turkish Officers In DC Clash

CHARGES, from page 1

Syrian Kurdish fighters that Turkey considers terrorists.

In January, Turkey launched a new military operation aimed at Kurdish forces in northwestern Syria. The US criticized the move and warned Turkey not to turn its focus toward Kurdish fighters working alongside US forces in the strategic Syrian town of Manbij.

The US and Turkey have set up special teams that are trying to try to bridge their differences in Syria, but there are broad concerns that the efforts may not avert a volatile standoff in Syria, according to American military and diplomatic officials.

The charges against members of Erdogan's security team were the outgrowth of a chaotic clash last May near the Turkish ambassador's residence in Washington against demonstrators protesting the Turkish president's visit.

Videos of the clashes showed men in suits with side arms punching and kicking demonstrators as Washington police and US Secret Service officers tried to intervene.

At least nine demonstrators were hospitalized. One police officer and two members of the Secret Service were also injured.

US lawmakers denounced the attack and some called on the Trump administration to expel Turkey's ambassador. District of Columbia Police Chief Peter Newsham characterized it as an unprovoked and "brutal attack on peaceful protesters."

Knights of Vartan Offer Free Bus Service to Times Square Demo from Boston

BOSTON — The Knights of Vartan Ararat Lodge 1 is sponsoring free bus transportation to and from the Times Square commemoration of the Armenian Genocide on Sunday, April 22.

The rally to remember the Armenian Genocide will take place at 2 p.m. at the corner of 43rd Street and Broadway in New York City.

The event is sponsored by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan and is co-sponsored by the AGBU, Armenian Assembly of America, Armenian National Committee of America, ADL-Ramgavars, and the Armenian National Council. Also participating are the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Church of America, Armenian Missionary Association of America, Armenian Catholic Eparchy of US and Canada, Armenian Church Youth Organization of America, AGBU Young Professionals of New York, Armenian Network of Greater New York, Armenian Youth Federation, New York Armenian Student Association, Homenetmen Scouts, Armenian youth and professional associations and Armenian university and college clubs.

Buses leave from the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center, 47 Nichols Ave., Watertown, at 9:30 a.m. and from the Worcester location, Route 146 and Mass Pike Park and Ride, at 10 a.m.

Bus transportation to and from Times Square is free, but reservations are required. Complimentary lunch and refreshments will be served.

For more information or to make a reservation call Avo at 978-376-1052, Jirair at 978-376-8285 or Pierre at 617-417-5303.



Armenians in Times square

Turkish officials accused protesters of attacking Erdogan's supporters and blamed Washington police and the Secret Service for not doing enough to separate the two groups.

The police department produced large "wanted" posters featuring photographs of the Turkish security guards that they displayed at a news conference announcing the charges, which included felony assault for several members of the security detail.

Mr. Erdogan blasted the charges as "scandalous" and said his team was only trying to protect him. "Why would I take my guards to the United States if not to protect myself?" he said last June.

Washington police worked with the State Department to identify the suspects, but the case began to unravel last fall. In November, at the request of prosecutors, a judge dismissed charges against four members of Mr. Erdogan's security detail.

Gunay Evinch, an attorney and co-chairman of the Turkish-American group that organized pro-Turkey demonstrators who clashed with anti-Erdogan protesters, said the four men were able to demonstrate that they weren't at the scene of the protest when the fighting erupted.

Last month, prosecutors dropped charges against seven others. The US attorney's office didn't issue a news release last month when it dropped the charges. The office responded to inquiries this week from the *Wall Street Journal*.

The office said it is still pursuing assault charges against four other members of Erdogan's security team, as well as two Canadian citizens, none of whom have been arrested.

Two American citizens are awaiting sentencing after they pleaded guilty in December to felony assault charges for their roles in the incident.

A Farewell to Arms

Broken Hopes and Total Departure from the Homeland in The Heroic Battle of Aintab

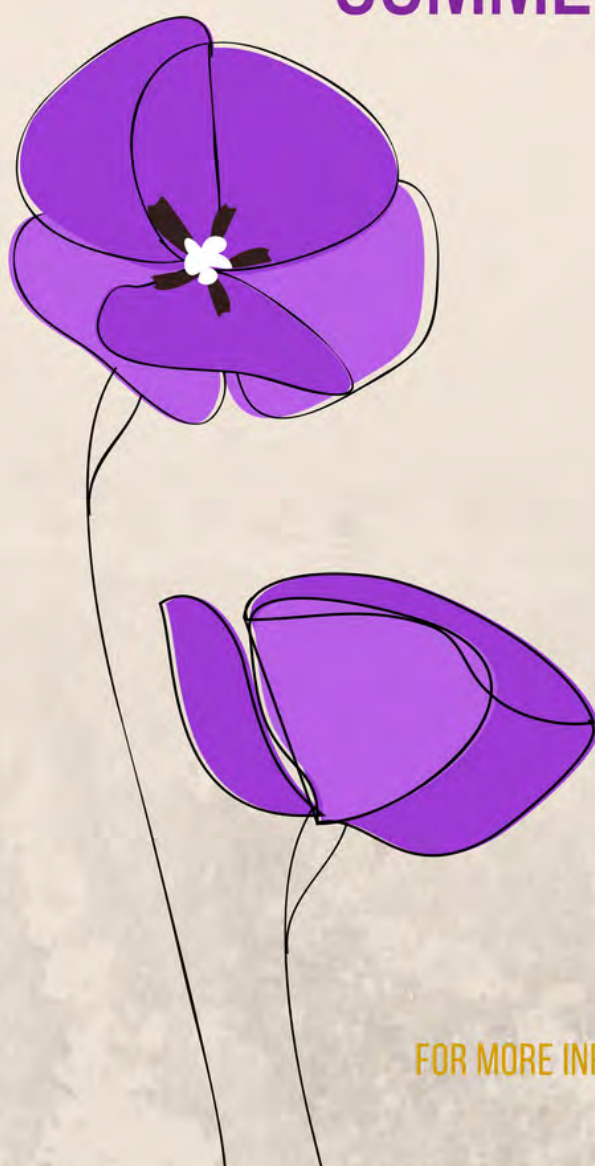


Lecture by Dr. Ümit Kurt with slides, book signing

7:00 pm ALMA 65 Main Street, Watertown, MA. Free admission
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see armenianmuseum.org/events

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Pulitzer Winning Balakian Named Bucknell Janet Weiss Fellow

LEWISBURG, Penn. — Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Peter Balakian, Bucknell Class of 1973, has been named the 13th Janet Weiss Fellow in Contemporary Letters at Bucknell University, becoming the first Bucknell graduate to receive the honor.

Balakian is the Donald M. and Constance H. Rebar Professor of the Humanities in the Department of English and director of creative writing at Colgate University. He will accept the award during a ceremony on Thursday, April 5, at 7 p.m. in Bucknell Hall. After the presentation, Balakian will read from his poetry and memoir, and then engage in a moderated discussion with Bucknell Professor of English Harold Schweizer. A book-signing will follow. The event is free and open to the public.

The author of seven books of poems, Balakian won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for poetry for his most recent collection, *Ozone Journal* (2016, University of Chicago Press). In the announcement, the Pulitzer committee said the poems in the collection “bear witness to the old losses and tragedies that undergird a global age of danger and uncertainty.”

Balakian’s *Ozone Journal* explores, among other topics, the poet’s memory of excavating. “In the dynamic, sensual language of these poems, we are reminded that the history of atrocity, trauma and forgetting is both global and ancient,” the prize committee said. “But we are reminded, too, of the beauty and richness of



Peter Balakian

culture, and the resilience of love.”

For more than four decades Balakian’s poems have engaged a wide range of social, cultural and political realities including genocide,

war, terrorism, climate change, the AIDS epidemic and historical trauma. His poems also probe the personal and meditative realities of love, death, art and culture, and the intersections between epic traumatic events and the private self.

“I began my life as a poet as an undergraduate at Bucknell during my sophomore and junior years in 1971-72,” Balakian said. “I studied with my mentor and then great friend Professor Jack Wheatcroft, an inspirational and brilliant teacher and an amazingly versatile writer. It’s been an interesting journey, and Lewisburg and Bucknell are dear to it.”

Balakian is currently compiling a collection of memorial tribute essays in honor of Wheatcroft, a member of the Class of 1949, who passed away last March. The poet

and author was a popular English professor at Bucknell from 1952 to 1996.

Balakian’s four books of prose include *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and*

America’s Response (2004), which won the 2005 Raphael Lemkin Prize and was a *New York Times* Notable Book and a *New York Times* best seller. His memoir, *Black Dog of Fate*, won the 1998 PEN/Martha Albrand Prize for the Art of the Memoir, and was a best book of the year for the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and *Publisher’s Weekly*, and was recently issued in a 10th-anniversary edition. He is co-translator of *Girgoris Balakian’s Armenian Golgotha: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide 1915-1918* (Knopf, 2009), which was a *Washington Post* book of the year.

He is also the author of a book on the American poet Theodore Roethke and the co-translator of the Armenian poet Siamanto’s *Bloody News From My Friend*. Between 1976 and 1996 he edited with Bruce Smith the poetry journal *Graham House Review*.

He is the recipient of many awards and prizes including the Presidential Medal and the Moves Khoranatsi Medal from the Republic of Armenia; the Spendlove Prize for Social Justice, Tolerance and Diplomacy; a Guggenheim Fellowship; a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship; and the Emily Clark Balch Prize for poetry from the *Virginia Quarterly Review*.

Balakian has appeared widely on national television and radio, including “60 Minutes,” “ABC World News Tonight” and NPR’s “Fresh Air.”

He has taught at Colgate since 1980 and was the first director of the University’s Center For Ethics and World Societies.

Established in 2002, the Janet Weiss Fellow in Contemporary Letters is awarded biennially to honor and recognize individuals who represent the highest level of achievement in the craft of writing within the realms of fiction, non-fiction or biography. Previous recipients have been Robert A. Caro, Edward Albee, John Edgar Wideman, David McCullough, Derek Walcott, Joyce Carol Oates, Tom Wolfe, Salman Rushdie, John Updike, Toni Morrison and Rita Dove.

The Weiss Fellowship was established through a grant from the Degenstein Foundation in honor of Janet Weiss, an author, civic leader and philanthropist as well as trustee emerita of the University. Her husband, Sigfried Weiss, was chair of the Bucknell Board of Trustees from 1982 to 1988.

ADL Endorses NY Congressional Candidate Don Boyajian

BOYAJIAN, from page 1

Tekeyan Cultural Association Executive Director Aram Arkun, who attended the event, noted that Boyajian was firm in his support of Armenian issues, and promised once again to be a powerful voice for Armenians concerning



Don Boyajian, left, with Aram Arkun

the Armenian Genocide, Artsakh and Armenia, and the remaining Armenians of the Middle East.

The Democratic primary in the 21st district takes place on June 26, after which Boyajian faces incumbent Republican congresswoman Elise Stefanik. For more information on Boyajian, see an interview in the March 10 issue of the *Mirror-Spectator* and his own campaign website (<https://don2018.com>).



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OBITUARIES

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Vrejouhi (Vrejik) Darian

Dentist, Mother, Born in Iran

DETROIT – Vrejouhi (Vrejik) Darian died on March 22. She was 93.

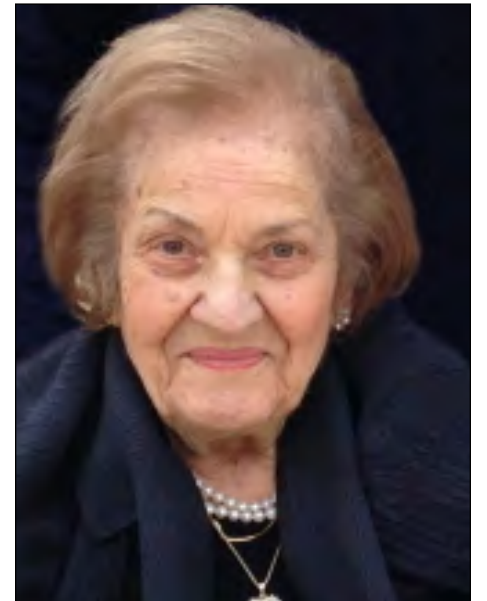
She was the wife of the late Dr. Hamazasp Darian. She was the mother of Dr. Vigen (the late Rosemary) Darian, Dr. Linda Darian (Michael) Karibian and Armen Darian. She also leaves grandchildren Talin, Ani and Mara.

