

# First Armenian Art Fair Dazzles Yerevan

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

YEREVAN and BOSTON – Armenia had its first international art fair, Armenia Art Fair (<http://armenianartfair.com>), from May 11 to 14 at the Yerevan Expo Center. Coinciding with a historic period of peaceful revolution in Armenia, it represented a sea change in the Armenian art world. Although the art fair format, with its combination of exhibition and market place, is

ARAM ARKUN PHOTO



Swiss musician Christian Zehnder

well known in the United States and Europe, it is something completely new for Armenia.

Armenia Art Fair showcased the works



A view of the main floor of the Armenian Art Fair

of over 20 solo artists and 19 galleries from Armenia, the Black Sea region, Europe and the Middle East. It is the first in a projected annual series, intending to connect Armenia and international art and artists, and make Yerevan a regional hub for the arts.

The international component of the fair included three artists from Art Residence Aleq, a program providing Syrian refugee

artists with space and materials for their work in Lebanon, Dutch mirror-artist Philippine Vinket, and Belarussian painter Oleg Kostyuchenko. The Discovery section included a Russian art collective called 7th Contemporary Art Fair. A “Millennial Spotlight” section highlighted artists under 25 years old. The lower area of the Expo building contained a series of art works curated by Eva Khachatryan. Called Open Space, they included photographs, videos and other installations.

A series of cultural events were organized during the fair. The opening night included a musical performance by Swiss performer Christian Zehnder. The next few see ART, page 20

## Corruption Arrests Gather Speed

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) – Law-enforcement authorities confiscated a further \$1 million worth of cash from a man who has long been former President Serzh Sargsyan’s chief bodyguard when they arrested him on Monday, June 25.

Vachagan Ghazaryan was detained by the National Security Service (NSS) five days after other law-enforcement bodies raided his apartment in Yerevan and found \$1.1 million and 230,000 euros (\$267,000) in cash there. The money was at least deposited with the Central Bank of Armenia pending investigation into its origin.

Investigators said on Friday that Ghazaryan and his wife failed to disclose it in their income and asset declarations submitted to an anti-corruption state commission. Such declarations are mandatory for Armenia’s high-ranking state officials and their close relatives. Ghazaryan was among them until Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan dismissed him last month as first deputy head of a security agency providing bodyguards to the country’s leaders.

An NSS video released late on Monday showed masked officers arresting the formerly powerful general outside a commercial bank in Yerevan. He was then shown emptying his bag, filled with stacks of banknotes, in an interrogation room.

An NSS statement said the bag contained \$120,000 and 436 million drams (\$900,000) in cash he withdrew from one of his bank accounts. It said Ghazaryan claimed that he was going to give the money to its “rightful owner” but refused to identify that person.

see CORRUPTION, page 2

## Cracking the Code for Armenia’s Future

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

Seda Papoyan is one of the people who would like to harvest that natural intelligence for the future of the country, by getting more and more young people in

high-tech. And for Papoyan, it is important that young girls get into coding, the language of high tech, from the start.

To meet that goal, she and a group of supporters are trying to crowdfund a new chapter of CoderDojo so that children, and girls especially, will learn coding.

Papoyan is the managing director of the Armenia chapter of Girls in Tech, which was founded in 2016.

Girls in Tech is another global organization that was founded 11 years ago in San Francisco, to “engage, empower and educate” women in tech, a field where women are in a distinct minority around the world.

see CODE, page 3



Youngsters learning code

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Mirror Annual Summer Vacation

WATERTOWN – The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* will close for its annual summer vacation starting July 2.

The last issue before the vacation will be that of June 30. The first issue back will be that of July 21.

You may submit stories, letters or inquires electronically in the meantime.

### Aliyev Again Threatens Military Action Against Karabakh, Armenia

BAKU (RFE/RL) – Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev talked tough at a military parade in Baku on Tuesday, June 26, threatening military strikes against “strategic” Armenian targets and saying that Azerbaijan will “reinstate its control” over Nagorno-Karabakh.

“We are for the peaceful resolution of the [Nagorno-Karabakh] conflict but [Armenia] has to understand that there is no military or strategic object that the Azerbaijani Army is unable to destroy,” Aliyev said.

“The war is not over. Only its first phase has ended,” he said, calling Karabakh “primordially Azerbaijani territory.”

Armenia was quick to condemn the threats. “War mongering and saber rattling are irrelevant, deplorable, if not preposterous,” Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanian wrote on his Twitter page. “Inconsistency of language for internal consumption and at negotiations doesn’t work. Need a more responsible and sensible negotiating party across the table.”

Aliyev spoke at a major military parade marking what his government considers the 100th anniversary of Azerbaijan’s armed forces. He stressed that Baku will continue to buy weapons abroad to strengthen its army.

Some 4,000 military personnel took part in the parade and 240 pieces of military equipment, including Belarussian-made Polonez and Israeli-made LORA missiles, were on display.

Senior military officials in Yerevan and Stepanakert say that the Azerbaijani military has deployed more troops along the “line of contact” around Karabakh since April. They have warned Baku against launching offensive operations there, saying that the Armenian side is prepared for any scenario.

There have been no high-level Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations since the recent dramatic change of Armenia’ government. US, Russian and French mediators indicated their intention to organize a meeting of Armenia’s and Azerbaijan’s foreign ministers soon when they visited Yerevan two weeks ago.

## INSIDE

### Konjoyan Honored

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Azeri Deputy Foreign Minister Arrives in Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – High-ranking diplomats from Azerbaijan and Turkey participated in the Ministerial Council meeting of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) in Yerevan on June 27.

Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Tigran Balayan said that Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Mahmud Mammed-Guliyev represented his country at the meeting, while Turkey was represented by the head of the Multilateral Economic Cooperation Department of the Foreign Ministry.

Armenia will pass the Chairmanship of BSEC to Azerbaijan, and Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia Karen Nazaryan and BSEC Secretary General Michael Christides were supposed to issue a statement on the subject.

Armenia, Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine are members to the organization.

## Hrazdan Mayor Resigns

HRAZDAN, Armenia (RFE/RL) – Hrazdan Mayor Aram Danielyan announced his resignation this week. Press secretary of Hrazdan municipality Alvina Zakaryan noted noting the mayor is taking this step “at his own discretion.”

Danielyan has invited the Hrazdan Council of Elders, on July 2, to an extraordinary session and, the mayor will ask council members to vote for his resignation.

Danielyan has headed Hrazdan for 15 years. He is a member of Serzh Sargsyan’s Republican Party. In the 2016 election, Danielyan was competing with Sasun Mikaelyan, the head of the Civiltas party, who accused Danielyan of bribing voters and exerting pressure on Hrazdan residents.

Last year, Danielyan’s 16-year-old son, who did not have a license, was found responsible for illegally driving his father’s car and fatally hitting Hrazdan resident Valeri Torosian, 58. He was released pending an investigating. He was found not to have violated traffic rules.

## Karapetyan Quitting Leadership Post In Former Ruling Party

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Former Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan has decided to resign as first deputy chairman of the former ruling Republican Party of Armenia (HHK), it was announced on Tuesday, June 26.

The HHK spokesman, Eduard Sharmazanov, said Karapetyan feels that he must resign from the party leadership because he is no longer “actively involved in political processes.”

“I find that very normal,” Sharmazanov told reporters. “Karen Karapetyan is a mature politician. It’s up to him to decide whether or not to be the first deputy chairman. I respect that decision by Karen Karapetyan.”

Asked whether Karapetyan will also end his membership in the HHK altogether, Sharmazanov said: “There is no such decision at this point. There has been no talk of leaving the party.”

Karapetyan took up the number two position in the HHK hierarchy in November 2016 two months after then President Serzh Sargsyan appointed him as Armenia’s prime minister. He ran the government until Sarkisian served out his final presidential term and controversially became prime minister on April 17.

Karapetyan remained in government as first deputy prime minister serving under a new, parliamentary system of government. The former business executive took over as acting prime minister on April 23 immediately after Sarkisian resigned amid mass protests against his continued rule.

The HHK-controlled parliament reluctantly chose the protest leader, Nikol Pashinyan, as the country’s new leader on May 8. Karapetyan has made no public statements since then. Some Armenian media outlets have claimed that he is considering setting up his own party.

In Sharmazanov’s words, it is not yet known whom the party, still headed by Sargsyan, will pick as its new first deputy chairman.

# Corruption Arrests Gather Speed

CORRUPTION, from page 1

The NSS said Ghazaryan was also planning to withdraw another 1.5 billion drams (\$3.1 million) kept by him and his wife at another Armenian bank. The statement suggested he claimed that he “forgot” to add these large sums to his official income declarations.

Despite being placed under arrest, Ghazaryan was not formally charged with any crime as of Tuesday afternoon. Under Armenian law, he cannot be held in custody without charge for more than three days.

Ghazaryan is the first person in Armenia who could be prosecuted on charges of “illegal enrichment” and/or false asset disclosure carrying up to six years in prison. He headed Sargsyan’s security detail for more than two decades.

Armenia’s new government was instrumental in a series of high-profile corruption inquiries launched against former officials and other individuals linked to the former Armenian leader. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has repeatedly pledged to “root out” endemic corruption in the country since taking office on May 8.

In addition, Alexander Sargsyan, the brother of the former president, was detained on Monday, but was released.

### Grigoryan Arrests

Following the arrest of General Manvel Grigoryan, a member of parliament, the board of the “Yerkrapah” Union of Volunteers decided at a sitting on June 25 to suspend President Manvel Grigoryan, Vice-President of the Board Hamlet Hayrapetyan told reporters following the meeting.

Grigoryan – the influential former general who is currently remanded in custody pending trial for grand theft

ily. The Special Investigative Service issued an arrest warrant for Nazik Amiryan, his wife.

Earlier on June 18, anti-corruption officers of police discovered two cargo vehicles loaded with military food supplies in a Yerevan parking lot. The drivers of the vehicles, members of the Yerkrapah Volunteer Union – an NGO formerly chaired by the general – have claimed that they loaded the supplies – canned meat made for the military and not available for sale anywhere – at the instruction of Nazik Amiryan from the headquarters of Yerkrapah Volunteers Union on June 16. About 3000 cans

The MP has denied any wrongdoing, and in a letter sent to the Speaker said he will restore his reputation, and called on his colleagues to strip him of immunity since “he has no desire to obstruct the investigation”.

A private zoo and a large car collection were also found during the search of the compound.

On June 19, the parliament voted to strip the MP of immunity and approved launching criminal proceedings.

Finally, the Special Investigative Service has launched criminal proceedings over former Mayor of Echmiadzin Karen Grigoryan, the general’s son.



Former Echmiadzin Mayor Karen Grigoryan, center

were found in the cars.

An investigation is underway.

Grigoryan, the former general who is suspected in misappropriating military supplies and donations, as well as illegal possession of firearms, will remain in pre-trial detention for two months.

The lawmaker from the Republican Party faction is suspected in embezzling military supplies and illegal pos-

The Special Investigative Service said it has charged Karen Grigoryan on June 23 with grand theft.

In the days of the April War of 2016, Members of the Armenian Community of Russia NGO, had acquired three UAZ SUVs, thermal vision devices and military uniforms and transferred it to Armenia as aid. Representatives of the organization arrived in Armenia, where accompanied with Karen Grigoryan, they departed for Artsakh to donate the abovementioned items to Artsakh’s defense ministry. The items allegedly had been handed over to Karen Grigoryan, and MP Manvel Grigoryan.

But instead of transferring the vehicles, worth over \$22,000, to the Artsakh military, Manvel Grigoryan and his son Karen transported them back to Echmiadzin.

Karen Grigoryan hasn’t been remanded and is free on a bail bond.

The investigation continues.

### Effective Yet Respectful Process

Pashinyan discussed his anti-graft drive on Tuesday, June 26, with the heads of the NSS, the Armenian police and other law-enforcement bodies. He told them to make sure that “this process continues more effectively” while “strictly” complying with laws and respecting human rights.



Vachagan Ghazaryan, right, with former President Serzh Sargsyan

and illegal possession of firearms.

In a statement adopted at the sitting the union strongly condemned the “impermissible act on the country.”

The board instructed the Vice-Presidents and members to set up a task force to discuss organization of a convention.

The bad news continues for the fam-

## Correction

A typographical error appeared in the column “The Demise and Legacy of Genocide Denier Bernard Lewis” by Edmond Azadian last week. The word “Armenians” incorrectly altered the meaning of the paragraph. The sentence should read, instead, “On May 19, 1985, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* ran an ad in which 69 American scholars called on Congress not to pass a resolution recognizing the Armenian Genocide.” The correct version appears online and on social media.