She was born to Khatchadoor and Nektar Saghatelian in Tabriz, Iran. The oldest of four children, she was a very bright student, excelling in all of her classes.

She attended dental school, where she met a determined medical student, Hamazasp (Hamzik) Barkhoudarian, and they married in 1949. Together they ran a joint medical-dental clinic. She helped raise Hamzik's youngest brother and cousins, whom she thought of as her own.

In 1956, they moved to Detroit and later shortened their surname to "Darian." In the US, Vrejik concentrated on her growing family: Vigen, Linda, and Armen. She instilled a strong value of education in her children, and later, her grandchildren, Talin, Ani, and Mara. Her family was the light of her life.

She also served as President of the Detroit Armenian Women's Club, where she developed



many cherished friendships.

A prayer Service was held at St. John's Armenian Church on March 26, with interment at White Chapel Cemetery.

George D. Kasparian

Air Force Veteran, Engineer

WATERTOWN – George D. Kasparian of Watertown died on March 22, 2018. He was 88.

Born and raised in Charlestown, he graduated from Boston English High School, class of 1947. He served in the US Air Force during the Korean War, and was stationed at Andersen Air Force Base on Guam.

He graduated from the College of Engineering at Northeastern University in 1959, where he was a member of the Eta Kappa Nu honor society.

He was an electrical engineer at Raytheon for 36 years and worked on the Hawk, Patriot and Trident missile systems. In his retirement, he enjoyed listening to classical music and attending BSO concerts.

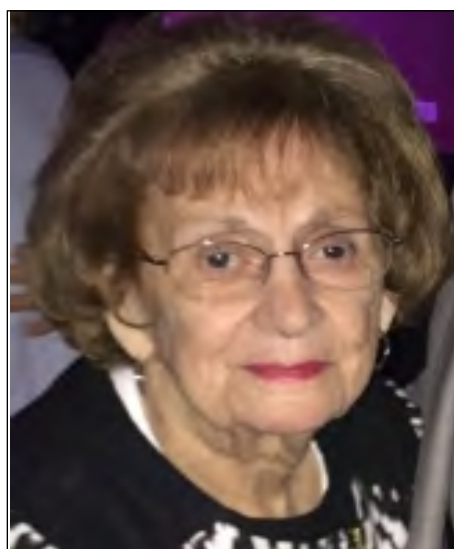
He joined several Air Force historical societies and used to research government archives for information about missing WWII flight crews.

He was a vociferous advocate of US recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

He was the husband of the late Louise (Gulumian) Kasparian. He leaves his children George N. Kasparian of Watertown and Rose Marie Kasparian of Watertown and grandchildren Paul Kasparian and his wife Megan of Easton. He was the brother of the late Kaspar Der Kasparian.

A visitation period was held at the Giragosian Funeral Home, on Wednesday, March 28 followed by a chapel service. Interment was private.

Virginia Ruth Melkonian



DETROIT – Virginia Ruth Melkonian, 91, passed away on March 20, with family by her side.

She was the wife of the late Byron Haig.

She was the mother of Jacqueline (Faouzi) Elchemmas, Patricia Muskat (Tim Hall), the late V. Rev. Fr. Haigazoun Melkonian and the late Michael Melkonian and grandmother of Taline Muskat, Jerry Muskat-Martin (Olivia Martin), Johnny Elchemmas (Sevana Melikian) and Raffi (Martha) Elchemmas and great-grandmother of Ani, Van, Aria, Adrian and Nina Anoush.

She was the sister of Margaret (Harold) Kleinsmith and aunt of Marge (Dan) Hildebrand, Kevin (Anne) Kleinsmith, Keith (Tomla) Kleinsmith, and Suzanne Saganich Kleinsmith (Damon Troyan).

Her funeral was on Saturday, March 24, with interment at Interment at Woodlawn Cemetery.

Giragosian

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway: Coming Together on Common Ground

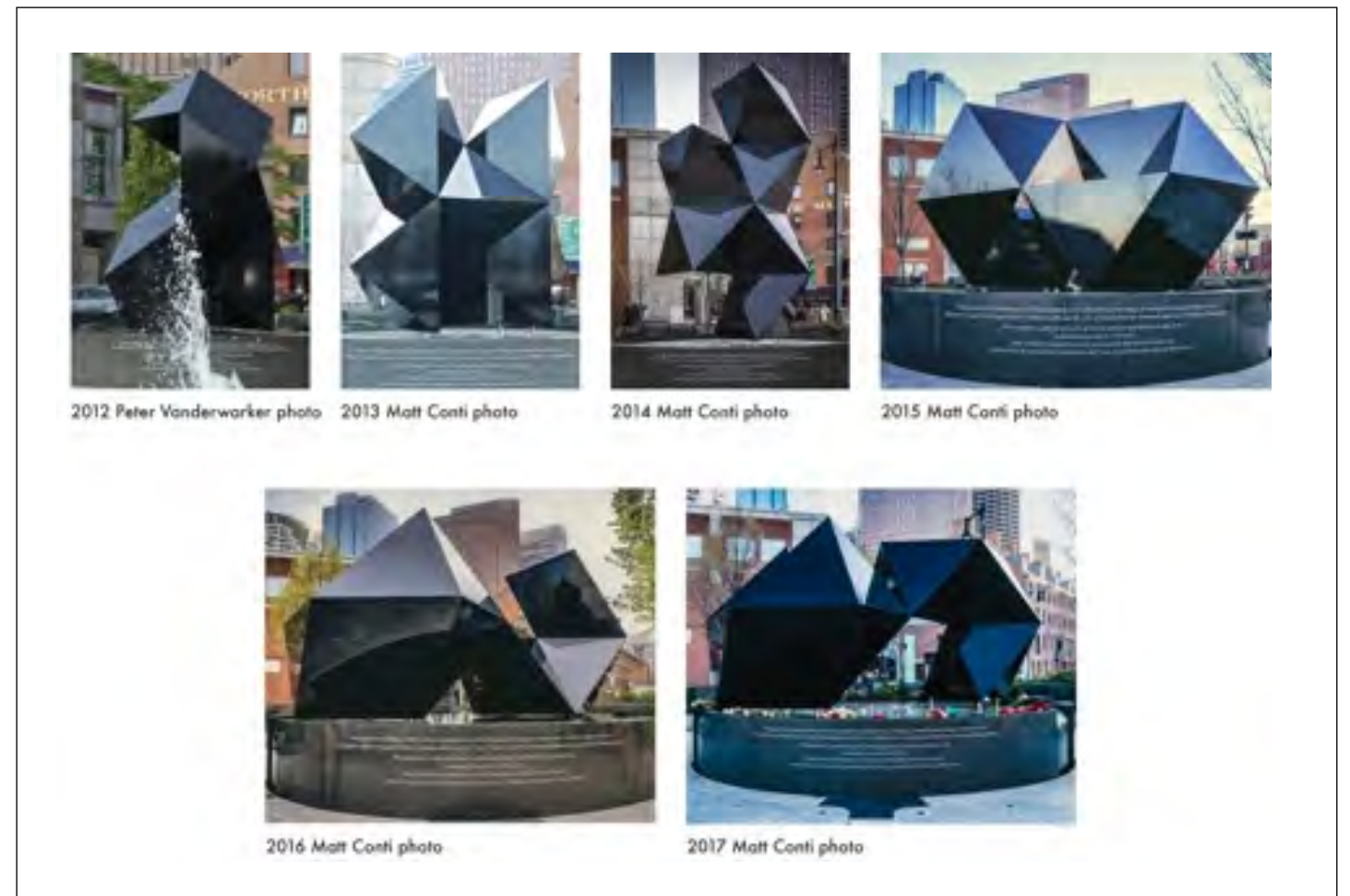
RECONFIGURE, from page 5

The Welcome Reception for New Citizens following the Naturalization Ceremony at Faneuil Hall takes place during the Fall with the date confirmed during the summer. The Park's Anna and Noubar Afeyan Endowed Fund supports the Welcome Reception offered in collaboration with US Courts, The Bostonian Society, Museum of Fine Arts, Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy among others.

Celebrate Public Art! during HubWeek in October is a two-day program featuring the Labyrinth and Abstract Sculpture. During the evening highlighting the Abstract Sculpture, the newly developed curriculum, Geometry as Public Art: Telling A Story, for school children recently piloted at The Eliot K-8 Innovation School, Boston Public School in the North End will be introduced. The Park's Abstract Sculpture, a geometric shape that "tells a story of the immigrant experience", has inspired the development of this curriculum. The intent of the curriculum is to engage students to share their own or their families' immigrant experience and, in doing so, to build common ground as we are all immigrants to the United States, except for Native Americans.

The Najarian Lecture on Human Rights at Faneuil Hall is being held during the late Fall, following a year's reprise. Endowed by George and Dr. Carolann Najarian, this public program of the Park is a "call to action to respond to the societal abuses of today in much the same way as the men and women who gathered at Faneuil Hall in the beginning of the 1890's who heard the eyewitness accounts of the atrocities taking place against the Armenian minority of the Ottoman Empire and during the First World War, spoke passionately about the urgent need for intervention and were called to action".

The Candlelit Labyrinth Walk on Sunday, December 16 from 4:30-6 p.m. with Hot Chocolate and Cookies hosted by The Bostonian Hotel culminates this annual series of programs.



Photos of annual configurations or 2017 Annual Reconfiguration (Matt Conti photo)

Thorough the year, there are always visitors to the Park. "In the city, I'm drawn back to the AHP. There is a certain peace, calm and safety I feel there, especially very late at night....", comments Zareh Zurabyan on Facebook. "It definitely has a certain level of clarity in the middle of all the craziness of the downtown..."

For details on programs, visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org. To receive the E-News and announcements, email helo@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

OBITUARY

Richard Martin Apkarian

Businessman, Dedicated to Community and Family

DETROIT — Richard Martin Apkarian, 75, died on March 18.

He leaves his wife, Paulette, children Kristen (Christopher) Vosbikian and Richard (Alexandra) Apkarian Jr.; and grandchildren Alana and Adam Vosbikian and Elizabeth, Katherine and Martin Apkarian.

The funeral was held on March 22 at St. John Armenian Church, Southfield, with interment at Woodlawn Cemetery.

He was born on February 16, 1943, in Detroit, Michigan to Martin and Varsenick Apkarian. He had one brother, Arthur.

His early years were spent in Detroit where he was educated, played the trumpet, and attended St. John's Church School. He also served as an acolyte. Upon graduation from Ferndale High School in 1960, he joined the Army Reserves and was honorably discharged as a commissioned officer in 1968.

He later attended the University of Detroit and then joined the family business, the Highland Park Candy and Tobacco Company.

Following the sale of Highland Park Candy and Tobacco, he worked as general manager of Fontana Brothers, another wholesale candy and tobacco company. Thereafter, he and his father purchased the Armen Berry Company, a meat by-products business. With his perseverance, talent for business, and

work ethic, he created Westside Cold Storage, a subsidiary of Armen Berry. At that time, Rick's brother, Arthur, returned to Detroit from Boston and joined the family business.

In 1985, following Martin's retirement, the two brothers purchased Design Media Technology, an engineering paper and supply company. After 15 years, Rick and Arthur acquired Specification Services and Print Graphics, which were specialty printing companies. They also formed Canvas Graphics, where they sold artist reproductions, invitations, and other event materials.

Following his retirement in 2009, Rick enjoyed living in his condo, where he was president of the Turnberry Park Condo Association. He also enjoyed his membership at the Detroit Golf Club, special projects meetings, golfing at Kensington, Saturday morning breakfast and Monday night cards.

He loved his family and his church and was a key contributor to the Armenian community. He served as assistant superintendent of St. John's Church School, Parish Council Chairman of St. John Armenian Church, Chairman of the Alex and Marie Manoogian School Board, and Chairman of the AGBU Special Projects Group.

St. James Armenian Apostolic Church and the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada

Present

An illustrated talk by

Raffi Bedrosyan of Toronto

Founder of Project Rebirth, one of the organizers of the reconstruction of Surp Giragos Church of Dikranager/Diyarbakir

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Earthquake Engineer Anne Kiremidjian Receives John Fritz Medal

PALO ALTO, Calif. – Anne Kiremidjian, professor of civil and environmental engineering at Stanford University, received the 2018 John Fritz Medal. The award, presented by the American Association of Engineering Societies (AAES), recognizes one individual each year for scientific or industrial achievements in the pure or applied sciences.

Kiremidjian received the award for her research in the field of probabilistic seismic risk assessment and for her leadership in the classroom, educating the next generation of earthquake engineers.

Kiremidjian's research focuses on building resilient, sustainable cities that can withstand short- and long-term environmental stressors, including earthquakes. Through the design and implementation of wireless sensor systems, the development of robust algorithms for structural damage diagnosis and several other evaluation techniques, Kiremidjian continues to expand conversations around creating strategic civil infrastructure systems, emphasizing the

importance of social, political and economic data in her findings.

Established in 1902, the John Fritz Medal is among the highest honors awarded an engineer. Kiremidjian joins a cadre of recipients including Alexander Graham Bell and David Packard.



Anne Kiremidjian

First in a new series!
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His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate
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DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA (EASTERN)

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SATURDAY, MAY 5

5 PM / EXHIBIT GRAND OPENING

Photos and Artifacts from 50 Years of Life at St. Vartan Cathedral

7 PM / A CONCERT OF SACRED MUSIC

FEATURED ARTISTS: Isabel Bayrakdarian

Hovhannes Mirzoyan and the Nikolai Kachanov Singers
Sahan Arzruni / Haig Mardirosian / Sato Moughalian

TICKETS: \$25

For tickets contact Tamar at (646) 220-9408 / Ani at (516) 521-5396
Shakay at (516) 398-0410 / Margrit at (914) 261-3738

A reception will follow in Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium



SUNDAY, MAY 6

10 AM / THE DIVINE LITURGY

HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II

Celebrant and Homilist

The Gomidas Choir and combined Diocesan parish choirs
Under the direction of Kris Kalfayan
Louise Yardumian, *guest organist*

*Following services, the public is welcome to a
Fellowship Reception in Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium
(Suggested donation: \$10 at door)*

Arts & Living

Akçam to Lecture on New Book at Armenian Museum

WATERTOWN – Clark University Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, the Armenian Museum of America and National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) cosponsor a lecture and book signing to celebrate a new book by Taner Akçam, on April 3 at the Armenian Museum, 65 Main St.

Akçam is the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Professor in Armenian Genocide.

His new book is *Killing Orders: Talat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide*.

The lecture and reception are open and free to the public. The reception will start at 6 p.m. and the lecture at 7:30 p.m. at the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor.

Akçam has made landmark discoveries that prove the Ottoman government's central role in planning the Armenian genocide. Despite decades of scholarly research, the scarcity of direct evidence has allowed Turkey to persist in its denial.

Akçam will discuss the findings published in his groundbreaking new book, *Killing Orders: Talat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide* (2018). He will highlight a recently discovered document, a "smoking gun," which removes the cornerstone of Turkey's denialism. He will show that the killing orders signed by Ottoman Interior Minister Talat Pasha, which the Turkish Government has long discredited, are authentic.

Festival of Composer's Art in Yerevan

YEREVAN and PROVIDENCE, R.I. – The International Festival of Composer's Art dedicated to the great Armenian composer, Grigor Egiazaryan, took place recently in Yerevan.

This was the ninth such festival organized by the State Symphony Orchestra, under the patronage of the President of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, and the support of the Cultural Minister of Armenia. The program of the Festival contained pieces by Egiazaryan and, also his students, and other well-known Armenian composers.

Yerevan-born-and-raised composer, Konstantin Petrossian, who currently lives in Providence, participated in the festival. His composition, *Quintet for Wind Instruments*, was well received.

As Konstantin Petrossian said, "the level of interpretation of the state orchestra was very high. The State Symphony Orchestra, led by Sergey Smbatyan, performed with its usual high standards.

Petrossian's works include symphonies, as well as choral, chamber and vocal pieces. He has been the music and cultural director of Sts. Sahag & Mesrob Armenian Church in Providence, and the artistic director and conductor of the Armenian Choroals of Rhode Island, and the Erevan Chorale and Orchestra in Cambridge, Mass. for many years.

He was honored with the Movses Khorenatsi medal and, also, the Sourp Sahag Mesrob medals.

–Knarik Galstyan



Wind Quintet of the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra



Sirusho on stage

Sirusho Wins Over Young And Old in Concert

LODI, N.J. – Award-winning pop singer Sirusho brought her dazzling mix of contemporary and traditional music to the Felician College's Breslin Theater on Saturday, March 17 at an event hosted by the Hamazkayin Armenian Education and Cultural Society New Jersey Chapter and Armenian Relief Society Agnouni Chapter. (See interview on Page 1.)

By Taleen Babayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

The symbolic concert, which honored the 100th anniversary of the First Republic of Armenia and 90th anniversary of Hamazkayin, gave Diasporans the opportunity to see Sirusho, a native of Armenia, perform live in the full-capacity event, which featured the Nayiri Dance Ensemble, under the leadership of director and choreographer Barkev Sanossian.

The performance went beyond the regular parameters of a concert as the well-seasoned Sirusho took her audience on an entertaining yet emotional journey, sharing behind-the-scenes footage from the filming of her music videos to her childhood years on the stage.

Singing the opening minutes of her performance a cappella, Sirusho displayed her impressive range and continued to do so during her 90-minute set as she sang songs from her recent "Armat" album, which features traditional Armenian folk songs with a modern Western spin, including *Huh-Hah*, *Zartonk* and *Gini Lits* as well as her previous hits *PreGomesh*, *Shorora* and *Qele, Qele*.

Representing a rejuvenated and modernized Armenia, Sirusho bridged all generations during her energetic performance, resulting in audience members dancing in a large shoorch bar in the theater. Her songs transcend generations as she pays homage to those before her while modernizing them with her own touch, making it accessible to current generations.

Highlights of the concert included footage of her *Tariner* duet with Harout Pamboukjian and a short film on her production team's experience filming in Ani for her song *Der Zor*.

Taking a moment, Sirusho reflected on the significance of this song, dedicated to the Armenian Genocide, and the experience of filming the music video in the ancient city, currently within Turkey's borders.

"Armenians have suffered through a difficult history," said Sirusho. "But as much as others try to destroy us, we remain strong in mind, faith and spirit."

As she sang *Der Zor*, whose lyrics tell the story of a girl remembering her grandmother's words of never forgetting her past, her home or her name, the music video shot among the ruins of Ani screened on stage, with Sirusho singing in the church.

Dynamic yet soft-spoken, Sirusho engaged and interacted with the audience throughout her set as well as the Nayiri Dance Ensemble performers on stage, applauding their dances and efforts. Singing to modern and fresh beats as she danced in Armenian-inspired costumes, Sirusho welcomed special guest Andre, an award-winning Armenian musician, as they sang a duet of *Ov Siroun Siroun*. The duo encouraged the audience to sing along with them.

Dedicating the concert to Armenia, a montage of the homeland's sites screened on stage, set to the poetic words of Yeghishe Charentz's "Yes Im Anoush Hayastani," further invigorating the audience as they recited the words together.

"Yes, we have been through challenges but we always stand back up," said Sirusho as she sang *Martiki Yerk* (Marty's Song).

see CONCERT, page 12

Orbelian and Hvorostovsky:

A Musical Collaboration, An Artistic Victory

By Sona Hamalian

LONDON – On March 11, Russia's BraVo International Professional Music Awards announced the DELOS label's recording of "Verdi: Rigoletto" as the 2018 Classical Album of the Year. The BraVo Awards are regarded as Russia's Grammys. The landmark "Rigoletto" recording, conducted by Grammy-nominated Constantine Orbelian, features the late baritone Dmitri Hvorostovsky in the title role, along with an all-star supporting cast, the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra, and the men of the Kaunas State Choir.

Constantine Orbelian is a globally acclaimed pianist and conductor, and an Honored Artist of the Russian Federation. Since June 2016, he has helmed the National Opera and Ballet Theater of Armenia (the Yerevan Opera House) as its General Director and Artistic Director.

Orbelian's recording of Sviridov's "Russia Cast Adrift," also featuring Dmitri Hvorostovsky, along with the State Symphony Orchestra of St. Petersburg, received a Grammy nomination last year, in the category of Best Conductor on a Solo Vocal Album.

Orbelian spoke recently in London, where he had traveled to attend the Royal Opera's Hvorostovsky Memorial Concert on March 18.

Q – For more than 25 years, up till your appointment as General and Artistic Director of the Yerevan Opera House, you were a central figure in Russia's musical life – as Music Director of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra and the Philharmonia of Russia. Can you describe your feelings when your recording of "Rigoletto" won BraVo's Classical Album of the Year Award?

A – My musical journey in Russia was an extraordinarily intensive. Scrolling back to October 2000, I met with Dmitri Hvorostovsky in New York to discuss a recording contract with DELOS Productions (the recording company with which I work). We began producing our first recordings in the summer of 2001 and continued until the summer of 2016. Our recording of Verdi's magnificent opera "Rigoletto" took place in Kaunas, Lithuania, where I am the chief conductor of the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra. Tragically, Dmitri had been diagnosed with terminal brain cancer in June 2015 and after that diagnosis he told me that his dream was to record "Rigoletto," which was his signature role for many years and a role that he had performed at the greatest opera houses of the world. So I was determined to fulfill his wishes on the highest possible level.

Any recording with Dmitri would require a stellar supporting cast. Luckily, in July 2016, I was able to assemble a top international cast, which included the glorious American superstar soprano Nadine Sierra, and Francesco Demuro, the Italian tenor.

Sadly, given the time it takes to edit and master a full opera recording, the CD was released in the US on November 10, and it was received in London on the November 22, 2017 – the day Dmitri passed away.

I was thrilled to learn that our recording of "Rigoletto" was chosen as Best Classical Album of the prestigious BraVo Awards in Moscow. The recording has been receiving wonderful reviews from around the world from top music critics, but winning the award in Dmitri's beloved home country, at the Bolshoi Theater, was extremely moving and touching. Dmitri's parents were there to

see INTERVIEW, page 15



ARTS & LIVING



Sirusho pays tribute to soldiers in Artsakh

Sirusho Wins Over Young and Old in Concert

CONCERT from page 11

Another portion of her performance was dedicated to love as she encouraged those in the audience to fight for love and never let it go.

The powerful ending to the concert brought all of the dancers back on stage as Sirusho sang her Eurovision hit *Qele, Qele* and the Nayiri Dance Ensemble performed the challenging “Bert Bar,” in which the men stand on the shoulders of other men, to great fanfare.

“The beautiful talented Armenian youth of Nayiri Dance Ensemble performed with Sirusho today, proud of their culture and honored to share the stage with a world renowned star,” said Ani Tchaghlasian, Chairwoman of Hamazkayin Armenian Education and Cultural Society, Eastern Region. “We say proudly today that Turkey failed.”

Sanossian reflected on the importance of “keeping our rich culture alive through

Armenian traditional folklore dance.” Noting that more than 40 Armenian villages each have had their own characteristic dances, Sanossian said his dancers were “excited and happy to learn dances from their own personal histories and backgrounds, including the dances of our Kavars.”

“It was an indescribable feeling to perform and dance with Sirusho, and even more so to meet her and get to know her as a person even though she is such a huge pop star,” said Sanossian.

“We were very pleased and honored to join with our sister organization, Hamazkayin of NJ, for this concert with Sirusho to celebrate the and 90th anniversary of Hamazkayin Armenian Education and Cultural Society,” said Zepure Tekeyan, Chairwoman, Armenian Relief Society of Eastern USA Agnoui Chapter.



Sirusho walks through the audience.

Tekeyan Cultural Association - Los Angeles and Glendale/Pasadena Chapters

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MORGAN O'SHAUGHNESSEY, *Viola* – NIALL FERGUSON, *Cello*

Aram Khachaturian

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Danielle Segen, *Mezzo-Soprano*

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Danielle Segen

Garrett Schoonover

Mezzo-Soprano

Baritone

Romanos Melikian

Franz Schubert

Geghouni Chitchyan

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Refreshments

All are welcome

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Dikran Tchouhadjian

For more information, contact: (626) 398-1142



ARTS & LIVING

Sirusho Mixes Traditional and New Forms

SIRUSHO, from page 1

And while her music has evolved, incorporating pop, folk, R&B and soul, Sirusho's innate desire and ability to preserve traditional Armenian music, with an up-tempo modern twist, remains, bringing her legions of fans of all generations and countries.

Following her electric New Jersey concert on March 17, Taleen Babayan sat down with Sirusho for an interview conducted in Armenian as the singer and her production team prepared to travel to Boston for scheduled engagements and performances.