Nazik Amiryan

back in 2016. The donated supplies even include letters written by school-children during the days of the April War of 2016.

The Prosecutor General requested an extraordinary sitting of the parliament to take place to strip the MP of parliamentary immunity, in order to keep him in pre-trial custody.

According to Pashinyan’s press office, they briefed the premier on their respective agencies’ “ongoing and upcoming works towards combatting corruption.”

(Reports from the Public Radio of Armenia, Armenpress and RFE/RL were used to compile this story.)





## ARMENIA

# Cracking the Code for Armenia's Future

CODE, from page 1

The Armenia chapter was founded two years ago with the aim of teaching coding to young girls, who in turn can become women in tech. It has about 100 members, with a staff of seven.

"We found CoderDojo through our network. We allow this is something as a curriculum, philosophy for our education path we need here," Papoyan said.

According to the CoderDojo website, the seeds for the organization were planted when a young hacker, James Whelton, in Cork, Ireland, hacked the iPod Nano. As a result, some of the students at his school expressed an interest in

CoderDojo members are girls.

"If children get in at an early stage, they will see no difference in gender" roles, Papoyan said. "It will help to make sure that there will be no discrimination in any field."

Armenia is working with the Swedish chapter of CoderDojo, thus it is able to take advantage of the experiences of another country where it has been successfully adopted.

There are several chapters in Sweden, Papoyan said.

In August, she and a group of future CoderDojo mentors will travel to Sweden to study their experiences and to be trained as



Coding in Armenia

learning how to code. He set up a computer club in his school. Later he met with Bill Liao, an entrepreneur and philanthropist and together the pair founded CoderDojo in 2011. There are now more than 1,600 verified Dojos in 75 countries.

Another advantage, she explained, that like Girls in Code, the organization is part of a global family, which will help expose Armenian youth to foreign experts and in turn allow those experts to help Armenia and offer a well-tryed path.

"We can be engaged in a global community

trainers so that they can return and in turn train more instructors.

The first locale for CoderDojo will be in Yerevan and later expand to the rural regions, as the capital is the easiest place in the country to set up.

If CoderDojo manages to raise all the funds they need, they plan to open centers in rural regions, including Artik, Charentsavan, Masis, Martuni and Vayk, in addition to Yerevan.

The money raised will help the organization set up clubs with equipment, and whatever is needed to be able to run it for at least six months, Papoyan explained. The clubs are going to be free for all.

"I am more interested in getting the regions to start," Papoyan noted, while she added that the cost for the rural regions is going to be far higher initially, as they would have to start from scratch.

The deadline for the crowd-funding campaign is July 22.

"We are planning and our activities have already started," she stated. The first CoderDojo chapter, she said, will open in Yerevan at the end of September in conjunction with the beginning of the school year.

The program will be an after-school activity, "but so much more flexible. There will be an online curriculum that will be open for anyone to participate in. It is a whole curriculum based on mentorship."

"We are going to actively work with schools



Seda Papoyan

of supporters," Papoyan said. "We want to empower more girls to do coding."

As such, she said that the organization will try to make sure that at least 50 percent of the



Girls in Tech

to engage more kids," she said. She noted that the program offered is different from the more established TUMO Center, which offers a broader range of computer education as well as a different age group. Papoyan, who used to work at TUMO, said that unlike TUMO, which is for children 7-17, CoderDojo is for children ages 7-14. She noted as well that TUMO is going to be a partner in the effort.

Papoyan said that in many towns and villages, there is no such program and thus they will be able to make the most difference. Other plans floating include creating a mobile

Being a working woman, however, fostered her interest in gender equality and thus she founded Girls in Tech.

"I have three children and every day I see all the challenges of kids," she said.

Thus, she also started TaTa, a support group for working mothers who need alternate child-care solutions.

"I am not doing this just as a job; it is something from my personal experience to do it," she noted.

Incidentally, she said, the group is testing out CoderDojo's curriculum on the TaTa group.



Teaching code to young people

CoderDojo club for the rural regions.

She explained that all of the country now has internet connection and thus connectivity should not pose an issue.

Papoyan, while a proponent of technology at work, is not a tech person by training; she received her degree in art history and later worked in journalism, communication and public relations.

She was also a project coordinator for European Friends of Armenia and worked as a press and PR coordinator for the Tumo Center for Creative Technologist.

To donate, visit <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/coderdojo-access-to-coding-for-kids-of-armenia-computers#/>. To learn more about Girls in Tech, visit <https://www.facebook.com/GITArmenia/>

## New Charge Brought Against 'Violent' Mayor

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Law-enforcement authorities have filed another criminal charge against the embattled mayor of an Armenian town stemming from violent attacks on opposition supporters who protested against the country's longtime leader, Serzh Sargsyan, in April.

Mayor Davit Hambardzumian of Masis, who is affiliated with Sargsyan's Republican Party (HHK), was detained and charged late last month with organizing one such assault in Yerevan on April 22.

The incident occurred just hours after Nikol Pashinyan, the main organizer of mass protests against Sargsyan's continued rule, was detained by security forces. Hundreds of Pashinyan supporters demonstrating there were attacked by several dozen masked men wielding sticks and even electric shock guns.

Hambardzumian denied any involvement in the attack. A Yerevan court refused to allow investigators to keep him and four other suspects in pre-trial detention. They all were set free three days after their arrest.

Armenia's Investigative Committee said on Monday that it has collected "factual evidence" of the Masis mayor's involvement in another violent incident reported later on April 22. Residents of the southern Ararat province encompassing Masis were attacked by a smaller group of other individuals as they marched to Yerevan to take part in an anti-government rally.

According to an Investigative Committee statement, four protesters sustained major injuries as a result. One of them was shot

and wounded.

The law-enforcement agency claimed to have identified the shooter. It said the suspect, a Masis resident, is now on the run.

The statement insisted that Hambardzumian was also among the attackers. He was formally charged with grave "hooliganism" on Sunday, it said. If convicted, the mayor will risk between four and seven years in prison.

Hambardzumian, 32, was elected mayor in 2016 with the help of the HHK.





## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

## Two Armenians Elected To Turkish Parliament

ISTANBUL (Public Radio of Armenia) — According to preliminary results of the Turkish Parliamentary elections, two Armenians will be represented in the Turkish Grand National Assembly.

Garo Paylan has been elected from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Markar Yesayan will represent the ruling Justice and Democracy Party (AKP).

Early results show the AKP has collected 42 percent of the votes for parliament, while its partner, the MHP, has 11 percent. The main opposition CHP has received 23 percent.

The pro-Kurdish HDP exceeded the 10 percent threshold needed to enter parliament. With 67 seats, it will form the chamber's second-largest opposition faction.

## Young Runner Wins Istanbul Race

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenian sprinter Gayane Chiloyan won the gold medal at the Balkan U20 Championship in Istanbul on June 22.

Chiloyan, the athlete who represented Armenia at the 31st Summer Olympics, won the 400m event with a 55.56 result.

More than 400 athletes from 16 countries are taking part in the championship.

Silver and bronze medals were captured by Romania and Serbia, respectively.

## Georgia Premier Resigns

TBILIS (AP) — The prime minister of Georgia says he has decided to step down, citing differences within the ruling party, AP reports.

Giorgi Kvirikashvili said on June 20 that he and the leader of the ruling Georgian Dream Party, billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, disagreed over economic issues. He wouldn't elaborate.

Kvirikashvili's move reflects escalating political infighting in the ex-Soviet Caucasus region nation.

In recent weeks, Kvirikashvili and his Cabinet have been targets of protests sparked by a court ruling over the December killings of two teenagers in Tbilisi. Protesters accuse the Cabinet and prosecutors of handling the investigation poorly and were calling for Kvirikashvili's resignation.

It will be up to the parliament controlled by Georgian Dream to name the new prime minister.

## Babikian Elected to Ontario Parliament

TORONTO (Star) — Ontario Progressive Conservative Party candidate Aris Babikian won in Scarborough-Agincourt on June 7, besting Liberal incumbent Soo Wong and taking the riding for the Tories for the first time in decades with a commanding lead.

"People were telling us, 'We want change. We are tired. We don't want Kathleen Wynne anymore,'" Babikian, a retired citizenship judge and longtime leader in the Armenian community said in an interview by phone from his election night celebration. "I am quite proud that they put their trust in me."

While the PC Party had been squaring off against the NDP in other Scarborough ridings, the Scarborough-Agincourt race became a Conservative-Liberal matchup after controversy surrounded NDP candidate Tasleem Riaz.

Wong was buoyed in the days before the election by leader Kathleen Wynne's late-campaign decision to concede she would not be premier while encouraging support of Liberal candidates, her campaign team said. It wouldn't be enough.

As in much of Scarborough, which lacks ready access to rapid transit, the issue of whether to extend subways remained a hot topic. Both Babikian and Wong supported a subway.

Also of issue in northern Scarborough, where a quarter of the population is over 65, was health care, including the need for assistance to age at home.

The Scarborough-Agincourt race plagued NDP Leader Andrea Horwath when the PC Party revealed posts on Riaz's Facebook page from several years ago that included an Adolf Hitler quote.

# Erdogan Wins Sweeping New Powers After Turkish Election Victory

ANKARA (Reuters) — Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan won sweeping new executive powers on Monday, June 25, after his victory in elections that also saw his Islamist-rooted AK Party and its nationalist allies secure a majority in parliament.

Erdogan's main rival, Muharrem Ince of the Republican People's Party (CHP), conceded defeat but branded the elections unjust and said the presidential system that now takes effect was "very dangerous" because it would lead to one-man rule.

A European rights watchdog also said the opposition had faced "unequal conditions", adding that restrictions on media freedom to cover the elections were accentuated by a continuing state of emergency imposed in Turkey after a failed 2016 coup.

Erdogan, 64, the most popular — yet divisive — leader in modern Turkish history, told jubilant, flag-waving supporters there would be no retreat from his drive to transform Turkey, a NATO member and, at least nominally, a candidate to join the European Union.

He is loved by millions of devoutly Muslim working class Turks for delivering years of stellar economic growth and overseeing the construction of roads, bridges, airports, hospitals and schools.

But his critics, including rights groups, accuse him of destroying the independence of the courts and press freedoms. A crackdown launched after the coup has seen 160,000 people detained, and the state of emergency allows Erdogan to bypass parliament with decrees. He says it will be lifted soon.

Erdogan and the AK Party claimed victory in Sunday's presidential and parliamentary elections after defeating a revitalized opposition that had looked capable of staging an upset.

"It is out of the question for us to turn back from where we've brought our country in terms of democracy and the economy," Erdogan said on Sunday night.

His victory means he will remain president at least until 2023 — the centenary

of the founding of the Turkish republic on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Erdogan's foes accuse him of dismantling Ataturk's secular legacy by bringing religion back into public life.

Erdogan responds to such criticism by saying he is trying to modernize Turkey and improve religious freedoms.

With virtually all votes counted, Erdogan had 53 percent against Ince's 31 percent, while in the parliamentary vote the AKP took 42.5 percent and its MHP nationalist allies secured 11 percent, outstripping expectations.

Turkish financial markets initially rallied on hopes of increased political stability as investors had feared deadlock between Erdogan and the opposition, if it had gained control of parliament. However, they then retreated due to concerns about future monetary policy.

The vote ushers in a powerful executive presidency backed by a narrow majority in a 2017 referendum. The office of prime minister will be abolished and Erdogan will be able to issue decrees to form and regulate ministries and remove civil servants, all without parliamentary approval.

"The new regime that takes effect from today is a major danger for Turkey... We have now fully adopted a regime of one-man rule," Ince, a veteran CHP lawmaker, told a news conference.

The secularist CHP draws support broadly from Turkey's urban, educated middle class. It won 23 percent in the new parliament and the pro-Kurdish HDP nearly 12 percent, above the 10 percent threshold needed to win seats.

The HDP's presidential candidate, Selahattin Demirtas, campaigned from prison, where he is detained on terrorism charges that he denies. He faces a 142-year sentence if convicted.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), a rights watchdog, said high voter turnout, at nearly 87 percent, demonstrated Turks' commitment to democracy. But the OSCE also cited some irregularities and echoed opposition complaints about

heavy media bias in favor of Erdogan and the AKP.

"The restrictions we have seen on fundamental freedoms (due to the state of emergency) have had an impact on these elections," Ignacio Sanchez Amor, head of the OSCE observer mission, told a news conference.

Erdogan's MHP allies take a hard line on the Kurdish issue, making it less likely that he will soften his approach to security issues in mainly Kurdish southeast Turkey and neighboring Syria and Iraq, where Turkish forces are battling Kurdish militants.

The Turkish lira and stocks sagged after initial gains, and economists said the outlook was uncertain.

The lira is down about 19 percent since January and investors fear Erdogan, a self-declared "enemy of interest rates", may pressure the central bank to cut recently raised borrowing costs to stimulate economic growth despite double-digit inflation.

Seeking to reassure investors, Erdogan's chief economic adviser, Cemil Ertem, told Reuters the new government would focus on economic reforms and budget discipline. He added that the central bank's independence was fundamental.

The European Commission said it hoped Erdogan would remain a committed partner for the EU on migration, security, regional stability and the fight against terrorism.

Turkey's EU accession bid stalled some time ago amid disputes on a range of issues, including Ankara's human rights record, especially since the post-coup crackdown.

In a message to Erdogan, German Chancellor Angela Merkel stressed the importance of "a stable and pluralistic Turkey in which democratic participation and the protection of the rule of law is strengthened," her office said.

In phone calls with Erdogan, Russian President Vladimir Putin and British Prime Minister Theresa May called for cooperation with Turkey in ending the Syrian conflict.

## EU 'Pleased' With Armenian Support For Iran Nuclear Deal

BRUSSELS (RFE/RL) — The European Union (EU) has praised Armenia for supporting its efforts to save the 2015 international agreement on Iran's nuclear program despite the withdrawal of the United States.

The issue was on the agenda of the first meeting of the EU-Armenia Partnership Council held in Brussels on Thursday, June 21. The meeting was co-chaired by the EU foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, and Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanian.

"Both parties confirmed their commitment to their international obligations with regard to Iran," read a joint statement on the session.

"We discussed the implementation of the nuclear agreement with Iran," Mogherini said at a news conference. "I was pleased to hear the [Armenian foreign] minister's support to our work to preserve the nuclear deal with Iran."

"We discussed ways to work together in that direction," she added.

Under the 2015 accord welcomed by Armenia, Tehran agreed to major curbs on its nuclear program in return for the lifting of international sanctions against the Islamic Republic. US President Donald Trump controversially pulled out of the deal last month.

The US move was criticized by the

other world powers that signed it: France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China. They have since been trying to salvage the accord. The EU is particularly active in that endeavor.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani reportedly complained about Trump's decision in a May 14 phone call with Armenia's newly elected Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. According to Iranian media, Pashinyan assured Rouhani that Armenia remains very supportive of the nuclear deal.

The Armenian leadership has also made clear that it will press ahead with joint economic projects with Iran despite the recent re-imposition of US sanctions on Tehran. Pashinyan called for "new impetus" to Armenian-Iranian ties when he met with the Iranian ambassador in Yerevan, Seyed Kazem Sajjad, on June 8.

The two men discussed, among other things, the ongoing construction of a new power transmission line and long-

standing plans to build a hydroelectric plant on the Armenian-Iranian border.

The high-voltage line will stretch almost 280 kilometers towards that border through Armenia's eastern regions. It will allow the two neighboring states



Federica Mogherini and Zohrab Mnatsakanian meet in Brussels on June 21

to sharply expand a swap arrangement involving supplies of Armenian electricity and Iranian natural gas.

The Armenian Energy Ministry said on Friday that "large-scale" work on the \$125-million facility resumed in May. An Iranian construction company is due to finish it next year.





## INTERNATIONAL

# Russia Military Says US Ceasefire Is Over in Syria as Israel Reportedly Attacks Iran Weapons in Damascus

By Tom O'Connor

DAMASCUS (*Newsweek*) – The Russian military's main air force base in Syria announced on Tuesday, June 26, an end to a ceasefire agreement reached with the US and Jordan in southwest Syria, citing breaches by insurgent groups. The decision comes at a time when Syrian President Bashar al-Assad stages a new offensive to retake one of the last rebel-held regions in the country.

The Hmeimim base, an airfield located in the west coast province of Latakia, is one of two major Russian-leased military installations in Syria, the other being a naval base about 40 miles down the coast in Tartous. Russian warplanes – likely based in Hmeimim – reportedly struck targets Monday in the southwestern province of Daraa, where Russia and Syria had agreed last year to a ceasefire with rebel groups attempting to overthrow Assad since a 2011 uprising backed by the US, Turkey and Gulf Arab states.

“The end of the period of reduced escalation in southern Syria can be confirmed after it was breached by extremist groups and illegitimate armed groups operating against Syrian government forces, while the agreement remains in the Syrian province of Idlib,” the Central Channel for the Hmeimim Military Base wrote on Facebook.

The base also denied reports of civilian casualties in a later message, maintaining that “Russian bombers do not target civilian sites by any means. Our missions are limited to the destruction of the terrorist bases belonging to the Nusra Front and ISIS [Islamic State militant group] terrorists, in order to support friendly land forces advancing on the ground.”

The news, which was also reported by Saudi Arabian newspaper *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, came as elite Syrian troops stormed through southern towns and villages held by various rebel groups, including elements of the Free Syrian Army and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a jihadi coalition recently added to the list of US-recognized terrorist organizations due to its Al-Qaeda ties. Quick government gains have prompted Hayat Tahrir al-Sham to issue a series of statements calling on rebel factions to unite against the military and condemned those currently attempting to broker reconciliation deals with Damascus.

The ceasefire collapse also occurred as airstrikes reportedly struck Damascus International Airport on Tuesday. While the attack remains unclaimed, it has been widely blamed on Israel, who rarely takes responsibility for strikes against Iranian and pro-Iran targets in neighboring Syria. The U.K.-based, pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that Israeli warplanes struck “a shipment of Iranian weapons” that had arrived at the airport, while Russia's state-run Sputnik News highlighted reports claiming an Iranian cargo plane may have been the target.

The official Syrian Arab News Agency said that two Israeli missiles fell near the country's main airport, without specifying the target. The channel connected the suspected Israeli attack to the Syrian military's retaking of large swathes of territory in the Al-Lajat region in Daraa, where international powers have rushed to prevent an even larger escalation between Iran and Israel.

Anticipating last year's ceasefire agreement to unravel as the Syrian military retook rebel enclaves outside the capital, the US and Russia entered quiet negotiations with Jordan aimed at excluding Iranian and pro-Iran forces from taking part in the Syrian campaign. Israel considers their presence a provocation and has for years bombed military assets allegedly associated with Iran. When these forces reportedly responded to a deadly pre-emptive Israeli attack last month by launching rockets at the Israel-occupied Golan Heights, Israel retaliated with its largest aerial assault on Syria since the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Despite their opposition to Assad, the US and Jordan have stepped back their support for rebel groups as they became increasingly saturated with jihadi movements. Washington told Free Syrian Army commanders that “you should not base your decisions on the assumption or expectation of a military intervention by us” in a stern message published Saturday by Reuters. Jordan has repeatedly stated that it would not grant entry to any fighters or civilians fleeing to Syria's southern border with the kingdom, with Jordanian Foreign Minister

Ayman Safadi asserting “our borders will remain closed” in a tweet Tuesday.

Iran-backed groups, such as the Lebanese Shiite Muslim Hezbollah movement, have reportedly pulled back from southwestern Syria as part of a recent agreement, but Iran has maintained that it would not leave Syria unless asked to do so by the local government. The latest airstrikes in Damascus, however, may indicate that the deal has fallen apart or did not preclude Israeli attacks elsewhere in the country. Last week, unclaimed airstrikes blamed on

both the US and Israel reportedly killed dozens – including Iraqi militias – in Syria's far eastern province of Deir Zor.

Assad has welcomed both Russia and Iran as partners in the battle against insurgents and jihadis, but he has called the US and Turkey to withdraw their forces immediately. Iraq, while deeply critical of US and Israeli targeting of pro-Syrian government forces, has managed to maintain close relations with both the Syria-Russia-Iran axis as well as the US-led coalition against ISIS.

## Foreign Minister Receives Special Representative of UN Secretary General

YEREVAN – On June 25, Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan received Mami Mizutori, assistant secretary-general, United Nations Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Welcoming the guest, Mnatsakanyan highlighted the importance of nearly 10 years of effective cooperation between Armenia and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, appreciating the support provided by the Office for the development of Armenia's institutional capacities in this area. In that context the Foreign Minister of Armenia especially highlighted the priorities of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

Mizutori thanked for the reception and highly appreciated Armenia's contribution and experience in disaster risk reduction and management, expressing willingness to continue the joint work in this area.

Both sides highly valued the close cooperation established with the UN and various offices since Armenia's independence, and the active engagement of Armenia in UN initiatives.

The interlocutors agreed that collective efforts and actions of the international community are important in preventing, managing and addressing major disasters.

In this context, Mnatsakanyan and Mizutori touched upon the program of the Second Central Asia and South Caucasus (CASC) sub-regional platform for disaster risk reduction, to be held on June 26-27, in Yerevan, and the events planned within the framework.



Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan received Mami Mizutori, assistant secretary-general, United Nations Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction



Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan received Mami Mizutori, assistant secretary-general, United Nations Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction

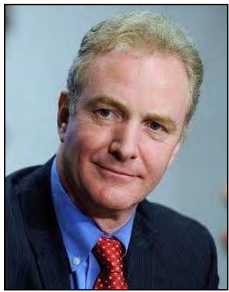


# Community News

## Senate Appropriations Committee Ensures Continued Aid to Armenia and Humanitarian Assistance to Artsakh

WASHINGTON — The Senate Appropriations Committee adopted the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS) Appropriations Bill, which ensures continued funding to Armenia and supports humanitarian programs in Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh), reported the Armenian Assembly of America.

According to the bill's report language, which Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) advanced: "The Committee remains concerned with the protracted conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, endorses the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Minsk Process, and supports humanitarian and health programs funded by the act for victims of that conflict, including for regional rehabilitation centers to care for infants, children, and adults with physical and cognitive disabilities." The overall bill also provides \$3.4 billion for Migration and Refugee Assistance.



Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)

In his testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee earlier this month, Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny urged, among other priorities, robust funding for Artsakh to help meet the ongoing humanitarian and development needs for its people as well as increased funding for refugee assistance to Armenia.

The committee included language that puts Turkey on notice for purchasing military systems from Russia. The Russian-made military equipment exposes the United States to potential risk in the region. Spearheaded by Van Hollen and with the support of State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Lindsey Graham (R-SC), the Committee adopted an amendment which would expressly prohibit spending funds from FY 2019 — as well as prior fiscal years — to transfer, or facilitate the transfer, of F-35 Joint Strike Fighters to Turkey until the Secretary of State certifies that Turkey is not purchasing and will not accept deliveries of the Russian S-400 missile defense system.

Chairman Lindsey Graham stated during the mark-up: "I find it very odd that we live in a time where a NATO ally is buying a missile defense systems from Russia. This is not exactly what I had in mind for NATO..." According to Van Hollen's press release, "senior defense officials have said that if Turkey operates both the F-35 and the S-400, it could compromise the F-35's security, including the aircraft's stealth capabilities, and represent a strategic threat to the United States. It would also compromise the security of our allies and stand in clear violation of the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act."

"The Armenian Assembly appreciates the Senate Appropriations Committee's commitment to provide humanitarian aid to Artsakh and for supporting efforts of the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] Minsk Group to find a peaceful solution to the Nagorno Karabakh peace process," stated Assembly Co-Chairs Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian. "That needs to include restoring the democratically elected Nagorno

see SENATE, page 7



Very Rev. Simeon Odabashian, Vicar of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church

## South Milwaukee Holds Outdoor Divine Liturgy, Celebration

SOUTH MILWAUKEE, WI. — On Sunday, June 17, over 85 Armenians from Southeast Wisconsin gathered for Outdoor Divine Liturgy and a memorial meal at Holy Resurrection Armenian Cemetery in South Milwaukee. The date, Father's Day, was chosen as an occasion for remembering the founding fathers of the cemetery as well as family members buried there. It also coincided with the 70th anniversary of the cemetery's consecration.

South Milwaukee played an important role in the history of Armenian immigration to the US. As an industrial suburb of Milwaukee, South Milwaukee was one of the first destinations for Armenians fleeing the massacres of the 1890s because of the enormous need for factory workers at Bucyrus Erie, one of America's largest manufacturers of mining machinery before its purchase in recent years by Caterpillar.