A positive role model, Sirusho exudes talent, grace and smarts, proving just how much she — and her country — have to offer the world.

Taleen Babayan: Congratulations on a spectacular performance that was composed of many cultural, historical and contemporary layers. Your concert went beyond music and had rich and informative aspects, including a short film of your team traveling to Ani to film a music video for your song *Der Zor*. How did you come up with the idea of traveling to Western Armenia (Eastern Turkey) and why did you feel it was necessary to travel there and take on potential challenges and risks?

Sirusho Harutyunyan: I always wanted to go to Ani to film a music video and perhaps I voiced this wish aloud that brought it into being. I first came up with the idea during Pregomesh (Sirusho's 2012 single) because I wanted to show that Ani was ours. Along with my production team, we researched the trip and realized it wasn't possible at that time. During my next album we tried again and mapped out the journey, taking into consideration the technical aspects of the production and the risk of filming a song about the Armenian Genocide in Turkey. When we recorded *Der Zor* (from her 2016 *Armat* album), we realized, yes, we have to film there, no matter what. We learned other groups from Armenia had traveled to Ani and were able to film so that gave us some hope that we could do it too. We did come across challenges when we traveled to Ani, but it was a significant experience for all of us and tied our production team together because we realized how dedicated we are to our work and to our goal of filming in Ani, which allowed us to forge ahead. It was one of the most unforgettable experiences of my life.

TB: Another part of the concert I enjoyed

was the behind the scenes footage of your duet with Harout Pamboukjian for his signature song *Tariner*. Why do you think it is important for today's popular contemporary singers such as yourself to honor and respect the legacy and work of those before you?

SH: I have parents who traveled through the same journey (Sirusho's father is actor/director Hrachya Harutyunyan and her mother is singer Syuzan Margaryan). As a representative of my generation, I applaud and thank those who came before me for their hard work. It's a beautiful thing. We can't forget the journeys others took before us and we have to always show gratitude and learn from them. I remember listening to Harout Pamboukjian with my friends at parties and gatherings when I was younger. For me, I associate his music with those years. Even if he himself wasn't present, his voice was present among us. Through his music, he takes his listeners through happy times as well as painful moments. He has entered people's hearts and I was just happy to have the opportunity to sing and record together. It's hard to re-record a song already loved by so many but my wish to collaborate was sincere and from my heart.

TB: You come from an artistically talented family and I'm sure arts and culture were always encouraged in your home. Did you know from an early age you wanted to dedicate your life to singing? What obstacles did you have to overcome, if any?

SH: From a very young age, perhaps 7-years-old, I sang. I never made the choice to become a singer. I just sang and everything went into motion from there. From a young age, because my parents were well known, whatever success I had, people attributed that success to them and not me. In a way that was hurtful. But I try not to pay attention to whatever is not the truth. When you show your talents and your successes, people eventually see that it's you who has the talent and the ability.

TB: But your voice speaks for itself. You opened up the concert a cappella and sang with no musical accompaniment for the first few minutes. You sang live the whole show, especially when you were dancing, while other singers may have relied on lip sync.

SH: It's my hope that when people hear my voice and see me in concert, demonstrating my hard work on stage, they see that as well. The smart ones understand.

TB: You burst onto the international scene in 2008 during the Eurovision competition for your song *Qele, Qele*, which to this day holds the record for most points on behalf of Armenia. When you were going through that experience, did you feel a shift or turning point

mentality makes us feel stronger and safer. While living outside (the homeland) it's natural to feel lonely and even while living in Armenia. But we aren't alone. We should always be together and I want to remember the history we went through together and how strong we've



The cover of "Armat" by Sirusho

in your career that you could open up Armenian music not just to Armenians but to the world at large?

SH: When I first started out, my family and I came to the US where there were opportunities from different music companies and labels. I am happy my parents and I understood that we didn't want to be reliant on these companies and that I wanted to make my own decisions. If I went with a label, I wouldn't have been able to do the "Armat" project (her 2016 album and subsequent music videos and documentaries), which is very Armenian and a sizable undertaking. For me, it is more enjoyable to make my own decisions. I don't want anyone to tell me I can't do this or that because I am contractually obliged. After Eurovision, a lot of opportunities opened up since the competition gave me more exposure and a larger audience on the international scene. I remember one time I went into a store in Greece and the clerk, who was Greek, said she loved my songs, especially *Shorora* (from her 2005 album, "Sheram"). I was touched because this is an Armenian folk song.

TB: In addition to recording pop music, you have made a real effort to record Armenian traditional and folk music with a modern spin as we have heard on your "Armat" album. As an artist, why is it significant to remember your cultural and historical roots?

SH: My thought is that it is our natural, human need to belong in order to feel safe. We are all Armenian and our shared history and

been to be here as a people today. We have had strong forebears and heroes and we stand on their shoulders. We have to honor our heroes and their moral values, power and strength and we have to continue that legacy with pride and find that inner strength within all of us.

TB: Your talents, music and professionalism bridges Armenians from around the world so I want to ask where do you see yourself artistically in your future and what do you see for Armenia's future?

SH: Artistically, I'm not sure where I'm headed and that's what's most interesting about my work. I compose and write my own songs and what I write tomorrow is unexpected. I myself sometimes don't know what I will create. It may seem to me everything is fine and then I write a song about something I didn't even realize was bothering me or making me uncomfortable. I didn't talk about it or even feel it but independently of me it became a song. Maybe the song understands me better than I understand myself. The songs suggest what follows. When the songs are born then I decide what direction to go in. I wouldn't be surprised if my next album is in the international genre.

As for us as a country, my hope is tied to my generation and the following generations. Whatever profession someone chooses, her or she should strive to be the best. Whether you're a driver or a doctor, be a hard-working professional because that way you can help your country, your family and the world.

St. James Armenian Church

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SATURDAY, APRIL 14, 2018
8:00PM

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ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

CALIFORNIA

APRIL 12 — In celebration of Legacy of Poetry Month, the Center for Literary Arts of San José will host Peter Balakian for a night of reading and conversation with San José State University President Mary Papazian. The Hammer Theatre (101 Paseo De San Antonio, 95113) at 7 p.m. Afterwards, there will be a VIP reception and book-signing. <http://www.litart.org/peter-balakian/> For tickets, visit: <https://web.ovationtix.com/trs/pe.c/10199025> Tickets are \$10 for students, \$20 for regular admission, and \$50 for VIP

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 Carribean’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 Jaine.

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

APRIL 3 — Clark University Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, the Armenian Museum of America and National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) cosponsor a lecture and book signing to celebrate a new book by Taner Akçam, on April 3 at the Armenian Museum, 65 Main St. Akçam is the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Professor in Armenian Genocide. His new book is Killing Orders: Talat Pasha’s Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide. The lecture and reception are open and free to the public. The reception will start at 6 p.m. and the lecture at 7:30 p.m. at the Adele and Haig Der Manuelian galleries, 3rd floor. Akçam has made landmark discoveries that prove the Ottoman government’s central role in the Armenian Genocide.

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

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

APRIL 12 — “A Farewell to Arms: Broken Hopes and Total Departure from the Homeland,” Ümit Kurt’s presentation on Aintab with slides of his translation

of Baboian’s The Heroic Battle of Aintab. Presented by the Tekeyan Cultural Association and the Armenian Museum of America (AMA), at AMA, 65 Main St, Watertown, MA, 7:30 pm, Free admission. For information, email tcadirector@aol.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 or contact info@stthagop.com.

APRIL 15 – Vase Painting, Wine & Unwind, 5 p.m., Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge MA. Vase painting led by artist Arevik Tserunyan, entertainment, food and wine. All proceeds to benefit medical outreach for the Karahunge and Shirak regions in Armenia. Donation: \$35; limited seats. To reserve a seat, call/text: Amalia, 617.669.7444; Marianna, 617.966.1339; or Naneh, 857.389.8362. Sponsored by Watertown Armenian Club and Holy Trinity Armenian School.

APRIL 19 — “3D printing: the wave of the future. Come and learn about efforts being made in Armenia and the U.S. Sponsored by the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA) with co-sponsorship by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). 7 p.m. At the Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic St., Arlington.

APRIL 20 – Raffi Bedrosyan of Toronto lecture: “Islamized Hidden Armenians of Turkey - Living Victims of a Genocide,” organized by the Tekeyan Cultural Association for the Armenian Genocide Commemorative Committee, Friday, 7:30 pm, Watertown/Belmont location to be announced. For more information, email tcadirector@aol.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.

APRIL 21 — Boston Armenian Genocide Commemoration, "United Against Genocide" organized by the Boston Armenian Genocide Committee, Saturday April 21st from 3-5 pm at the Armenian Heritage Park. Buses will be provided from St. James, Watertown and Holy Trinity, Cambridge. For more information, email 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.

APRIL 28 – Trinity Talent Showcase, 7 p.m., doors open; 7:30 p.m., Showcase begins; Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge MA. All invited to an evening of entertainment featuring talent from the Holy Trinity Church community; Robert Clarke, magician and juggler; and music by the Black Sea Combo. Cabaret Table Seating: \$20 per person/\$100 for table of 6 max. (RSVP deadline April 15); Auditorium seating: \$10 in advance; \$15 at the door. For further information or to reserve online, log onto <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/trinity-talent-showcase-tickets-43801836472>, or call the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632.

MAY 4 – ANNUAL MEETING & LUNCHEON, Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA). Meeting, 9:30 a.m.; Luncheon, 12 noon. Speaker: Patti Fletcher, author of Disrupters: Success Strategies from Women Who Break the Mold. Alumnae Hall, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA. Info & Reservations: info@aiwainternational.org or 617-926-0171.

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 — 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

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

MAY 11 — Welcome His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, to a Celebration of a Life of Service: Rev. Mampre A. Kouzouian on the 60th Anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Under the auspices of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate. Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Hrashapar Service in Sanctuary, 6 p.m. All are invited to attend. Celebration Banquet, 7:p.m., in the Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, by advance paid reservation, RSVP deadline April 30. For an invitation or further information, <http://www.htaac.org/calendar/event/525/> or call the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632.

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

JUNE 9 — The Friends of Armenian Culture Society will host the 67th annual Armenian Night at the Pops on Saturday, at 8 p.m. at Symphony Hall in Boston, to celebrate the achievements of one of Boston’s own – the talented violinist Haig Hovsepien. A winner of the 2017 Boston Symphony Orchestra’s Concerto Competition and a rising sophomore at the Cleveland Institute of Music, Hovsepien will appear as soloist with the Boston Pops Orchestra under the direction of Keith Lockhart. He will perform the Sibelius Violin Concerto in D-minor. The Boston Pops will present Dance to the Movies where top choreographers bring to life classic movie dances of yesterday, starring the Boston Pops, Dancing Celebrity Pros, So You Think You Can Dance top finalists, and singing stars from American Idol and The Voice. Tickets \$95, \$70 and \$35, and are available at: www.FACSBoston.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

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

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

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ARTS & LIVING

Orbelian and Hvorostovsky: A Musical Collaboration, an Artistic Victory

INTERVIEW, from page 11

receive the award and the entire audience of the Bolshoi Theater gave them a spontaneous standing ovation. Everyone was in tears.

Your collaboration with Dmitri Hvorostovsky stands as among the most celebrated in recent music history. With regard to “Rigoletto,” what was your experience like working with Hvorostovsky, as well as the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra and the Kaunas State Choir?

A – Working with Dmitri was a unique and extraordinary gift which fate brought to me. At the same time, the preparations for every concert or recording were always very intensive, and I had a huge responsibility to prepare each and every orchestra to Dmitri’s extremely high standards. Luckily, Dmitri’s previous experience in working with the Kaunas Orchestra and Chorus was very positive when we recorded another signature role, Verdi’s “Simon Boccanegra,” in 2013. The Kaunas Philharmonic and administration of the Orchestra are extremely cooperative and helpful during the recording period, and our stellar recording engineers and producers Vilius and Aleksandra Keras are the best in the business.

Opera News has described Hvorostovsky’s voice as “the best kind of embrace – exceptionally warm, powerful but not smothering, drawing you in and not letting go.” In technical and esthetic terms, what does it mean for a conductor to work with an outstanding baritone such as Hvorostovsky?

A – Working with Dmitri was a huge responsibility. My main objective in working with singers is to allow them to feel free enough to give them support and the opportunity to express themselves fully and completely. I think that Dmitri felt my ability to give him total support and freedom in expression. Dmitri and I not only worked occasionally on various projects, but worked intensively every year for prolonged concert tours and recordings at the most important concert halls around the world. We traveled together and lived in the same hotels for many weeks every year.

Hvorostovsky was also known for his extraordinary humility, his kindness to his colleagues and backstage workers alike. How rare is this in the world of opera?

A – Dmitri was hugely demanding of himself and pushed himself to the limit – physically, musically, artistically, and dramatically. He adored working with colleagues who devoted their lives to their art, who were constantly

searching for new, original, and, most of all, convincing interpretations of the famous operas in which he performed with his colleagues.

On March 18, 2018, London’s Royal Opera House presented a concert in memory of Hvorostovsky, featuring many of his friends including the Royal Opera Chorus, the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House. What can you tell us about Hvorostovsky’s relationship with the Royal Opera?

A – Dmitri became an overnight superstar when he won the BBC Singer of the World competition in 1989. Shortly afterwards, he moved to London and became a star at the Royal Opera House in the next seasons. London was his home, the birthplace of his children, and the Royal Opera House witnessed some of his most important performances. Thankfully, some of them have been preserved on DVD. His longtime relationship with the extraordinarily gifted Music Director of the Royal Opera House, Antonio Pappano, was wonderful. They worked on many productions together and respected each other tremendously.

Hvorostovsky has also appeared on the stage of the Yerevan Opera House with you, in 2012, thrilling audiences and critics alike.

A – The first concert that we did together in Armenia – which took place with the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra at the Khachaturian Concert Hall in September 2012 – was of dual significance. Firstly, it was Dmitri’s first solo performance in Yerevan; and, secondly, Dmitri loved singing a song called *The Shimmering of the Birch Trees*, composed by my uncle, Konstantin Orbelian. My uncle was living in Glendale at the time and made the trip to Yerevan specially to perform with Dmitri that evening. During the performance of my uncle’s song, the entire orchestra had tears in their eyes, and, of course, I had tears running down my cheeks. It was memorable, historic, and very important for my uncle to be on the same stage with the most glorious and beautiful voice in the world. Besides, Dmitri’s incredible interpretations included not only arias from the great Italian, French, and Russian operas, but also songs by our beloved Arno Babajanyan.

Our second concert in Yerevan with Dmitri took place on May 12, 2015.

After the concert, President Serzh Sargsyan awarded the Armenian Friendship Medal to me, and Minister of Culture Hasmik Poghosyan presented the Gold Medal of the Ministry of Culture to Dmitri.



Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

Apricot Walnut Cake with Cinnamon Lemon Glaze

INGREDIENTS:

1 (18.25 oz.) yellow or lemon cake mix
1 (16 oz.) can apricots, drained (reserve syrup)
2 tablespoons apricot brandy or brandy of choice, optional
1 teaspoon vanilla or almond extract
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon lemon zest
1/2 teaspoon allspice
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1/2 cup chopped golden raisins or dates

INSTRUCTIONS:

Note: Use apricots and syrup to replace the water in this recipe.

Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease and flour a 10-inch tube pan or bundt pan and set aside.

Drain and dice apricots, reserve syrup in a bowl, and set aside.

In a mixing bowl, prepare cake mix (using all ingredients except water) according to the directions on box. Add the apricots, syrup, brandy, vanilla, cinnamon, zest, and allspice to the bowl, and beat for 3-4 minutes at medium speed. Fold in the walnuts and raisins or dates and toss to combine.

Sprinkle some walnuts on the bottom of the pan, pour the batter into the pan, and bake according to the directions. Cool cake in pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove from pan and cool on wire rack.

Drizzle with Cinnamon Lemon Glaze and garnish with walnuts or diced dried or fresh chopped apricots. Serve with fresh whipped cream.

CINNAMON LEMON GLAZE:

Sift 1 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar with 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon in a bowl. Add one tablespoon milk or cream, one teaspoon vanilla, and one teaspoon lemon juice, and mix until smooth. Add a few more drops of milk or cream if ingredients are too stiff. Drizzle glaze on top and over sides of cake and let dry before serving.

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

from previous page

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

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

APRIL 1 — Sunday, Easter Sunday Cabaret Nitecap with The Devastating Lynne Charnay. Happy Birthday Show celebrating 93 years. Special guest Frank Basile. 7-8:30 p.m. \$15 cover and 2 drink minimum per guest. Seating from 6:30 p.m. Cabaret favorites plus the premiere of a new song from “Gorky’s Dream Garden” opera by Michelle Ekizian. At Don’t Tell Mama, W. 46th St., NY. For more info visit www.donttellmamanyc.com

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 or call (212) 239-6200. For discount tickets: www.telechargeoffers.com or call (212) 947-8844. Or contact the theatre: info@panasianrep.org, (212) 868-4030.

FRIENDS OF THE ARMENIAN CULTURE SOCIETY presents

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Winner of the 2017 Boston Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition

and **BOSTON POPS ORCHESTRA**
with **KEITH LOCKHART**, conductor

also featuring...

DANCE TO THE MOVIES



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Ilham Aliyev, the 'Emperor'

By Edmond Y. Azadian

As the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chairs continue to spin their wheels in their efforts to settle the Karabakh issue, armed with the mantra that there is only a non-military solution to the Karabakh conflict, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev continues to escalate the war rhetoric in an echo chamber where there is no opposing response.

The main focus of the OSCE co-chairs – the US, Russia, France and the UK – is the Karabakh conflict, and yet, President Aliyev goes over their heads to claim Armenia's territory as well.

The first such claim was made on February 10 when he was addressing his New Azerbaijan Party Congress.

Many in Armenia as well as around the world dismissed that statement as harmless election campaign rhetoric. However, he reiterated these claims on March 19 in his Novruz (new year's) message to the Azerbaijani people. He promised to return Azerbaijanis to Yerevan, Armenia's southeastern Syunik province and the area around Lake Sevan, describing those territories as "historical Azerbaijani lands."

He concluded his speech by stating, "This is our strategic goal and we must gradually move to achieve that goal."

To lay claims on a neighbor's territory is a declaration of war in international law. As many countries reserve the right to make a preemptive strike in similar situations, Aliyev has provided ample legal base for the exercise of just such a right. But the situation in the Caucasus is too complex to resort launch a tit-for-tat response.

In the broader political context, Azerbaijan's older brother Turkey has been bullying its neighborhood with impunity and is inspiring Azerbaijan to emulate its games. Armenia's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Tigran Balayan has stated that Aliyev's territorial appetite for Armenia is growing "because of the indifference of the world community."

During a press conference with Luxembourg's foreign minister on March 27 in Yerevan, Edward Nalbandian, Armenia's foreign minister, stated, "Azerbaijani creativity has reached a point that it calls the 2,800-year-old Armenian capital of Yerevan 'Azeri territory.'"

This continuing saga has far surpassed the nature of election rhetoric to become a strategic and existential threat to Armenia. There are some objective reasons that are fueling Aliyev's overconfidence, chief among them being the perception of Armenia's weakness.

Emil Sanamyan, who is knowledgeable about Azerbaijan's internal politics, suggests there is an emotional component to Aliyev's outrageous claims. Indeed, he states that Aliyev's father (and predecessor), Heydar, is believed to hail from rural Zangezur, whereas his mother's family traces its roots to Yerevan and Spitak. Both families were displaced to Nakhichevan during the Armenian-Azerbaijan fighting of 1918-1920.

Before 1918, there was no nation or country of Azerbaijan for Mr. Aliyev to base his historic claims against Armenia. Sure enough, Azerbaijan's petrodollars have bought some pseudo academics to manufacture an ersatz history for Azerbaijan to gain legitimacy among the family of nations.

A Moscow-based Azerbaijani analyst, Fouad Abassov, who has been trying to convince Russian media that Azerbaijan is a more loyal ally of Russia than Armenia, recently conducted an interview with prominent Azerbaijani political scientist Orkhan Jemal on the Karabakh issue. The latter stated that Azerbaijan will not only recapture Karabakh but also Armenia. This demonstrates that the issue has moved from the level of election rhetoric to academic circles and has become one of the components of Azerbaijan's state policy.

Here again Azerbaijan's economic progress and integration within the Caucasus economy contrasts with Armenia's isolation.

tion.

Although the messages from Moscow's official circles seem somewhat reassuring, the comments of its pundits do not differ much from Azeri analysts. A Russian think tank called Analysis of Strategies and Technologies has conducted a study and released its conclusions, which predict the worsening of the situation during the coming months for the following reasons: a) Azerbaijan's technical superiority, b) possible rise in oil prices to further building Azerbaijan's arsenal, c) demographic imbalance, especially Armenia's depopulation and d) the perception of Armenia's inability to protect territories outside Nagorno Karabakh. Any outbreak of hostilities may end in Baku's favor.

There are certainly some truths in these conclusions. However, had Azerbaijan's leadership been convinced of the veracity of the above statements, they would not have missed an opportunity for a blitzkrieg. The April 2016 skirmish convinced the Azeri side that they are not at that stage – yet.

In modern warfare, the numerical superiority of combatants is no strategic advantage as the entire operation is based on technology. The Armenian army is numerically inferior to its Azerbaijani counterpart but military planners in Armenia believe that they have the technological edge on their side.

If war breaks out, Armenia will be squeezed from both sides, Azerbaijan's mainland and Nakhichevan, where a Turkish base



has already been created. In that instant, Ankara and Moscow will have to consult each other, with Ankara certainly backing Azerbaijan. But will Russia support Armenia in the same manner?

When the US abandoned the Kurds in Syria, leaving them to the tender mercies of Turkey, Ankara consulted and secured Moscow's neutrality to launch its Olive Branch assault on Afrin. The same scenario may repeat in the Caucasus, too.

We have to be bear in mind that the appointment of John Bolton as President Trump's National Security advisor may turn the entire world into a powder keg. He is reported to have advised Israel to attack Iran. If, God forbid, he imparts the same advice to Turkey, forcing that NATO ally to face Russia, then a situation may get out of hand. Mr. Bolton has been known to be a diplomat whose reckless political impulses create dangerous consequences.

As Armenia has been improving its relations with Europe, all the while complaining about Moscow's arms sales to Azerbaijan, President Vladimir Putin's government has dispatched a delegation to Armenia to make sure that Yerevan does not stray too far from the Russian fold.

Russia intends to fulfill its allied commitments to Armenia in the security and defense sectors, assured Konstantin Zatulin, the first deputy chairman of the State Duma Committee for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, during a press conference in Armenia's Parliament.

"In the future," he added, "Russia will also view any military threat against Armenia as a threat against itself." He also dismissed Aliyev's threats and claims as election rhetoric.

At this point, it is a serious question whether Mr. Zatulin's statements and reassurances can serve as a counterbalance to Aliyev's rhetoric and the predictions of Russian pundits.

Although Armenia's armed forces are taking these verbal threats and the Azeri war games very seriously, the politicians and the news media there are not. There is a nonchalance which is very dangerous.

Aliyev may be behaving as a modern-day emperor but we may laugh at him only at our own peril.

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

How Azerbaijan Distorts UN Security Council Resolutions

(Part 2)

Last week, I described Azerbaijan's distortions of two of the four UN Security Council Resolutions adopted in 1993. I will now present the remaining two Resolutions:

Excerpts from UN Security Council Resolution 874, adopted October 14, 1993:

"Calls upon the parties concerned to make effective and permanent the cease-fire established as a result of the direct contacts undertaken with the assistance of the Government of the Russian Federation in support of the CSCE Minsk Group."

"Expresses the conviction that all other pending questions arising from the conflict... should be settled expeditiously through peaceful negotiations in the context of the CSCE Minsk process."

"Calls for the immediate implementation of the reciprocal and urgent steps provided for in the CSCE Minsk Group's 'Adjusted timetable', including the withdrawal of forces from recently occupied territories and the removal of all obstacles to communications and transportation."

"Calls on all parties to refrain from all violations of international humanitarian law and renews its call in resolutions 822 (1993) and 853 (1993) for unimpeded access for international humanitarian relief efforts in all areas affected by the conflict."

"Urges all States in the region to refrain from any hostile acts and from any interference or intervention which would lead to the widening of the conflict and undermine peace and security in the region."