The first wave of immigrants was joined after World War I by an influx of Genocide survivors. St. Mark's Episcopal Church was the site where visiting Armenian priests conducted liturgy in South Milwaukee until 1924, when the growing community established Holy Resurrection Armenian Church. The city's Armenians were buried in St. Mark's cemetery until 1948, when the community purchased the plot of land adjacent to St. Mark's cemetery, that became one of only a handful of Armenian cemeteries in the US.

"Those early immigrants realized the sense of loss of homeland and family — they somehow knew that their physical bodies could never go back," said Armen Hajinian, deacon at Holy Resurrection and president of the cemetery board. "Walking through the headstones you'll read 'Born in Armenia' and see their names or phrases written in Armenian. It is one last attempt at reclamation of their losses."

The June 17 liturgy was celebrated by Very Rev. Simeon Odabashian, Vicar of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church. He was assisted by Rev. Fr. Sahag Kaishian of Holy Resurrection and Rev. Fr. Nareg Keutelian of St. John the Baptist Church of Greenfield, along with deacons and choir from both churches. In his homily, the Vicar confessed that he had never previously performed liturgy in a cemetery, but upon reflection, realized that Christian worship began, in a sense, in a cemetery at the empty tomb of Jesus on the first Easter Sunday.

Afterward, he conducted a requiem for all souls buried in the cemetery, including Very Rev. Fr. Soukias Kalfaian, pastor of Holy Resurrection's parish for many years, and performed the blessing of the madagh, provided by Mark Kaishian, a longtime parishioner of Holy Resurrection.

During the luncheon on the cemetery grounds, the Mayor of South Milwaukee, Erik Brooks recounted the immense contribution the early Armenian settlers made to the city and commended their descendants for continuing in their forefathers' footsteps.

## Portantino Proposed Items for Armenian Scholarships Adopted In State Budget

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — State Sen. Anthony J. Portantino (D-La Cañada Flintridge) is the chair of the Senate Education Budget Subcommittee with long and close ties to the Armenian American Community. In that capacity, he personally submitted two education proposals on behalf of Armenians in California into the California State Budget. This included six full-tuition scholarships at Hastings College of Law for graduates of the American University of Armenia (AUA) and a \$500,000 state grant to create study guides for California schools to properly teach the Armenian Genocide.

Portantino is pleased to announce that the California State Budget adopted both of his important proposals.

"I am so pleased to report the successful inclusion of these important education proposals. I had the honor to work with representative of AUA and Hastings to create the scholarships and with the Genocide Education Project on the implementation of the study guide proposal. I am grateful to my colleagues and Governor Brown for embracing the idea of helping all Californians properly learn about the Genocide and to provide a career path that cements California's positive relationship with AUA, commented Portantino.

The six scholarships at Hastings have an estimated value of \$190,000 each. To be eligible, students must be California residents who graduate from AUA and meet Hastings' admission requirements. Following on the heels of last year's successful effort to budget \$10 million for the implementation of the updated Social Science curriculum in California, the study guides will further advance the cause of properly teaching all California students accurate history around the horrendous events that began in 1915.

"For many years, one of the top legislative priorities of the ANCA-Western Region has been to find pathways to implement the mandated curriculum of Armenian Genocide education in public schools, whether through professional development and teacher training, preparation and distribution of appropriate and comprehensive study guides, and proper inclusion in social studies and history textbooks. We are very grateful to Senator Anthony Portantino for his ongoing efforts to secure substantial funding for this purpose, and we look forward to continuing to work with him and the State Legislature toward ensuring that the history and lessons learned from the Armenian Genocide are appropriately taught to California students," stated Nora Hovsepien, Esq., chair of the Armenian National Committee of America — Western Region.

Portantino has a long and distinguished record of supporting the Armenian American Community. In addition to chairing the Education Budget Sub-committee he also chairs the California Armenia and Artsakh Select Committee. Last year he requested \$3 million for the Armenian American Museum in addition to the \$10 million for social science curriculum. He has visited Yerevan and Artsakh and supported many local Armenian initiatives and causes. Earlier in the year he held a historic hearing on the 30th commemoration of the Sumgait Pogrom with a survivor of the atrocity.

"AUA presents an outstanding opportunity for students in California to come to Yerevan for an excellent education. The scholarship gives an extra incentive to these students to further their dreams to become lawyers without the fear of creating debt. I am grateful to Senator Portantino for proposing the idea for our students," added AUA President Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian.

The adopted budget is headed to Governor Brown for his signature. The Senator is cautiously optimistic that the Governor will sign the budget creating the scholarships and the study guides.





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Armenia and the Post-Velvet Revolution Presented by Dr. Hampig Sarafian

FRESNO — The Armenian Cultural Conservancy (ACC) and the Armenian Council of America (ACA) organized an evening lecture by Dr. Hampig Sarafian, chairman of the Social Democrat Hunchakian Party's Central Committee titled "Armenia and the Post Velvet Revolution Movement" at Fresno's Woodward Park Regional Library on June 18.

Addressing the large audience was Deacon Allan Y. Jendian, publicity chair of ACC, who delivered the opening remarks and gave a brief introduction on the traditional Armenian political parties and the cultural, educational and

political action organizations that function under their auspices.

Sevak Khatchadorian, chairman of ACA, discussed the mission of ACA, that includes bridging the gap between elected US officials and the Armenian American communities in the United States, strengthening US-Armenia and US-Artsakh ties and promoting good governance in Armenia. Khatchadorian then introduced Sarafian.

Sarafian delivered an intellectual and thought provoking presentation about Armenia by highlighting the major events since the independence in 1991

that resulted in subversion of the rule of law and erosion of checks and balances between the three branches of government, which in turn led to institutionalized corruption that pilfered the state coffers, regime sponsored monopolies, class of untouchables who were above the law and the establishment of perpetual fraudu-

lent elections that enabled the leading Republican Party to further strengthen its grip on all aspects of life in Armenia getting very close to establishing a single party rule, much like the communist party in Soviet times.

Speaking about the major achievements of the "Velvet Revolution" thus far, the speaker singled out the relentless war against corruption by Nikol Pashinian's government that has so far ensnared prominent figures of the previous Republican Party-led regime with more revelations to come, re-establishment of judicial independence and a concerted effort toward more transparent and just governance.

He later drew a contrast to neighboring Georgia, which prior to the Mikheil Saakashvili-led "Rose Revolution," was considered to be one of the most corrupt countries in the region and now has become a thriving democracy. Dr. Sarafian felt confident that the new leadership under Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian will spearhead the same type of change in Armenia. He ended his speech by stating that he was optimistic about the future because Armenia's youth, the driving force behind this movement, is fully engaged in the process, is fully aware of its rights; and in the



Dr. Hampig Sarafian



Midge Barrett, ACC co-chair and Deacon Jendian present Dr. Hampig Sarafian and Sevak Khatchadorian with gifts of appreciation.

age of advanced technology and the internet, they have a good grasp of how a modern democracy is supposed to function.

The lecture was followed by a lively question-and-answer session where members of the audience asked and received answers to wide ranging and in-depth questions about the topic at hand.

Ending the question and answer session Midge Barrett, ACC co-chair and Deacon Jendian presented Sarafian and Khatchadorian with gifts of appreciation.



Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.

## Dr. Nubar Berberian Annual Awards

Dr. Nubar Berberian, intellectual, journalist, activist and editor of many ADL daily newspapers for more than 50 years passed away at the age of 94 in November 23, 2016. In his Will, Dr. Berberian directed his Trust Fund managers to appropriate awards every year to college students of Armenian descent worldwide who major in either International Law or Political Science.

### ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Eligible recipients are college students of Armenian descent who major in either International Law or Political Science.
- 2) Applicant must be enrolled in a full-time graduate program in a fully accredited college or university in the world.
- 3) Applicant must provide all of the information requested on the application form.
- 4) Applicant must submit a copy of his or her most recent college transcript.
- 5) Applicant is to include a small head and shoulders self-portrait.
- 6) Application could be received by requesting from [Tcadirector@Aol.com](mailto:Tcadirector@Aol.com).
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: [Tcadirector@Aol.com](mailto:Tcadirector@Aol.com). The Paper submissions will be accepted by the deadline at:

Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.  
Dr. Nubar Berberian Trust Fund  
755 Mt. Auburn Street  
Watertown, MA 02472  
USA

but electronic application is preferred.

- 8) The deadline of receiving the applications is **August 30, 2018**.
- 9) The administrators and managers of the fund will vote the qualified winners in **October, 2018** based on the merits of each applicant.
- 10) The winner or winners will receive their awards in **November, 2018**. Applicants who were not selected will be notified in writing and invited to apply next year again, if they are eligible.
- 11) Winning applicants are not eligible to apply again.
- 12) This announcement is published in Armenian, English, French and Spanish.

Watertown, MA, April 23, 2018

## Senate Appropriations Committee Ensures Continued Aid to Armenia And Humanitarian Assistance to Artsakh

SENATE, from page 6

Karabakh authorities as full participants in the Minsk Group process as well. With President Erdogan's permanent damage to Turkey's democratic facade about to be exposed yet again this weekend in elections there, we also fully agree that the United States ought not to reward Turkey for its egregious actions and are also deeply troubled by reports that Azerbaijan has purchased Bell-412 helicopters for its military," the Co-Chairs added.

"In our recent travel to the region, concerns were expressed regarding Azerbaijan's continued military build-up. The United States and the other co-chair countries need to be investing in confidence building measures and sending the message to Aliyev that killing more Christian Armenians will not go unpunished. Azerbaijan continues to violate the cease-fire agreement it signed with Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, including the targeting of civilians and kindergartens. This is unacceptable and we urge the United States and the OSCE Co-Chairs to hold Azerbaijan accountable. Armenia's commitment to democracy has been proven yet again, and the United States needs to start calling balls and strikes more fairly and consistently with American values," they concluded.

The bill restates the traditional exceptions to Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, while the report language maintains military parity between Armenia and Azerbaijan, recommending \$600,000 for International Military Education and Training and \$1 million for the Foreign Military Financing Program for each country. The Senate report language also recommends the same funding for Armenia consistent with last year's level: \$17.633 million through the Assistance to Europe Eurasia and Central Asia (AEECA) account and \$1.5 million for International Narcotics Controls and Law Enforcement.

The bill allocates \$25 million for programs to promote and protect international religious freedom. In addition, the bill provides \$6.5 million for the ambassador-at-large for religious freedom, and \$2 million for the Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom in the Near East and South Central Asia.

Earlier this week, the House Appropriations Committee approved the FY 2019 SFOPS bill on a vote of 30-21.





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Knights and Daughters of Vartan Hold High School Graduation and Scholarship Award Ceremony in Cambridge

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. – Ararat Lodge No. 1 of the Knights of Vartan and Arpie Otyag (Chapter) No. 9 held their annual high school graduation recognition and scholarship award ceremony on June 12 in Talanian Hall at Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church of Cambridge. Twenty students graduating from high school were honored along with four college students receiving scholarships.

Ararat Lodge Sbarabed Argishtti Chaparian spoke and participated in the ceremonies. Arpie Chapter Dirouhie Dr. Knarik Arkun provided words of encouragement to the new graduates, while Arpie Chapter Nakhgin Dirouhie [Former Matron] Anahid Mardiros spoke about the book *The City of Orphans: Relief Workers, Commissars and the “Builders of the New Armenia,”* Alexandropol/Leninakan 1919-1931, by Dr. Nora Nercessian, which the Arpie Chapter gave the graduates. She pointed out that it is important for the graduates, and all Armenians in general, to know about these sad chapters in Armenian history.

The evening included two keynote speakers, Dr. Julie Gulesserian, who provided information on the Armenian Diaspora Survey funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and administered by the Armenian Institute of London, and Harry Glorikian, a well known entrepreneur and global business expert.

Asbed Vartan Soukiasian introduced Glorikian as a speaker who will inspire the new



Vartan Soukiasian, left, and Argishtti Chaparian, far right, flank the high school graduates of 2018 (photo: David Medzorian)

graduates. Glorikian did not fail to deliver. He used his family story, starting with the Genocide and several family emigrations, to

show how success is possible through hard work. He stressed that students should not be afraid to take risks and welcome change, because even failure can open doors to new paths to success.

The high school graduates came up to receive several gifts, including a certificate of recognition of their achievements from Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian. Their photographs alongside Sbarabed Chaparian were taken by Asbed David Medzorian, photographer of Ararat Lodge No.1, and proud parents often went up to join their child in the photograph.

Kourken Aroyan has been head of the scholarship committee for the last year. The college

students who received scholarships are Alexander Avakian, Alec, Tina and Andre Kotikian, and Garen Soukiasian (Tina Kotikian was unable to be present). The names of the 2018 high school graduates are Sevag Aboyan, Alex Abrahamyan, Nicole Akhian, Kevork Atinikian, Nishan Avedikian, David Belorian, Katrena Daldalian, Julie Der Torossian, Alique Fisher, Melanie Halibian, Saro Karaguesian, Anoush Krafian, Matthew Kutzer, Naig Megerdichian, Liana Nalbandian, Jacob Naroian, Nairi Ostayan, Ani Ouligian, Sona Ourfalian, Michael Samuelian, Albert Trimble, Christina Yapoudjian, George Yeghyayan, and Albert Yildirim. Of these 24 graduates, 20 were able to physically participate in the ceremony.



Kourken Aroyan, left, and Argishtti Chaparian, far right, flank scholarship recipients, from left, Andre Kotikian, Alexander Avakian, Garen Soukiasian, and Alec Kotikian (photo: David Medzorian)

## OBITUARY

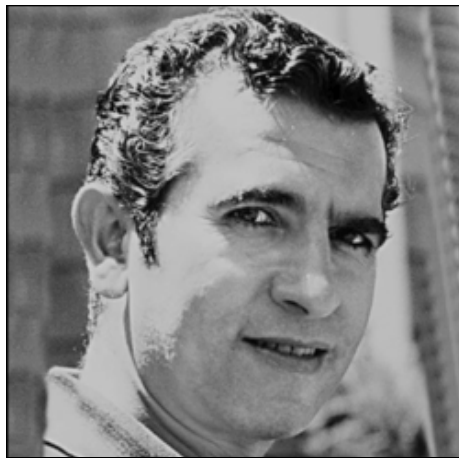
### Vahan Levon Barmakian

WINCHESTER, Mass. — Vahan Levon “Vaughn” Barmakian of Winchester and Oak Bluffs, died on June 17.

He was the husband of Sylvia (Tatigian) Barmakian for 60 years.

He also leaves children Adreena, Adam, and Nyree Valdes and her husband Eduardo Valdes; and grandchildren Evan, Emil and Oliver Valdes. He was predeceased by his identical twin Diran Levon Barmakian and the late Ara Barmakian. He is also survived by his sister-in-law Lillian Barmakian; nieces Sima Seymourian and her husband Bruce, Liane Bush and her husband Edward and Deanna Barmakian and her husband Michael Jimenez. Also survived by many grandnieces and grandnephews.

Funeral services were at Saint James Armenian Church, 465 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown on Friday, June 22. Interment was



at Wildwood Cemetery, Winchester.

Arrangements were made by the Aram Bedrossian Funeral Home.

Telephone (617) 924-7400

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Finding a Dad at 46

By Carmen George

FRESNO (*Fresno Bee*) – For 35 years, Tiffany Dow thought her dad was her mom's high school boyfriend, a blonde, blue-eyed man who left before she was born.

Dow always thought it was odd that her mom, also blonde and blue-eyed, would give birth to a dark-haired, dark-eyed babe who looked different from everyone in the family – but she left it at that.

That is, until this Christmas, when her boyfriend bought her a DNA test as a present. She expected the results to show a diverse ancestry. It instead revealed she's half Armenian.

"I'm not a mutt at all!" Dow recalls thinking.

"I called my mom. I didn't think she was lying, but I was in shock."

Her mom asked if she could come over to her house later to talk.

"I said, 'No, we're not doing this. You're telling me now.'"

So she told Dow who she suspected was her biological father, a man named Doug Davidian from Fresno. She said he had a beard, a light blue van, and was on a road trip across the US when they met in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1971.

Dow searched for Davidian online and found his LinkedIn profile within minutes, which showed he worked as the sales and marketing administrator at Total Care Medical Group.

It was already evening so she waited until the morning to call his Fresno office. Davidian answered the phone.

The start of that exchange, as Dow recalls it:

"Hi Doug, do you have a minute?"

"Well sure."

"Well good, my name is Tiffany. Have you ever been to Missouri?"

Davidian said he had, on a road trip in the 1970s. Dow proceeded to tell him the story about her DNA test and how his name "came up."

Davidian then called Dow's mother to help jog his memory, and the pair decided Davidian was likely Dow's father.

Davidian and Dow became sure of it as they talked more later that night. Their resemblance in personality and appearance was striking and they felt an instant connection. They are thrilled to have found each other.

Before Davidian was contacted by Dow, he was reading a Bible passage about such a "crazy ass miracle" that he started to laugh.

It also inspired him to pray: "I prayed if there's something or someone who needs friendship or attention, I don't just walk by it, I show up. I do my part. ... One hour exactly after I prayed that prayer, Tiffany was on the other line."

It was a different prayer than normal.

"A lot of times when I pray, it's about me and my need," Davidian said. "This prayer was not about me and my need, it was about being aware



Doug Davidian welcomes his daughter Tiffany Dow after she flew in from Missouri to Fresno for Father's Day weekend.

of other people, and I think that's something that God wants."

Another amazing twist: They learned each starts the day reading from the same Bible study daily devotional.

They met for the first time in March, when Davidian flew to Missouri to visit Dow at her home in Lee's Summit, a suburb of Kansas City, for her 46th birthday.

They've gotten more out of their relationship than each other.

Davidian, 65, also got grandchildren, Dow's children: Olivia, 24, Sam, 21, Jack, 20, and Ben, 17.

And Dow got grandparents. She met Horace and Dolores Davidian for the first time recently. Dow flew into Fresno on June 15 to celebrate Father's Day with her dad.

"We both talk a lot," Dow said of how they're alike. "We both don't let many people get words in, so we interrupt each other the whole time, but it's OK because we both don't find that disrespectful, and we talk with our hands."

Both are business savvy. Dow sells real estate, and Davidian is a past president of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce who once ran a large office furniture company.

They also share a reputation for winning arm-wrestling matches, Dow added with a laugh.

Dow was disappointed her mom didn't tell her about Davidian earlier, but she's found solace in the belief that "God's timing is perfect."

Dow's mother gave birth to her when she was 17 years old. When Dow was 11, she learned the man she thought was her father – her mother's husband – was actually her stepfather. She later learned the high school boyfriend she thought was her real dad died in a car accident.

"It's like a miracle," Dow said of finding Davidian. "I kept saying that inside, 'I have a dad. It's a miracle.' It really was a miracle."

Their families have been accepting of their relationship, including Dow's stepfather and Davidian's two adopted sons.

Davidian said finding Dow has brought more meaning to his life and helped "connect the dots."

Dow said finding her dad gave her "a peace."

"It was like all the pieces finally fit and I didn't even know they were missing," she said. "I'm still who I am, just finding out you have a father, it shouldn't make a difference, but it really, really did. I think for the first time in my life I felt 100 percent whole."

## AGBU Offers E-Books, Apps About Armenia

NEW YORK – The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) has developed a series of multimedia educational and travel e-books as well as family-friendly apps which present a wide variety of themes about Armenia. The newest addition is a versatile e-book entitled *Vayots Dzor*, prepared in collaboration with My Armenia, a program implemented by the Smithsonian Institution and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Armenia's Vayots Dzor province is home to many ancient landmarks and tourist attractions, including the Areni-1 cave complex – with the earliest known winery Areni 1 inside – the 8th-century Tanahat Monastery, the 10th-century Smbataberd Fortress and the 13th-century Noravank Monastery. Vayots Dzor is also home to the therapeutic springs and mineral pools of Jermuk.

Ideal for travelers, nature lovers and history buffs, the e-book includes interactive maps, slide shows, videos, 360-view photos and audio descriptions featuring Vayots Dzor's architecture, archeology, adventure activities, cuisine, festivals and cultural events. Visitor information, tips for easy trip planning, hotels, restaurants and an essential Armenian phrasebook are also highlighted.

*Vayots Dzor* is the third in a series of travel companion e-books, with *Exploring Yerevan* and *The Armenian Highland* being the first two. Available in seven languages, the e-books can be downloaded for free on smartphones, tablets and PCs at [www.agbu.org/armenia/travel](http://www.agbu.org/armenia/travel).

"We are proud to partner with the Smithsonian in our mission of introducing the wealth of the Armenian heritage to the world," said AGBU Board Member Dr. Yervant Zorian. "The new e-book uses creative state-of-the-art solutions to promote the richness and diversity of Vayots Dzor's nature and history and was designed to contribute to the greater number of tourists in the region."

In addition to the e-books, AGBU also developed Im Armenia travel app for kids of all ages. It invites users to explore interesting facts about popular sites throughout and around Yerevan, as well as in the provinces of Gegharkunik and Vayots Dzor. The first digital travel guide to introduce kids to the country in a fun and interactive way, Im Armenia functions in English, Portuguese and French, while also teaching basic words in Eastern Armenian. To download the Im Armenia app, visit [www.agbu.org/armenia/travel](http://www.agbu.org/armenia/travel) or your app store.



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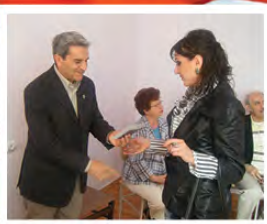
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## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Armenian Assembly Board Member Annie Totah Works to Promote US-Armenia Relations Leading up to National Advocacy

WASHINGTON — Armenian Assembly of America Board Member Annie Simonian Totah continues to work to advance United States-Armenia relations, reaching out to Members of Congress. Working with the Armenian Assembly Board of Trustees and staff, Totah has held numerous meetings with elected officials, where she raises issues of key concern to the Armenian American community. All of her work is leading up to the Assembly's National Advocacy Conference, which will take place at on September 24-25.

Last month, Totah discussed strengthening and expanding US-Armenia relations and reaffirming the Armenian Genocide with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Senate Minority Leader Charles "Chuck" Schumer (D-NY).



Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Assembly Board Member Annie Totah

When she spoke with Congressman Don Beyer (D-VA) in early April, the Congressman reiterated his commitment to and support of US reaffirmation of the Armenian Genocide. Last year, he joined the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, and since then he has co-sponsored H.Res.220, and co-signed the letter to President Donald Trump urging him to squarely acknowledge the Armenian Genocide.

"It is incumbent upon every Armenian — young and old alike — to advocate to their elected officials on a regular basis, whether on the Hill or whether in Congressional district offices. If we Armenians do not lobby our Representatives, how do we expect them to understand our issues and help us with a myriad of challenges relating to our Homeland as well as to the Armenian Genocide reaffirmation," stated Totah. "We, at the Armenian Assembly, also continue our efforts and meetings with Congress by promoting America's proud chapter in helping the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. We also share with Congress the Armenian National Institute's new 24-panel digital exhibit, displaying the role of the YMCA



Assembly Board Member and Armenian Honorary Consul Oscar Tatosian, Clara Andonian, Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Assembly Board Member Annie Totah, National Advocacy Conference Chair Margie Satian, and Assembly Grassroots and Development Associate Mariam Khaloyan

and American relief work during the first Republic of Armenia (1918-1920)," she added.

Totah also serves on the Board of the Armenian National Institute (ANI).

At this year's Armenian Genocide Commemoration on Capitol Hill, hosted by the Congressional Caucus on



Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, Rear Admiral Dr. Susan Blumenthal, Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA), and Assembly Board Member Annie Totah

Armenian Issues, Totah spoke with various Representatives and Senators, including Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Armenia Caucus Co-Vice Chair Congressman Adam Schiff (D-CA), Congressman Brad Sherman (D-CA), and many others.



Senate Minority Leader Charles "Chuck" Schumer (D-NY) and Assembly Board Member Annie Totah

"Annie's year-round advocacy is immeasurable, and the Assembly is fortunate to have the benefit of her time and talent for over 40 years. She continuously encourages others to contact their Representatives and educate them on the importance of strengthening US-Armenia and US-Artsakh relations," Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny stated. "On September 25th, the Armenian Assembly will be honoring her at our evening Gala following a full day of advocacy, which will include featured guests and Members of Congress. We hope everyone can attend for what promises to be an outstanding event," he added.

## LA City Fifth District Chief Deputy of Public Safety Greg Martayan Honored

LOS ANGELES — On June 21, the Circle of Excellence Public Servants Appreciation Reception hosted by the Greater San Fernando Valley Chamber of Commerce was held at the Airtel Plaza Hotel. Among the honorees was Armenian-American Gregory Martayan, chief deputy of public safety for Councilmember Paul Koretz of the Fifth District. On hand to present the awards were Los Angeles Police Chief — Designee Michel Moore, Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Koretz, Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Krekorian (CD2), and Los Angeles City Councilmember Bob Blumenfield (CD3).