Azerbaijan has violated every one of the above clauses. In addition to the frequent violations of the mandated cease-fire, the Azerbaijani forces attacked Artsakh in April 2016, causing major damage to border towns and killing civilians. By cutting off the ears of elderly Armenian villagers and decapitating several Armenian soldiers, Azerbaijan's armed forces committed a barbaric act and a war crime!

Excerpt from UN Security Council Resolution 884, adopted November 12, 1993:

"Calls upon the Government of Armenia to use its influence to achieve compliance by the Armenians of the Nagorno Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic with Resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993) and 874 (1993), and to ensure that the forces involved are not provided with the means to extend their military campaign further."

Armenian officials usually neither respond to the Azeri accusations regarding the UN Security Council Resolutions nor try to set the record straight. The only exception was President Serzh Sargsyan's comprehensive speech at the

U.N. General Assembly on Sept. 24, 2014.

President Sargsyan stated: "While discussing the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement I cannot but address the four UN Security Council Resolutions, which were adopted during the war, that every so often are being exploited by the Azerbaijani authorities in order to justify their obstructive policy."

"It is about those four Resolutions that demanded unconditionally as a matter of priority cessation of all military hostilities. Azerbaijan failed to comply. Azerbaijan's own non-compliance with the fundamental demands of these Resolutions made impossible their full implementation. The Resolutions contained calls upon the parties to cease bombardments and air strikes targeting the peaceful civilian population, to refrain from violating the principles of the international humanitarian law but instead Azerbaijan continued its indiscriminate bombardments of the civilian population. Azerbaijan did not spare children, women and old persons thus gravely violating all legal and moral norms of the international humanitarian law."

"Now Azerbaijan cynically refers to these Resolutions – refers selectively, pulling them out of context as a prerequisite for the settlement of the problem. The adequate interpretation of the UN Security Council Resolutions is not possible without correct understanding of the hierarchy of the demands set therein."

"The Resolutions inter alia request the restoration of economic, transport and energy links in the region (UN SC Resolution 853) and removal of all obstacles to communications and transportation (UN SC Resolution 874). It is no secret that Azerbaijan and Turkey imposed blockade on Nagorno Karabakh and the Republic of Armenia from the outset of the conflict. The Azerbaijani President in his statements even takes pride in this fact promising his own public that direction would remain the priority of Azerbaijan's foreign policy."

"The above mentioned UN Security Council Resolutions called upon Azerbaijan to establish direct contacts with Nagorno Karabakh. Azerbaijan refused to establish any direct contacts with Nagorno Karabakh, which was a legally equal party to the Cease-fire Agreement concluded in 1994 as well as a number of other international Agreements; moreover, Azerbaijan preaches hatred towards people it claims it wants to see as a part of their State."

"None of the UN Security Council Resolutions identifies Armenia as a conflicting party. Our country is called upon only 'to continue to exert its influence' over the Nagorno Karabakh Armenians (UNSC Resolutions 853, 884) in order to cease the conflict. Armenia has fully complied, and due to its efforts a Cease-fire Agreement was concluded in 1994. All UN Security Council Resolutions recognize Nagorno Karabakh as a party to the conflict."

"Azerbaijani authorities have failed to implement the fundamental demands of the Security Council Resolutions, including abiding and sticking by the humanitarian norms."

"Incidentally, Azerbaijan has been gravely violating this demand every now and then. Azerbaijan's cruel and inhumane treatment of the Armenian civilian prisoners of war regularly results in their deaths. Although, I think, one shall not be surprised about it because it is the same State that suppresses and exercises the most inhumane treatment of its own

people. A clear proof of it was the decision of the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture to suspend its visit to Azerbaijan due to obstructions it encountered in the conduct of official Baku."

"The Co-Chairmanship of the OSCE Minsk Group is the only specialized structure that has been dealing with the Nagorno Karabakh issue according to the mandate granted by the international community. While Azerbaijan is very well aware that it could not possibly deceive or misinform the Minsk Group, which is very-well immersed in the essence of the problem, it attempts to transpose the conflict settlement to other platforms trying to depict it as a territorial dispute or exploiting the factor of religious solidarity. That is ironic, since Armenia traditionally enjoys very warm relations with the Islamic nations both in the Arabic world or, for instance, with our immediate neighbor Iran."

To summarize Azerbaijan's distortions of the four UN Resolutions:

1) The UN Security Council Resolutions were adopted in 1993 during the height of the war between Artsakh/Armenia and Azerbaijan. These Resolutions reflect the conditions on the ground at the time. Since then, the situation has dramatically changed.

2) Despite the cease-fire that was signed in 1994 between Armenia, Artsakh and Azerbaijan, the latter keeps violating both the ceasefire and the UN Security Council Resolutions by its frequent attacks on both Artsakh and Armenia.

3) Azerbaijan opposes Artsakh's participation in the negotiations, thus violating the UN Security Council Resolutions.

4) The Minsk Group co-chairs, composed of the United States, France, and Russia, are the official mediators of the Artsakh conflict, not the UN Security Council and not the UN General Assembly.

5) In fact, when Azerbaijan brought the Artsakh issue to the UN General Assembly in 2008, all three Minsk Group co-chairs voted against it. Azerbaijan's proposal was adopted by a small number of States. The overwhelming majority abstained.

6) By blockading Artsakh, Azerbaijan is violating the four UN Security Council Resolutions.

7) Importantly, Armenia is mentioned in the UN Security Council Resolutions, not as a party to the conflict, but only as an intermediary to persuade Artsakh Armenians to comply with these Resolutions. Azerbaijan's President Heydar Aliyev acknowledged this fact during his speech to the Parliament on February 23, 2001: "Four resolutions have been adopted in the United Nations Security Council.... It is written in these four resolutions that the occupational army should leave occupied lands of Azerbaijan. But there is not a word 'Armenia', that is, there are no words 'the Armenian armed forces'. But in one of resolutions it is written to demand from Armenia to exert influence on Mountainous Garabagh (Nagorno-Karabakh). In reality, it is an Armenian-Azerbaijan war. In reality, Armenia has made aggression against Azerbaijan. However, nobody recognizes Armenia as an aggressor in a document of any international organization...."

Azeris who continue to distort the four UN Security Council Resolutions should follow former President Heydar Aliyev's statement and refrain from accusing Armenia of violating these Resolutions when in fact Azerbaijan is the one not complying with them.

European Human Rights Court Condemns Turkey over Jailed Journalists

By Alasdair Sandford

TURKEY acted illegally by detaining two prominent journalists who were arrested in the wake of the military coup attempt in July 2016, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has ruled.

It is the first judgement by the Strasbourg court relating to the situation facing journalists in the country, which imprisons more media workers than any other in the world – according to one campaign group.

The ECHR found that in the cases of journalists Mehmet Altan and Sahin Alpay there had been violations of the right to liberty and security, and of the right to freedom of expression.

The pair are just two of hundreds of journalists arrested during a wave of detentions following the failed coup in July 2016.

Seventy-four-year-old Alpay was a columnist for the daily newspaper Zaman, which was shut down following a decree by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan five days after the attempted military takeover. Last weekend a court ordered his release under house arrest after more than a year in detention.

Altan, an economics teacher and journalist who presented a political TV program, was sentenced to life in prison in

February for belonging to a terrorist organization, due to alleged ties to the US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen. Five other journalists including Altan's brother received the same sentence.

The verdict drew fierce criticism from human rights groups and Western countries. Ankara accuses Gulen of orchestrating the failed coup, a charge he denies.

The ECHR's decision said "the investigating authorities had been unable to demonstrate any factual basis" to determine the journalists' guilt. The court said Turkey should pay both men 21,500 euros in damages. One Turkish judge issued a partly dissenting opinion, challenging the court's jurisdiction.

The European court's rulings follow decisions by Turkey's Constitutional Court, which also found the journalists' rights had been violated. But the lower courts refused to implement them, saying the top court had overstepped its jurisdiction.

The European Court of Human Rights is recognized by all 47 member states of the Council of Europe – including Turkey and all European Union countries. However, it is strictly a European, not an EU, body.

Nearly 250 journalists and media workers are in jail in Turkey, most in pretrial detention, according to the Stockholm Center for Freedom – a human rights organization set up by journalists, with a special focus on Turkey.

International pressure has forced some cases to be reconsidered. Last month German-Turkish journalist Deniz

Yucel returned to Berlin after being jailed without charge for over a year in Turkey.

The United Nations said on Tuesday, March 20, that Turkey had committed "profound human rights abuses against hundreds of thousands of people", including torture and arbitrary detentions, accusing Ankara of extending the state of emergency, brought in after the coup, to crack down on opposition.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, said nearly 160,000 people had been arrested and 152,000 civil servants sacked – "many totally arbitrarily" – in the past 18 months, describing the numbers as "just staggering."

The UN's 28-page report says "massive and serious" human rights violations continue to be committed by Turkish security forces in the southeast of the country.

The Turkish government has dismissed the report. Turkey's Foreign Affairs Ministry said the text ignored "the severe and multiple terrorist threats faced by Turkey," accusing the High Commissioner of having "lost his objectivity and impartiality" and of having "developed prejudices against our country."

(This commentary originally appeared in the website www.euronews.com

<http://www.euronews.com/2018/03/20/european-human-rights-court-condemns-turkey-over-jailed-journalists>)



COMMENTARY

The ADL Proudly Marks the May 2018 Centennial

By Dr. Arshavir Gundjian

Only three years ago, the Armenian nation and Armenians all over the world marked another centennial, that of the Armenian Genocide. The impressive series of manifestations on that occasion in Armenia and the Diaspora reflected a gratifying unity of thought and sentiment among all Armenians. Given the nature of that event, such an outcome was normal. It could hardly be expected to be any different. On the other hand, the situation is expected to be rather different as we now approach rapidly the much heralded commemoration of what has now come to be known as the May 2018 (“Mayissian”) Centennial. The present article is intended to help shed some light on at least one particular aspect of this Armenian national manifestation, as is spelled out in the title.

Whereas there has been already extensive debate in Armenian on certain aspects of this centennial, there has been hardly any notable critical discussion in the English language, which is one of the reasons that led me to write this article in English.

I will attempt to give a very broad overview of the history of the past one hundred years of Armenian history, depicting only well-known and undeniable turning points, which can hardly be controversial to the eyes of a neutral reader.

Going back one hundred years to the year 1918, after six centuries of stateless existence, Western Armenians had just gone through the devastating tragedy of the Genocide and were already mostly dispersed in a rapidly growing Diaspora. Eastern Armenia, which had been under long years of Russian rule, had been evacuated in 1917 by the newly formed Communist Russian Army. In their search for some semblance of security against the surrounding Turks still fighting in the last months of the First World War, as well as against the newly emerged Bolsheviks in the North, Armenians had joined the neighboring Georgians and Azerbaijanis to form a fragile three nation Transcaucasian Federation known as the Seim.

From that point forward to the present day, the history of our nation can be logically divided into three well-defined major periods:

a) May 2018 to November 1920. This period starts with the unprecedented victorious battles of Sardarabad, Pash Abaran and Gharakilise, accompanied by the collapse of the Seim, the declarations of independence and the creation of the first Republic of Armenia around May 28, 1918, and ends in November or early December 1920 with the creation of the Soviet second Republic of Armenia.

b) The end of November or December 1920, when Armenia turned into the Soviet Republic of Armenia, until September 21, 1991. This longest period of 70 years ends with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the most recent declaration of Armenian independence, and the creation of the third Republic of Armenia.

c) From this latest declaration of independence and the creation of the third Republic of Armenia on September 21, 1991, to the present date – as a totally sovereign country.

The two and a half years period of (a) is an incredibly and catastrophically confused period. Armenia was simply not ready to exist as a sovereign country. Furthermore this period was marked by a succession of major events, battles, alliances formed then broken, and contradictory treaties signed and succeeding or overlapping each other, all separated, on the scale of history, by very short periods that could be as short as few hours, few days or a few months. The landmark events are the following.

In May 1918, the entire Armenian population battled against Turks in Sardarabad victoriously for the first time in centuries and stopped the latter’s army. Since the Seim had crumbled under Turkish pressure, Armenians declared their independence. Even though dictated by Turkey, this marked a landmark in our history, since for the first time in over six centuries an Armenian state was created. A few months later, the Ottoman Turks lost the war. However, as incredible as it may be, they were soon helped by the West to recover, and Kemal Atatürk’s army in November 1920 pushed aggressively towards Yerevan,

Armenia, once more aiming at its complete annihilation. This is where the Turks were stopped by the Armenian Communists helped by their Soviet allies, and the Soviet Republic of Armenia was created.