Beginning with welcoming remarks by Chief Michel Moore and Chamber CEO Nancy Hoffman Vanyek, the evening celebrated the valuable partnerships between the public and private sectors, commending government staff who have made positive change for the City of Los Angeles.

"As the Fifth District's Chief Deputy of Public Safety, Greg goes above and beyond daily, handling issues and solving whatever problems arise. Two of the largest critical infrastructure projects in the Fifth District were coordinated under Greg's leadership. He is incredibly deserving of this award and I am proud to stand with the Chamber in recognizing his work" stated Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Koretz.



Gregory Martayan, holding his award, at the event

"Greg has been a great friend to our business community and the Chamber. He has helped members in matters like addressing homeless individuals on their properties and has resolved conflicts in a dignified manner.

He is value-added and demonstrates astuteness at connecting businesses with the appropriate persons throughout city agencies" said Nancy Hoffman Vanyek, president and CEO of the Chamber.

Martayan is chief deputy of public safety for the Fifth Council District in the City of Los Angeles. Based out of LA City Hall, Martayan acts as Councilmember Koretz's liaison to the command staff, relative Commissions and Bureaus of the Los Angeles Police Department, the Los Angeles Fire Department, the Los Angeles Emergency Management Department and related public safety agencies. In his work establishing safe communities, Martayan has always placed an emphasis on prevention rather than reaction. Martayan is the first Armenian-American in that position in the city's history. His family immigrated to the United States escaping the Armenian Genocide in 1919, eventually settling in Los Angeles in the early 1940s, where they have been ever since.

"The future of Los Angeles knows no bounds when we work together as a team and establish strong foundations to create incredible futures, for our residents and our businesses" reflected Martayan.

"This evening is a great celebration of all that represents the best in our City. Public private partnerships are a vital part of moving our City forward. The City has an asset in Greg, for always being ahead of the curve and putting people together to get resolution" commented Joan Pelico, Chief of Staff to Koretz.



# Fletcher Tavitian Scholars Present Program On Milestones for Armenian Identity

By Aram Arkun  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

MEDFORD, Mass. — The 2018 Tavitian Scholars at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy of Tufts University on April 19 presented a program “Three Milestones that Shaped the Armenian Identity” at Tufts. Gayane Hayrapetyan, head of the Secretariat of the Ministry of Culture, Youth Affairs and Tourism of the Republic of Artsakh, served as master of ceremonies.

Hayrapetyan introduced Dr. Joyce Barsam, a member of the Fletcher School Board of Advisors and vice-president of the Tavitian Foundation. Barsam pointed out that the cooperation between Fletcher and the Tavitian Foundation is now in its 19th year. She said that it produced a critical mass of almost 300 young professionals who have each received six months of advanced training at the Fletcher School. She declared that, “we are investing in Armenia’s best raw material – its most plentiful natural resource. No, it is not oil. No, it is not



The Tavitian scholars sing for the audience.

then spoke on the “Centennial of the First Republic.” Displaying slides, he gave the background of this republic, the first independent

Arega Hovsepyan, who works at the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh, gave a talk titled the “Nagorno Karabakh Freedom Movement.” She began with the events at the end of the Soviet Union and the foundation of the state of Artsakh. She asked the audience to remember that Nagorno Karabakh is not the name of a conflict but of the home of freedom-loving people and a special culture. Hovsepyan declared that Europe starts from Karabakh both geographically and due to a shared system of values.

of the Fletcher School because they have fewer such opportunities than the Armenians of Armenia. Despite the tough neighborhood, the Artsakh Armenians are doing their best to live the lives they want, Avetisyan said. They try their best to overcome their problems and look forward to the future celebration of many decades of freedom.

Shougarian declared that a restless quest for knowledge and universal values was the commonality shared by the three topics discussed this day. He reminisced about the early days of



Dr. Joyce Barsam, left, with Gayane Hayrapetyan (photo: Aram Arkun)

gas, gold or silver. It is the intellectual capacity of its youth.” She pointed out one of the “champion graduates” of the program sitting in the front row, Robert Avetisyan, class of 2006, who has become the permanent representative of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh Republic) to the United States.

Robert Loynd, Fletcher’s director of executive education, declared that he was “a proud

state after the fall of the medieval Armenian kingdom of Cilicia. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this republic stood out by having elected three female parliamentarians, and the appointment of a female ambassador to Japan. Yengibaryan continued the story up to the present, covering the Karabakh Movement and the independence of the third republic of Armenia and the ongoing protest movements which now are known to many as the Violet Revolution.

Tavitian Scholar Narek Melkumyan, assistant to the Deputy Mayor of Yerevan, spoke on the “2800th Anniversary of Yerevan,” giving a historical excursion to the audience from ancient times to the present of the developments that made this ancient city, chronologically the 12th capital of Armenia, so memorable. He also provided some of the highlights of Yerevan’s unique touristic sites, and ended by showing a brief inspirational video on the city.



Robert Loynd (photo: Aram Arkun)

friend of the Tavitian Foundation, the Tavitian Scholars and certainly of Armenia as well.” Of the seven in-residence programs he manages in executive education, he said that this is the bedrock or cornerstone program. This is the program that Fletcher uses as a guidepost when planning other such programs.

Tavitian Scholar Viktor Yengibaryan, president of the European Movement of Armenia,



Rouben Shougarian (photo: Aram Arkun)



Viktor Yengibaryan (photo: Aram Arkun)



Narek Melkumyan (photo: Aram Arkun)



Arega Hovsepyan (photo: Aram Arkun)



Robert Avetisyan (photo: Aram Arkun)

The three illustrated talks were similar to classroom projects and no doubt served as useful practice for the scholars. Certainly it was an unusual combination of themes.

Closing remarks were made by Avetisyan, and Rouben Shougarian, the first ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the United States and a professor at the Fletcher School. Avetisyan said that the Armenians of Artsakh in particular appreciate the possibility of participating in large international programs like that

the recent movement for Armenian independence and praised the Fletcher School’s efforts over the past several decades as having a major impact on Armenian life. Many of its graduates are in the government or the opposition.

The program finished with an Armenian song that the Tavitian Scholars prepared and sang for the audience, followed by a reception.

The Tavitian Scholars finished their official six-month stay in Boston and left for their jobs in Armenia and Artsakh this June.





COMMUNITY NEWS

# AMAA's Avedisian School Bids Farewell to its Second Class of High School Graduates

PARAMUS, N.J. — Saturday, June 16 was Graduation Day for the AMAA's Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian School in Yerevan. The graduating 12th-grade students bid farewell to their beloved School on their way to new opportunities and phases in their lives.

Commencement Day is a great event in the life of the Avedisian School, when the school



Avedisian High School Graduates of Class of 2018 with historian Taner Akcam, School Benefactors Edward and Pamela Avedisian



Edward Avedisian congratulates the graduates

Minister of Education and Science Arayik Harutyunyan, Deputy Minister Hovhannes Hovhannisyan and Head of General Education Department of Yerevan Municipality Anna



Historian Taner Akcam with Minister of Education and Science Arayik Harutyunyan



Edward Avedisian congratulates the graduates

welcomes its benefactors Edward and Pamela Avedisian, friends, supporters, representatives of international organizations, School Board members, journalists and numerous guests from abroad. This year, among the guests were the Republic of Armenia's newly appointed

Stepanyan.

The keynote speaker was historian Taner Akcam, one of the first Turkish scholars to recognize and publicly condemn the Armenian Genocide. In his welcoming words, Akcam urged the students to be courageous and innovative, to have their own views and defend them if necessary, and to fight against injustices.

Before handing out the graduation diplomas, benefactors Edward and Pamela Avedisian, AMAA Representative in Armenia Harout Necessian, and School Principal Melanya Geghamyan congratulated the graduates and wished them success in their future endeavors.



Principal Melanya Geghamian escorts Minister of Education and Science Arayik Harutyunyan

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# Arts & Living

## Armenian Arts And Crafts Featured at Smithsonian Folklife Festival

WASHINGTON – Armenia and Catalonia will take center stage at the 2018 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, which will run from June 27 to July 1 and July 4 to 8 on the National Mall, and feature more than 170 participants from Armenia and the Armenian diaspora, including artisans, designers, musicians, cooks, winemakers, and performers.

During the 10-day event that annually draws millions of visitors on site and online from across the United States and around the world, the Smithsonian and Armenian partners will present the “Armenia: Creating Home” program, showcasing the country’s food and artisan craft and highlighting how Armenian communities integrate heritage into their own strategies for economic and cultural sustainability.

The President of Armenia, Armen Sarkissian, the Armenian Minister of Culture, Lilit Makunts, the US Ambassador to Armenia, Richard Mills, the USAID Armenia Mission Director, Deborah Grieser, the Ambassador of Armenia to the United States, Grigor Hovhannisian, and representatives from the Government of Armenia, US Department of State, USAID, and Armenian-American diaspora organizations will be in attendance at the Folklife Opening Ceremony on June 28. Mills, Hovhannisian, and Grieser will also participate in the Smithsonian’s public discussions on cultural diplomacy and cultural tourism on June 28 and 30.

Armenia is the first country in the Caucasus region to be featured at the renowned festival in the heart of the U.S. capital. Visitors to the Armenia program will be able to learn how to cook lavash flatbread in tonir (a clay oven), make cheese and gata, and grill khorovats (barbecued meats). Along with tasting wine, observing and trying their hand at baking, dancing, weaving, and carving, visitors will also be able to virtually explore two of Armenia’s most prominent historical sites – the Areni-1 Cave housing a 6,100-year-old winery and the 13th century Noravank Monastery – thanks to the 3D imagery that was developed by the Smithsonian and CyArk with USAID support.

Apart from interactive demonstrations and workshops in Hyurasenyak (living room), Hatsatoun (bakery), Hazarashen (traditional structure), and Kenats Tsar (tree of life), the Armenian display at the festival also includes a “Smithsonian in Armenia” tent, which will highlight the work done through the My Armeniacultural heritage tourism program – a unique partnership between USAID and the Smithsonian Institution to promote sustainable rural development while preserving the country’s rich cultural heritage.

As part of its tourism promotional efforts, My Armenia will also organize three business-to-business meetings in Boston, New York City, and Washington, D.C. on the sidelines of the 2018 Folklife Festival. In each city, five Armenian inbound tour operators and hospitality businesses will meet with 12 representatives of the American tourism industry and related organizations. These meetings, which will feature press meetings, keynote presentations and networking events, are aimed at boosting Armenia as an attractive cultural heritage tourism destination, creating business linkages and, ultimately, increasing the number of tourists from the U.S. to Armenia.

The “Armenia: Creating Home” program partners include the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, the My Armenia Program, the U.S. Embassy in Armenia, and the Embassy of Armenia to the United States of America.



Hasmik Konjoyan displays souvenir album presented to her by parent Ani Belorian Stepanian

## Hasmik Konjoyan’s Zangakner Gives Final Performance

WATERTOWN – The Zangakner Performing Arts Ensemble gave its final performance with founder Hasmik Konjoyan as director on June 3 at St. James Armenian Church.

**By Aram Arkun**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

Konjoyan is moving to California at the end of June.

Konjoyan established Zangakner in 2010 in Boston with the goal of offering a unique venue for children of diverse Armenian backgrounds to preserve their Armenian language, culture and heritage through music and lyrics. As master of ceremonies Mark Arkun declared in his introduction, “She ended up doing much more than that. She of course is very talented musically, but she also has the unique ability through her personal warmth and skilled guidance to bring us together and make us feel loved and valued. She created a venue for us to come together as part of the broader Armenian community while making

see ZANGAKNER, page 15



Zangakner Performing Arts Ensemble June 3 performance

## Tale of an Armenian Candy in the US: ‘Sometimes You Feel Like a Nut’

**By Joel Denker**

It is an improbable story. In 1890, a newcomer to America, an Armenian born in Turkey, takes a job in a rubber plant in Naugatuck, Conn. and moves on to try his luck in the candy business. The young man, Peter Halajian, was seeking refuge from the oppression and economic hardship his people suffered under the Ottoman Empire. Halajian would become the founder of the Peter Paul Manufacturing Company, the maker of the Mounds Bar. Its 1980s jingle, “Sometimes you feel like a nut, sometimes you don’t,” advertised its marquee products, Mounds and Almond Joy.

Halajian was following a path pursued by many Armenians who journeyed to the US in pursuit of jobs in the country’s surging manufacturing economy. Companies hired the immigrants in the industrial heyday of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to fill low-rung, cheap labor jobs. Woolen mills; wire, iron, and steel plants; and packing houses put the recruits to work. Immigrants sometimes knew little of their destination other than the name of the plant whose reputation had lured them.

Armenians arrived in Lynn, Mass., historian Robert Mirak points out, in search of the White Shoe Company, rather than the industrial town outside Boston. Unwilling to accept these positions as their permanent lot, Armenians were known for their eagerness to break the bonds of factory life.

Entrepreneurial independence was a goal that Halajian shared with many of his compatriots. “As soon as I could I started a business on my own for I do not like to work for other people” one Armenian told the US Immigration Commission.

Naugatuck, where Peter Halajian settled, was located in a region that was a seedbed of early American manufacturing. Drawn by the Naugatuck River Valley’s abundant and cheap water power, employers built thriving mills in Ansonia, Waterbury, Seymour, and Shelton, names familiar to anyone who has heard a conductor recite them on a Metro North train. These firms made brass, chemicals, rubber, and other basic industrial goods.

The economy of Naugatuck revolved around rubber, an early enterprise in the western Connecticut town not far from New Haven. It was here in the 1840s that the industrialist Charles Goodyear developed the pioneering methods of vulcanization. The US Rubber Company, founded in 1892, as a giant combination of small businesses, was a magnet for immigrants. Many laborers lodged in tenements and rooming houses on Rubber Avenue and its nearby streets. The city, from which naugahyde got its name, was also known for Keds, the shoes assembled by workers at US Rubber.

Rubber was so dominant in Naugatuck that other, less visible businesses were overshadowed. Gregg Pugliese, a native of what he calls this “factory town,” was fascinated by its rubber industry when he decided on a graduate school research project. In the course of his investigation, the then-social studies

see NUTS, page 16



Peter Halajian





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## Animated Film on Shahan Natalie's Life Recognized at Multiple Film Festivals

WILLIAMSPORT, Penn. — Leah Bedrosian Peterson, multi-media artist, associate professor of film and video arts, and chair of the communications department at Lycoming College, received recognition at multiple national film festivals for “Under the Walnut Tree,” her first stop-motion animation.

The animated film, which was made in part with funds gifted through a Lycoming College Professional Development Grant, was officially selected for screening at the Atlanta Shortfest, the Austin Spotlight Film Festival and the Florida Animation Festival where it won first place as the audience favorite.

In addition, “Under the Walnut Tree” was chosen as a finalist with onscreen recognition in the DaVinci International Film Festival and as semi-finalist at both Animayo, an Oscar qualifying festival, and the Los Angeles CineFest.

Peterson found inspiration for this film through her Armenian heritage. Based loosely on the story of Shahan Natalie, who survived the Hamidian Massacres in Armenia, the plot follows a young boy who was displaced after the mass murder of his family and his people. In order to depict the reality of child refugees, the main character is portrayed as a child who could be from any era, rather than strictly adhering to the details of Natalie's life.

Peterson utilized her own talents in designing and sculpting the characters, designing the set, and shooting and editing the film, but she received help with many other aspects



A shot from “Under the Walnut Tree”

of production from colleagues and students, as well as from faculty at other institutions.

Maria Hebert-Leiter, a lecturer for the English department at Lycoming College, wrote the touching narrative, which was translated by Vartan Matiossian, director of the Armenian National Education Committee and book review editor for Armenian Review.

The film is narrated by Charles Garoian, PhD, professor of art education at Penn State University and the title song for the film is by Hooshere, a well-known Armenian singer. The set and costumes were created by former Lycoming College students, Gabriela Burch '18, the digital animation was done by Brianne Charnigo '14, and Geena Woodley '17

assisted in costume modification.

“‘Under the Walnut Tree’ was a labor of love to tell a very important story, and I would not have been able to produce it without the generous time and talents of those who helped me make it a reality,” Peterson explained. “My Armenian heritage and the stories of survival that were passed down in my family have had a deep impact on my life and my creative work. My hope is that the film resonates with audiences and that they are able to reflect on the nature of our world in a way that elicits more compassion and consideration for those who have been through turmoil and genocide.”

To see a clip of the film, visit <https://vimeo.com/232123569>

## Stories of Food and Friendship in Gyumri and Kars at Tufts

By **Aram Arkun**

Mirror-Spectator Staff

MEDFORD, Mass. — The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy of Tufts University held its Food Symposium on food and conflict April 19 to 20. As part of this symposium, the film “Haven't We Shared Much Salt and Bread Together” was screened on April 19 and a discussion and question-and-answer session held with the film's producers, Ihsan Karayazi and Armine Avetisyan.

Prof. Nadim Shehadi, director of the Fares Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies at the Fletcher School, served as moderator.

Karayazi is the Kars office representative of the Caucasus Business and Development Network, and president of Kars City and Culture Research Association (KasKa). He first went to Kars as a student and stayed 10 years there with various jobs. He traveled to Armenia across the border because the mayor at the time was interested in establishing such ties.

Avetisyan, his partner, is from Gyumri, and has a master's degree in cultural management

from Bilgi University in Istanbul. She is currently pursuing another degree from the Heller School of Brandeis University in Conflict Resolution and Coexistence and working as Project Manager at IMPACT (Imagining Together Platform for Arts, Culture and Conflict Transformation), run by Brandeis University. The two ended up marrying about 10 years after meeting in Kars.

First, the film was screened. It depicted a group of women from the Armenian town of Gyumri visiting the Turkish town of Kars, and women from Kars going to Gyumri to observe the similar cooking and lifestyles. Some of the Kars women knew that certain foods or customs remained from the Armenians who used to live there, while some of the Gyumri Armenians understood some Turkish and knew that their families originally came from Kars or other parts of Turkey across the border. They told some of their family stories from the Armenian Genocide and how their parents or ancestors escaped.

After the film, the discussion began. Shehadi declared that he saw the film three times and each time he noticed something new. He said that because he did not know either Armenian or Turkish, it took him time to even understand who was who. Karayazi said this was done on purpose.

Avetisyan pointed out that there were so many common words in the everyday language of each group of women though they had been separated from one another for one hundred years. The region, climate and geography formed the cuisine of both peoples, which explains the similarity.

Karayazi said that initially some institutions provided some financial support for fieldwork to prepare a bilingual Armenian/Turkish recipe book, which recently was published under the name *Beraber Az Mi Tuz Ekmek Yedik/Kich enk Miasin agh ou hats gerel?*

They collected recipes and stories from people living in the two cities. For more information or to obtain a copy, email [info@kaska.org.tr](mailto:info@kaska.org.tr).

He and Avetisyan understood that it would be possible to make a film documentary (and used the same title). They thought the two groups of women should actually meet in person so they did fundraising from the US State Department,

International Alert, the Gulbenkian Foundation, the German Marshall Fund and some other sources, and began to film the two groups.

Avetisyan said they knew some of the women already and the other they just met on the spot. Some of the Armenian women were conflicted about joining this initiative initially, while some

Turkey and Armenia at the moment, he said, were not that enabling for cross-border events. Turkey was preparing for its elections and Armenia just had one.

This was the first time that Karayazi and Avetisyan have made a documentary. They hope to improve some of the technical aspects of the film over the summer of 2018 before



Prof. Nadim Shehadi



Armine Avetisyan and Ihsan Karayazi

of the Turkish ones were unaware of the issues concerning the Armenians. A few women dropped out during the process.

The two groups now remain in touch with each other through social media like Facebook, and even if they don't know each other's languages they have friends who can translate for them. They try to visit each other when they can.

Karayazi said he hoped restaurants might begin to use bilingual Armenian and Turkish menus with the names of the same foods in both languages in Kars and this would be part of tourism but there was too much resistance. Instead, he might try organizing occasional food-related events. Political conditions in both

showing it more widely and in festivals. It was shown to the participants and small groups of friends in Kars and Gyumri and was screened at the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery in Great Britain in 2017 as part of a symposium. They also have the idea of doing something to make Armenian poet Yeghishe Charents more visible in his native Kars, perhaps through a type of virtual museum.

The film producers also participated in a panel discussion on peacebuilding, food and integration on April 20 together with Gonca Sönmez-Poole, documentarian and founder of the Turkish Armenian Women's Alliance, Anna Ackerman, cofounder of World to Table and Alex Galimberti of Oxfam America.





ARTS & LIVING

# Tribute Concert in Providence Honors Garo Nichanian

By Shirley Ventrone

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — On Saturday, June 16, the Cultural Committee of Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Church, presented a concert honoring Garo Nichanian. Lisa Zaroogian was the mistress of ceremonies for the evening.

Nichanian is an accomplished bass-baritone who has been singing for more than 40 years. He engaged the audience and drew them into his performance. Due to his endeavors to bring Armenian music to Canada, Nichanian was considered the cultural bridge between Canada and Armenia. In 1998, he received the St. Nerses Shenorhali Medal of the Armenian Church from Catholicos Karekin I, the supreme patriarch of all Armenians. At the end of the evening, Nichanian thanked everyone who has inspired and encouraged him. One of those people is composer and conductor Konstantin Petrossian.

Janette Khalarian has received many accolades for her performances in the United States and in Yerevan. Khalarian's CD, "Noritz Kez Hed," was nominated in the Best Pop Retro category at the Armenian Music Awards. She sang both with Nichanian as well as the Nazeli Dance Group.

David Griego performed *Four Songs* by Komitas. The lilting melodies were beautiful. Although the melodies were familiar and lovely



Garo Nichanian

in their own right, they seemed to be enhanced by the flute. Griego also teaches flute in the Arts Education Program.

The Nazeli Dance Group, with choreographer Narine Lemme, has evolved into an impressive troupe. There were several costume changes. The young ladies exhibited a great deal of poise and

professionalism. They worked together as a well-balanced comprehensive unit. They are committed to many rehearsals with arduous repetitions in order to get the results they have achieved. The dance group is a credit to all involved, including the parents, for making it happen.

Mari Panosian provided the very able piano

accompaniment for the evening. She seems to have a certain sense about whom she is accompanying, and she is right in step providing the proper cues.

The program concluded with Nichanian singing Petrossian's *Hayastan*.



Nazeli dance group

Very Rev. Shnork Souin gave the closing remarks for the evening. He also related a personal story about Canada. He recalled meeting with Garo Nichanian's father, the Rev. Housig Nichanian, who told Souin that he thought that one day he would become a priest.

Due to the fact that this was a celebratory event, the cultural committee members went all out to make it special. There were two kinds of wine and of course coffee. There was an inordinate amount of specialty foods prepared by members.



Very Rev. Shnork Souin, at right, with the performers.



David Griego, left, performs with Konstantin Petrosian.

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## Hasmik Konjoyan's Zangakner Gives Final Performance

ZANGAKNER, from page 13  
friends and learning about what it really means to be Armenian. She gave us the self-confidence to appear and perform in public. We cannot thank her enough."

Konjoyan said that in Armenia graduation, "verchin zange," was being celebrated at this time, and it coincided with the "verchin zang" of Zangakner. She expressed her thanks to all the individual supporters of Zangakner as well as institutions like St. James Armenian Church and Holy Translators Armenian Church.

As a surprise to Konjoyan, the children of Zangakner sang a special song in Armenian to say goodbye to their teacher and modified the final words of *Verchin Zang* by Tata Simonian. Konjoyan was given a special album with messages from the children and photos from Zangakner over the years. Certificates of recognition were presented to Konjoyan by both Rep. David Muradian of the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Sheriff Peter Koutoujian, sheriff of Middlesex County.

It was a bittersweet occasion for the audience, which lamented the departure of the talented and personable Konjoyan. The parents prepared a sumptuous reception at which many lingered long after the performance in order to say their farewells.



Hasmik Konjoyan (Aram Arkun photo)





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Tale of an Armenian Candy in the US: ‘Sometimes You Feel Like a Nut’

NUTS, from page 13

teacher at the local high school stumbled on an enthralling part of Naugatuck’s lore, the history of Peter Halajian and the Mounds bar. Previously unknown to the young man of Italian ancestry, this story brought him a wider and more enthusiastic audience than a chronicle of the rubber industry ever would have. Pugliese recounted the saga in lectures and articles.

As Pugliese tells it, Halajian’s stint in the rubber plant was a relatively brief one. He quickly tired of the regimented factory routine. As soon as he met his quota of piecework, typically by early afternoon, Halajian would begin peddling baskets of fruit and homemade candy with his daughters, Mary and Lillian. They sold their wares to people who filled the Naugatuck train station and other stops along the busy rail line that ran the length of the Naugatuck Valley. Halajian also went from house to house hawking his products and soon opened a fruit stand.