During this two and a half period of the first Republic, while the political life in Armenia was mostly dominated by a majority from the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF, or Tashnag), all other political parties as well as independents were participants in the government, especially at the beginning. Specifically, the Joghovertagans (Populists, a predecessor party of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, or Ramgavars) were very active as part of the government and held several important ministries. In the second half of that period, however, Tashnags controlled the government almost single handedly.

The next period identified as (b) lasted seventy years. With secure borders, it undeniably provided Armenians, who had barely survived terrible circumstances, the opportunity to be resurrected as a nation, albeit under a totalitarian communist regime. It is fashionable these days to demonize and depict the years of Soviet rule through all shapes and forms of social, human and political monstrosities. The reality, however, is that as much as Armenia suffered during those years from the well-known excesses of the communist regime, in exchange, it simultaneously managed to build Armenia into an unprecedented modern nation.

Armenia has become a country excelling internationally in the fields of science, industry, arts, literature, sports, architecture, etc. Armenian names that shone internationally in all such fields have become a common fact of life. Hampartoumian, Alikhanian, Merguelian, Khatchadourian, Babadjanian, Migoyan, Saryan, Sevag, Issahakian, and Gaboudikian are only a few of the most outstanding ones.

It was also in this period of time that Armenia had to participate in the devastating Second World War and thus lost some 300,000 citizens, a disproportionate number of casualties relative to its small population. Finally, during this entire period where no one, not even the CIA, could imagine that the Soviet Union would not last for many more decades, an incredible succession of international developments brought the Soviet regime to an unexpected sudden collapse. Once more Armenia, being left to its own fate, declared its independence. The third Republic of Armenia was thus formed on September 21, 1991.

The third period identified above as (c) started and continues to this date. This period includes the historic and heroic liberation of Artsakh or Karabakh. The new and third Republic of Armenia had of course the benefit, as a starting point, of an already formidable country and infrastructure left over from the Soviet period which it would have to build further, modify and plan for the future. I will not engage in any critical political, economic or philosophical analysis of this last and still current period which is still in intense evolution.

A clear characteristic of this period, however, is that it provides now the platform for the marking of the forthcoming May (“Mayissian”) Centennial, as a truly independent nation, as a full member of the United Nations, possessing a respectable and modern army. It occupies an honorable position within the big family of world nations. Correspondingly, by now also a well-established Diaspora has been created, in which Armenians are dispersed in all corners of the planet. Even though critical of some aspects of the political life or other conditions prevailing in Armenia, the Diaspora feels unconditionally attracted by the homeland and is willing and ready to help it to the full extent of its possibilities.

Taking the above as background, I first would like to expand on the nature of the debate that surrounds the May 2018 centennial celebrations.

To start with, as strange as it may sound, it is still hardly clear as to what precisely in specific detail, the centennial celebrations are about.

A few months back, when the centennial was announced by the government of Armenia, the Tashnags spontaneously jumped in the field to declare that this was essentially and exclusively the centennial of the creation of the first Republic on May 28, 1918. Thanks to years of

brainwashing, they would have liked to appropriate the latter entirely as being almost exclusively of their own making. Naturally they also pushed hard for the glorification of some of their prominent personalities exclusively as heroes of the time, even though such personalities also carry controversial baggage from various periods in their careers.

The debate that followed brought up the fact that clearly the true starting point for the reestablishment of Armenian statehood was actually the unprecedented victorious battles of May 1918, symbolized by Sardarabad, in which practically the entire Armenian population of the region, as well as the clergy led by Echmiadzin, took part under General Movses Silikian. It has been pointed out that all political parties—beside Tashnags, specifically the Joghovertagans (who later became Ramgavars) and Huntchags, as well as independents, also participated and contributed in a substantial way to the short-lived first republic of 1918.

Furthermore, it is hardly disputable that the centennial of the creation of Armenia’s statehood would have not even been worth mentioning had it not been for the continued existence of the Armenian state, and the continuing enormous nation-building achievements of Armenia through the seventy years of the Soviet era, independently of its regime, and finally, had it not been for the eventual coming to existence of the newly independent third Republic of Armenia. Evidently the latter now provides the opportunity for these celebrations.

Thus in the final analysis, in May 2018, in a few weeks, the celebration of the centennial will actually be the celebration of the sum total of the entire chain of the above three distinct periods to which all Armenians have contributed in different ways at different times, and all of which constitute in actual fact the centennial of Armenian statehood.

Thus the Armenian language “*Mayissian Haygagan Bedaganoutyan Haryuramyag*” qualifier sums it up best.

What precedes leads me now to the final part and to the main purpose of this article. I would like to focus on the leadership role and the selfless services provided to the Armenian world by the Ramgavar Party throughout these hundred years, during each and every one of the three (a), (b) and (c) periods. The actions undertaken and the behavior of this Armenian political party during such trying periods of our nation is indeed quite revealing, considering that the dominant political character of Armenia during every one of those periods has been rather in quite stark opposition to that of the other periods, and was never dominated by Ramgavars. Any and all other Armenian political parties or organizations can, of course, and in fact should make a similar critical review of its own record of behavior during those hundred years.

Today’s Ramgavar Azadagan or Democratic Liberal Party was created in 1921 by the unification of a number of previously existing parties (some, such as the Armenagans, going as far back as the 19th century) which shared fundamentally similar principles and approaches in pursuing their common objectives. They believed strongly in the respect of democratic principles of governance in the way the latter had by then been developed and adopted widely by Western democratic countries. In this respect the Ramgavar Party clearly distinguishes itself in a very basic way from the other three major parties, the ARF, the Social Democrat Huntchags and of course the Communist Party.

During the very first period of the past hundred years, identified as (a), Joghovertagans, as noted above, were full participants and even ministry holders until pushed out of office towards the end of that two and a half period by the Tashnags. Such rivalry, however, did not prevent Ramgavars from providing their full support to the state of Armenia both within Armenia and in the Diaspora.

It is well documented that when Alexander Khadissian, the Tashnag Prime Minister of Armenia, went to Egypt and Istanbul on a fundraising mission, Ramgavars undertook to organize for him a number of very successful events. An even more significant episode is that, taking advantage of the presence of the British army in Egypt, Ramgavars negotiated very hard

with the British and raised the necessary funds to purchase some twenty planes to be dispatched to the fledgling Armenian forces of the first Republic. The latter, however, had soon collapsed and the planes remained in Egypt.

When next, in period (b), Armenia became a Soviet republic, the latter very rapidly closed its borders and became isolated from the rest of Armenians in the Diaspora.

In the meantime, the newly created Diaspora was badly in need of organization. As that formidable task was being pursued, the Diaspora gradually had also to position itself towards the reality of a new Soviet Armenia which had adopted the Communist regime. All other considerations put aside, Armenia remained unquestionably the homeland and the main base and unique viable source of Armenian culture, art and history. It was also the land where the head of our Church, the unnegotiable center of our faith, Holy Echmiadzin, the See of the Catholicosate of All Armenians was located. The other hard reality was that the entire Middle East and the Western world where the Diaspora was located were vehemently hostile towards the Communist bloc of countries.

To complete this picture, the Tashnag Party leadership who had been expelled from Armenia, following their ill-fated February Uprising which had resulted in the loss of 20,000 Armenian lives in fratricidal clashes, had now established itself in the Diaspora with the stolen state treasury of the first republic. From that point on, Tashnags were unfortunately firmly set to conduct a deadly anti-Soviet and more particularly a relentless anti Soviet-Armenia campaign, which would poison Armenian communities lives for the following 70 years.

Indeed an incredible drama was about to unfold within the lives of all communities of the Diaspora. While the ARF did play an important positive role in the creation of important cultural and educational institutions within the newly created communities, on the other hand, unfortunately Tashnags who were in the distinct minority tried to assume the role of a “government in exile.” In this respect, they acted systematically with their acquired second nature mentality of intolerance and totalitarian rule.

Most unfortunately the underlying central policy they pursued was to have Armenians cut all relations with their homeland and the Mother Church of Echmiadzin. For the greatest majority of Armenians, however, all of that was an outrageously unacceptable behavior. At the outset, the Diaspora being by its very nature a widely dispersed and unorganized mass of forcefully displaced individuals, its initial concern was quite naturally to provide for its main everyday necessities. Thus the presence of a highly principled organization having as its main objective the pursuit of the highest interests of the Armenian nation, willing and able to take the role of leadership to counteract the Tashnag posturing, was absolutely necessary in order for the Diaspora to be able to maintain its national character and to maintain healthy yet totally apolitical ties with its homeland and its Mother Church.

The Ramgavar Party was able to rise to fulfill that extremely difficult role of leadership in a consistent, reliable and legitimate way in an anti-communist world. Ramgavars played courageously and successfully this vital role while Tashnags used and abused relentlessly the Cold War conditions. They would not hesitate to report to local security authorities every person and every innocent move of dealing with Armenia and the Mother Church as a suspect communist agent or communist subversive organization action. Today, twenty-six years after that dark era of the Cold War and the nightmares that devastated the Armenian communities, it is almost impossible for those who are younger than 30 to imagine and visualize the tragedies that our communities have experienced in the preceding seven decades.

Among the most salient representative events of those times, a bishop was murdered on the altar, fratricidal murders plagued communities, and the catastrophic schism of the Armenian Church most dramatically took place, unquestionably implemented by Tashnags with the help of the CIA. These events unfortunately continue to divide communities, although with slackened

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COMMENTARY

Does the Gülen (Hizmet) Movement Deny the Armenian Genocide?

By Ismail Akbulut

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

In the past, certain individuals affiliated with the Gülen Movement, and sometimes the movement as a whole, have often been accused of supporting lobbying efforts to circumvent the passing of resolutions that commemorate the Armenian genocide. Members of the Armenian diaspora have voiced complaints about this, both in several articles and in verbal statements. To tell you the bitter truth, I would be lying if I said that the accusations held no weight at all.

Let me state something straight from the outset: this is not an attempt to curry favor with the Armenian community. And no, I am not an “ex-Gülenist” bashing the Gülen Movement (GM), otherwise known as the Hizmet Movement. Furthermore, I speak for myself alone. I am not a spokesperson of the GM making an official statement of some sort.

Instead, this article reflects an honest attempt of an individual participant in GM to articulate his personal views and experiences of GM-Armenian relationships during the last decade.

First, a bit about Gülen and the movement he has inspired.

Islamic scholar Fethullah Gülen is best known for fostering universal education, inter-faith dialogue and humanitarian activities. Inspired by Gülen’s teachings and philosophies, participants in the GM engage in various altruistic activities to sow the seeds of world-peace for future generations. Indeed, the term “Hizmet,” the name participants use for the movement, means “service” in Turkish.

Gülen himself emphasizes the importance of human agency in bringing sustainable change and fostering morality and good virtues. For over half a century, he has been an advocate for liberal democratic values such as human rights, social justice, pluralism, the empowerment of women, freedom of speech, thought, and religion. Gülen consistently urges participants in the GM to be law-abiding citizens willing to work to help others, and to promote understanding for others regardless of culture, faith, or ethnicity.

Nevertheless, critics from various backgrounds accuse Gülen of pursuing a range of

sinister, secretive agendas. Certain Islamist groups, for instance, have pushed the conspiracy theory that Gülen is actually a secret cardinal of the Pope, or that he’s a crypto-Armenian trying to spread Christianity among Muslims. Moreover, some secularists allege that Gülen is pushing efforts to consolidate powers to transform Turkey into an Islamic caliphate.

The movement did not develop in a vacuum. The roots of the GM go back to Turkey, hence many of the participants in the movement, including Gülen himself, were educated and socialized in Turkish schools that acted as vessels for the indoctrination of the glory and sanctity of pure “Turkishness.”

Historically, the GM has never openly supported any political party. Instead, most participants have supported the party that they believed would pursue a liberal democratic agenda. Consequently, the movement was criticized by Islamist parties for “selling out” to the liberals, particularly before 2003.

However, with the rise of the Justice and Development (AKP) party under Recep Tayyip Erdogan, which appeared (according to its own party’s manifesto) to promote liberal democracy, human rights, and inclusion in the European Union; the leadership of the GM, for the first time in its history, decided to form a political alliance based on shared goals. The AKP was not only supported by GM participants, but many liberals, nationalists, leftists and minority groups also voted for that party in the belief it supported democratization.

In fact, GM-affiliated media outlets such as *Zaman* and Samanyolu TV openly praised and endorsed Erdogan’s AKP, further reinforcing the perception that the whole movement backed the party.

The history of the GM in the US is still very young. Many GM participants came in the early 2000s as students, academics, engineers, businessmen or educators from Turkey. Excited about the “New World,” GM participants wanted to carry out their civil society projects in the US. Several saw opportunities to contribute to American society through establishing intercultural dialogue centers, charter schools or charity organizations.

This involvement allowed them to foster valuable relationships with pastors, rabbis, imams, and other religious leaders. Turkey’s economic boom of the early 2000s allowed for an unprecedented, and deeply longed-for, patriotic

self-confidence. Intercultural dialogue trips to Turkey, offered to US-based legislators, religious leaders, academics, media personalities and community leaders created awareness of the spirit of the GM and promoted understanding of Turkey, the greater Anatolian region, and the religion of Islam.

The first interaction between GM participants and the Armenian community in the US took place after the assassination of Hrant Dink, the prominent and brave Turkish-Armenian journalist and human rights activists in front of his newspaper, *Agos*, by an ultra-nationalist youth on January 19, 2007.

Subsequently, GM participants paid their respects through visits to Armenian churches and organizations to express their condolences. These visits opened doors for conversations and dialogue, mainly with Armenians from Turkey. Consequently, GM participants were exposed, often for the first time, to the suffering of Armenians during the Ottoman and modern Turkish eras, and during the genocide itself. In many cases, this created new empathy among some participants of the GM, thus acting as an antidote against years of propaganda.

Yet, despite this fabulous story of a “Turkified” American Dream, one of the most profound disappointments we felt was the ongoing vilification of Turkish people on the part of many in the Armenian diaspora. On this front, GM participants have been living in a state of inner turmoil.

On the one hand, we deeply desire a constructive and positive relationship with Armenians. However, on the other, the very word “genocide” has proved to be an obstacle for engagement. Indeed, the facts of 1915 have become the massive “elephant in the room” when the two groups, Turks and Armenians, come into contact. One of the most ridiculous conspiracy theories promoted by some on the Turkish side, was that ultra-nationalist Armenians across the United States, have been engaged in inciting a “revenge” genocide, to be perpetrated on the “poor, innocent” Turkish people.

During this time, high-ranking Turkish officials and diplomats reached out to GM for support to stop the passing of resolutions that recognize the Armenian genocide.

Serving the nation of Turkey by visiting US officials in America and repeating to them the Turkish state’s official narrative about 1915 thus became an altruistic patriotic deed.

Yet, recently, our own support for the Turkish narrative has waned, and GM participants have begun questioning almost everything they had learned about what happened in 1915.

The turning point was the outcome of July 15th coup d’état attempt in Turkey. After the Turkish government held the GM responsible for the coup attempt, tens of thousands of ordinary citizens, who were in one way or another affiliated with the GM, found themselves illegally profiled, persecuted, detained, arrested, abducted, tortured or disappeared.

Our experiences thus far cannot be called a genocide; however, we have certainly been scapegoated and enduring an ongoing collective trauma, with no end in sight. The fact that the Turkish state could label innocent people guilty, and punish them for their association (even tangential) with the GM, opened the majority of our eyes. If they could do this to us, it must be true that they did it to other minority groups (Kurds, Alevis) and certainly to the Armenians. They wiped out Turkey’s Christian-Armenian population and taught us all it never happened.

So, what are the lessons we can learn here...

Driven by patriotic and sometimes nationalistic sentiments, participants in the GM, including myself, have deceived ourselves by acting in a way that contradicted our very values. We failed. We did not question the Turkish narrative, and we did not listen nor read the stories of Armenians.

Today, I personally regret and sincerely apologize for my involvement in efforts that undermined the suffering of Armenians that endured one of the greatest atrocities of the 20th century, the Armenian genocide.

I was intending to end this article here, with an apology that was long overdue, instead I would like to make three humble suggestions on how I believe we could repair our relations:

Firstly, I ask GM participants to show genuine gestures to Armenians by showing up to genocide commemorations or contributing to Armenian organizations.

Secondly, I wish Armenian journalists would reach out to Gülen for an interview with him to ask him about his views on what happened during 1915.

Lastly, I ask my Armenian brothers and sisters to welcome and engage with GM participants to listen to their stories about what is happening today in Erdogan’s Turkey.

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intensity, to this date.

The virulent Tashnag press of the time went as far as to preach that an “Alternate Armenia could be built in the friendly deserts of Arizona....far from communists...” In such traumatic conditions, Ramgavars and their press stood tall and steady to provide needed leadership. They developed and defended the well founded principle that Armenian individuals, organizations as well as communities could very well maintain their ties with their Mother Church and their communist homeland while remaining perfectly faithful citizens of their countries of residence.

It must be realized that it was thanks to this crucial and delicate policy developed, defended and taught throughout the entire Diaspora, that the latter maintained its cultural and spiritual ties with the homeland and was ready to become a well-conditioned partner of the new independent Armenia in 1991. Even though Huntchags and some other small leftist Armenian groups also carried on this struggle, only the Ramgavars could handle this fight legitimately.

Indeed Ramgavar Party principles and bylaws were the only ones that are clearly and essentially in line with Western democratic principles. The Western-oriented philosophy of the Ramgavars was so evident that they could openly declare often that they were opponents of communism. As a matter of fact, the Ramgavar party was ironically and sarcastically labeled in communist circles in Armenia as a “bourgeois party.”

This very clearly formulated understanding permitted the other most prominent Armenian community institutions in the Diaspora, namely the Armenian Apostolic Church and the

Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) to conduct over seventy years their vital activity to the benefit of the Diaspora, yet maintain unwavering ties with the Mother Church and the Armenian homeland. This was made possible thanks to the presence of Ramgavars in their leadership and the strong and unconditional support of the latter. Had Tashnags been allowed to give free reign to their seven-decades-long policy of isolating Armenians completely from their homeland, the spontaneous wave of Diaspora help to independent Armenia would have never taken place.

Whereas today it is very natural for all Armenians to travel, maintain relations with, and extend help to, Armenia, for seventy long years, that vital communication channel was maintained only through the heroic and determined dedication of the Ramgavar Party as well as the vast group of non-Ramgavar Diaspora activists who informally carried the label of “Patriotic Front” (*hayrenasiragan jagad*). They all looked to the Ramgavar Party for guidance and inspiration.

Finally it must be underlined that when the Soviet Union collapsed suddenly in 1991, and Armenia declared its independence, those in Armenia who conducted the preceding short struggle of a few months, mainly as leaders of the Karabagh Committee, were exclusively residents of Armenia and Karabagh. There was not even a single Armenian in that struggle from abroad, certainly not any Tashnag. Yet immediately after the new independence, Ramgavars and like thinkers were the first to rush to Armenia in order to bring their support to the totally unexpected reality of the newly independent Armenia. In fact, from the Diaspora, only

Ramgavars happened to have been among the supporting signatories of the declaration of independence in the National Assembly on September 21, 1991.

Ramgavars were thus present in Armenia from the very first days of the third republic. Within weeks, we took the bold decision to start in Yerevan the publication of *Azg*, the first paper in Armenia having a completely new Western-style approach to reporting news and critical analyses of events and government decisions. *Azg* became the most popular news outlet. Several tens of thousand copies would be grabbed from the shelves and would disappear within minutes of their appearance. *Azg* continues to this date to be considered a most trusted publication in Armenia.

Several members of the Ramgavar Central Committee gave the example by being the first to rush to Yerevan to make pioneering efforts and take concrete steps to establish businesses operating on the free market model of the Western world. Those efforts were proven later to have been premature. As mentioned above, the Ramgavars have had an outstanding presence in the AGBU leadership and membership from its very inception. Thus, as would be expected, the AGBU in its turn undertook many actions to bring help to the new republic, including the very bold decision of establishing an entirely new institution of higher learning. Indeed, the American University of Armenia, which has become in later years one of the most productive and well-established vital institutions in Armenia, was created right in those first days of Independence.

I will stop this enumeration at this point as it is simply not the purpose of this article to under-

take a full analysis of the political and economic developments that took place in Armenia during the last twenty-six years, and the ups and downs as well as the role played and still being played therein by many and more particularly by the Ramgavar Party. Suffice it to confirm that in spite of many difficulties the Ramgavar Party is presently live and active in Armenia. It has recently reorganized itself in the Diaspora to become an Armenia-centered political organization and, therefore, it is now even better focused on its role to support the state of Armenia.

This overview of the enormously complex history of our nation’s last hundred years makes it evident that the Ramgavar Party stands rightfully tall and proud on the eve of the celebrations of the centennial of Armenian statehood in May 2018, based on its record of uninterrupted and unrivaled selfless service for the benefit of Armenian statehood. At no time has it sought to take advantage or enrich itself in any shape or form in exchange for its devoted service, which was often rendered under extremely trying circumstances. No other political group can claim to supersede the Ramgavar Azadagan Party in that respect. History must record this fact.

The Ramgavar Party is exceptionally and uniquely qualified to proudly celebrate the centennial and also itself be rightfully celebrated during the May 2018 centennial national commemorations.

(The author had been Chairman of the ADL Central Committee for several years, Vice President of the Central Board of Directors of the AGBU for many years, and leading founder of the Armenian Apostolic Church Canadian Diocese and Chairman of its Diocesan Council for many years.)

Climate Change and Population Growth: Future Threats and Solutions

TORONTO – The Zoryan Institute and its Division, the International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, is devoted to educating the public about genocide and human rights violations as grave threats to continuing life on the planet.

The study of genocide and human rights has been based on important case studies such as the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust and the genocide in Rwanda among others. However, as the 20th century gave way to the 21st, new models of genocide and human rights violations began to emerge. The older cases of nation-states targeting specific groups for destruction gave way to more dispersed forms of violence perpetrated by criminal groups and national/religious, ethnic based organizations such as ISIS. Confrontation with these altered forms of violence must be addressed if the puzzle of genocidal violence is to ever be solved.

The Zoryan Institute created a Symposium on “Climate Change and Population Growth: Future Threats and Solutions” which was convened on March 9, at the University of Toronto, Munk School of Global Affairs Conference Centre.

The symposium and discussion brought together the latest analyses of what might be new causes of genocide. The symposium particularly focused on climate change and population growth which are already having a global impact on causing political violence and might very well lead to future genocides.

For example, in the Monday, March 12 edition of the *New York Times*, an article on the draught in the horn of Africa, Kenya and Ethiopia points out that the land suitable for grazing cattle and cultivation is disappearing and this, in turn, is causing groups to wage contests to find land to carry out these activities. As part of this quest, periodic violence takes place while populations fight off starvation and compete for land as they attempt to move on to land controlled by others. This is a perfect example of the crisis addressed in the Zoryan sponsored symposium.

The first session of the symposium began with a lecture by Dr. Alex Alvarez, professor of criminal justice at Northern Arizona University and a founding co-editor of *Genocide Studies International*. Alvarez is the author of the most recent book on climate change and genocide: *Unstable Ground: Climate Change, Conflict and Genocide*. Alvarez laid out the possible connections between climate change and genocide. His lecture was followed by commentary and analysis by Dr. Herbert Hirsch, professor of political science at Virginia Commonwealth University and one of the founding co-editors and remaining co-editor of *Genocide*



Dr. Henry Theriault speaks at the symposium.

Studies International as well as an instructor in the summer seminar on genocide and human rights. Hirsch pointed out that Alvarez did not comment on the political connections and the relationship between the rise of populist/authoritarian movements and the decline of democracy. Hirsch noted that this has major impacts on climate change and genocide as authoritarian states do not take action to combat climate change nor to prevent genocide.

A second commentary by Dr. Maureen Hiebert, professor of political science at the University of Calgary and a former co-editor of *Genocide Studies International* noted the implications of climate change and genocide in the international political system. This was followed by a question-and-answer session, which

featured large scale audience participation.

The afternoon session started with a lecture by Dr. James Tyner, Professor of Geography at Kent State University and the author of numerous books on the subject. Tyner connected population growth and population movements to climate change and to political violence and genocide. His lecture was followed by comments from Dr. Roger Smith, co-editor of *Genocide Studies International* and a member of the Zoryan Institute Board of Directors who noted the importance of this subject and by Dr. Henry Theriault, professor at Worcester State University and a co-editor of *GSi*, who provided contemporary examples and pointed out theoretical explanations. This was also followed by audience participation in a question and answer session.

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