In 1895, he established his own candy store in Naugatuck vending peanut brittle, licorice, lemon drops, caramels, and other sweets, as well as fruits and ice cream. He wooed customers with handbills promoting his products, according to the Famous Brand Names blog:

Peter Paul has very good food

You don’t throw any down the chute

His delicious ice cream your dreams will haunt

The more you eat it, the more you want

Ice cream soda the year round

No better soda was ever found

His homemade candy will make you fat

To Peter Paul, take off your hat.

As sales increased, Halajian added another store in Naugatuck and opened one in nearby Torrington.

The entrepreneur dropped Halajian, his last name, and legally changed it to its English equivalent, Paul. The signs on his shops carried the name “Peter Paul.” The pressure of selling to an American market would similarly force the Colombosians, another Armenian business family, to change the name of their yogurt to Colombo. “Nobody could pronounce our name,” son John Colombosian told me.

From retailing, Peter Paul jumped into manufacturing. Teaming up with five Armenian friends – Calvin K. Kazanjian, George Shamlian, Jacob Hagopian, Harry Kazanjian and Jacob Chouljian – he launched the Peter Paul Manufacturing Company in New Haven in 1919. The group pooled together \$6,000, each putting up \$1,000. In their 50 foot by 60 foot loft, husbands and their wives made their own candies at night. Since they had no refrigeration, this was a necessity. The system had its rewards: Products were ready to be sold fresh in the morning. Peter Paul turned out a line of lollipops, candy kisses, peanut brittle and other popular items. The company’s first breakthrough was the Konabar, a mixture of nuts, fruit, chocolate and what would become the business’s trademark flavor, coconut. In 1921, one of the partners, George Shamlian, concocted a recipe for a dark, bittersweet chocolate candy with a creamy coconut filling. The Mounds bar was born, and a marketing slogan – “What a bar of candy for five cents!” – was coined.

Assembling the new product was laborious. The candy had to be shaped, rolled, dipped by hand in chocolate, and then wrapped in foil. Before long, the business was burgeoning and the company was outgrowing its space. The factory also desperately needed machinery to more efficiently meet their rising demand. The solution was to build a new facility. With a \$35,000 loan from the Naugatuck National Bank, the partners left New Haven and, in 1922, built a plant in Naugatuck, where Peter Paul had learned the candy trade. With new equipment, they transformed what had been a handicraft operation into a larger-scale factory. During the 1930s, machines to coat chocolate, wrap the candy, and to refrigerate their products were installed. Unlike some other firms, Peter Paul was able to withstand the Depression and even to prosper. New items like Thin Mints, After Dinner Mints, and Bachelor Bars (filled with sesame seeds) supplemented their top-selling Mounds bar.

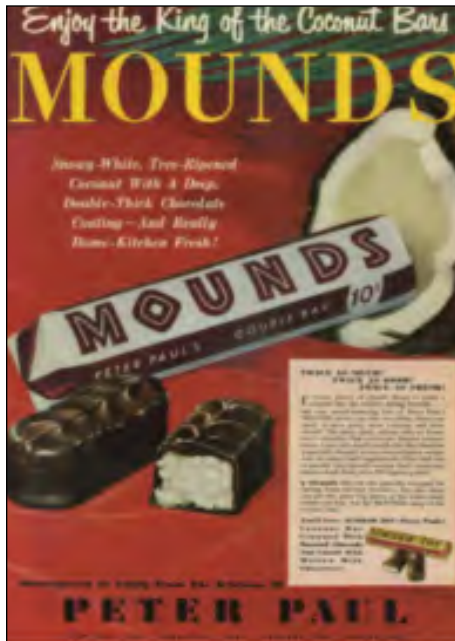
Peter Paul, who had been ailing, died in 1927 and his associate, Cal Kazanjian, took the helm. The new chief, as writer Liana Aghajanian point-

ed out, won over customers with a personal touch: “Mr. Kazanjian used to carry a little box of ‘Mounds’ around with him,” wrote reporter Wesley S. Griswold in the *Hartford Courant*. “When he entered the broker’s office, he would take one of the coconut bars out of his pocket, remove its tinfoil cloak, deftly break the chocolate-covered confection and offer the broker a taste.”

During World War II, the company’s fortunes continued rising. Shortages of sugar and other ingredients pushed Peter Paul to concentrate its efforts on producing Mounds bars. The military became the company’s largest customer, ultimately buying 80 percent of its products. The firm shipped out 100,000 pounds of candy a day. Considered a high-energy item, the Mounds bar was now an essential part of the soldiers’ rations. “There’s a lot of religion in a candy bar,” one military chaplain said, according to Patch.com poster Terri Takacs.

The business developed into the world’s largest consumer of coconuts. So vital was this raw material that Peter Paul had to create an ingenious supply route when its Philippines source was cut off by the Japanese invasion. The company sent a contingent of small schooners to islands in the Caribbean to buy coconut. The “Flea Fleet,” as it was called, was not bothered by the Germans. But the boats were able to gather valuable intelligence about the routes the Nazi ships were taking. As an extra bonus, Greg Pugliese reports, Mounds provided the military with empty coconut shells to make gas masks.

Peter Paul’s service to the military stayed a secret until a search of a Nazi prisoner of war extradited to New York uncovered a Mounds bar in his belongings. “German General Is Found to



An ad for the Mounds Bar

Be in Possession of Peter Paul Mounds,” read the headline in the July 20, 1945 issue of the Naugatuck Daily News. “Sticking out like a sore thumb among the array,” the paper wrote, was the chocolate candy. Speculation was that the Mounds bar had been stolen from an American PX in Europe.

By the end of the hostilities, the fame of the company’s product had spread. The Mounds bar already had a loyal customer base among G.I.s and their families. A companion candy, Almond Joy, was introduced in 1946. The firm took clever advantage of new media, first radio and

then television, to advertise its products. Mounds was the first candy company to buy time on network color television in the 1950s. The singing Peter Paul Pixies were featured in ads extolling the Mounds bar as “indescribably delicious.” The company also hired broadcasting personality Arthur Godfrey as spokesman for their brand.

Armenians took great pride in Peter Paul. Some even bought stock in the company, lawyer Harry Mazadoorian observes. Holiday dividends were paid in free candy bars. The candy’s flavor, one Armenian observed in an email response to an online article, was transporting: “When we first immigrated to America, Mounds bar was our family’s favorite,” Silva Elmedejian wrote. “It was closest candy to Middle Eastern taste. Now I know why. Proud of our . . . Armenian ancestors. I will keep on eating them until I die.”

Like many small firms, low on capital, it was hard for Mounds to resist the overtures of bigger companies when they came courting. Cadbury Schweppes bought the enterprise in 1978, and Hershey’s acquired it 10 years later. In 2007, Hershey’s shut down the Naugatuck plant, which had been manufacturing Mounds for 85 years. Jack Tatigian, a long-time company executive, mourned the demise of the factory: “In Naugatuck, you worked for the rubber company, the glass company, or the candy company,” he told the *Naugatuck Republican-American*. The facility that had long made a product, the brainchild of Armenian immigrants, was discarded, swept aside as if it were a used candy wrapper.

(This article by Joel Denker originally appeared in his newsletter Food Passages, Excursions in the World of Food & Culture.)

## Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian



### Chilled Cucumber Soup with Crab

#### INGREDIENTS

4 medium cucumbers (about 2 1/4 lb.), peeled, seeded, and chopped  
2 cups plain white yogurt  
1 cup low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth  
3/4 cup sour cream  
1/2 cup chopped green onions (white and pale green parts only)  
1/4 cup chopped fresh dill  
1-2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced  
2-3 tablespoons olive oil  
2 tablespoons fresh lemon or lime juice  
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard  
Sea or Kosher salt and black pepper  
6-8 ounces shelled cooked crabmeat

#### PREPARATION

In a blender or food processor, in batches if necessary, whirl the cucumbers, yogurt, broth, sour cream, green onions, dill, garlic, olive oil, lemon juice, and mustard until medium smooth. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Transfer to a bowl, cover, and chill until cold, at least 2 hours and up to 6 hours. Ladle chilled soup evenly into bowls.

Drizzle with olive oil and top each serving with about 1/4 cup crabmeat or shrimp.

Garnish with diced tomatoes, cucumbers, green onions, and avocado or sliced radishes and chopped dill.

Makes 6 cups; 4 servings.

\*Christine Datian’s recipe was originally published in *Sunset* magazine, May 2003. She makes this easy, creamy soup in the morning so that it is chilled by lunchtime. Also garnish this soup with a sprinkle of cayenne or chopped fresh dill.

See: <http://www.myrecipes.com/recipe/chilled-cucumber-soup-with-crab>

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







ARTS & LIVING

# CALENDAR

## FLORIDA

**JANUARY 20-27, 2019 — Armenian Heritage Cruise XXII 2019.** Western Caribbean Cruise aboard the Royal Caribbean's Allure of the Sea. Traveling to Nassau, Cozumel, Roatan, Costa Maya. Cabin Rates, starting from \$949/person based on double occupancy, including port charges and ACAA registration fee. Government rates of \$137.45 are additional. Armenian entrainment, Armenian cultural presentations, Armenian Festival Day, Tavlou and Belote Tournaments and much more. Call Travel Group International at 1-561-447-08750 or 1-866-447-0750 ext. 108, contact person Janie.

## MASSACHUSETTS

**JULY 7 — Armenian Church of Cape Cod presents Kef Time** - Dinner & Dancing Saturday 6 to 11.30 p.m. at The Cape Club, 125 Falmouth Woods Road, North Falmouth. Chicken Kebab & Losh Kebab dinner Leon Janikian band with special appearance by Harry Minassian & a DJ \$60 per person, children 7-14 \$10. For tickets/tables contact Andrea Barber (617)201-9808

**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

**AUGUST 23 — Under an August Moon, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston, Thursday, 7:30 - 9:30 pm.** Meet & Greet! Berklee All-Star Jazz Trio! Enjoy signature tastings, hosted by anoush'ella say kitchen; creative mocktails, hosted by The Bostonian Hotel; luscious ice teas hosted by MEM Tea Imports. RSVP appreciated. hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

**SEPTEMBER 9 — Trinity Family Festival, Sunday, 12-5 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge.** Delicious Armenian food with take-out available; Armenian music for your listening and dancing pleasure; games and fun activities for children. Blessing of the Madagh, raffle drawing and more. Save the date; details to follow. For further information, contact the Church office, 617.354.0632, or email office@htaac.org.

**SEPTEMBER 16 — Sunday Afternoon at the Park for Families. Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway, 2-4 p.m.** Cindy Fitzgibbon, WCVB TV5, Emcee; Boston Hye Guys-Ron Sahatjian, clarinet; Joe Kouyoumjian, oud; Art Chingris, percussion; ADD At 2:30pm "Match the Pair": Game for all ages! Face Painting: For Kids by Kids, Hoodies RSVP appreciated. hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

**NOVEMBER 14 — Najarian Lecture on Human Rights at Historic Faneuil Hall, Boston Wednesday.** Doors open at 6:45pm, Program at 7:30pm. Reception follows at The Bostonian Hotel An endowed public program of Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway. Details forthcoming.

**NOVEMBER 30 and DECEMBER 1 — Trinity Christmas Bazaar, Friday, 12 noon-9 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.;** Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA. Save the date; details to follow. For further information, contact the Church office, 617.354.0632 or email office@htaac.org.

**DECEMBER 9 — Christmas Holiday Concert – Erevan Choral Society and Orchestra, 7 p.m., Church Sanctuary, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge.** Save the date; details to follow. For further information, call the Church office, 617.354.0632 or email office@htaac.org.

## NEW JERSEY

**SEPTEMBER 30 — Armenia Fund USA and Ardzagang Armenian TV are proud to present Artash Asatryan and Band, guest singer Grisha Asatryan,** from Armenia on Sunday, 4 p.m. Don't miss the performance by the son and grandson of the legendary Armenian singer Aram Asatryan! Proceeds will benefit Fruitful Artsakh Project. Location: Bergen PAC, 30 N Van Brunt St, Englewood, NJ. Tickets: \$50, \$70, \$90. Please call Box Office 201-227-1030 or visit www.bergenPAC.org

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

## New Kind of Lease in Boston's Seaport District

BOSTON — The grand opening of the new JC Cannistraro fabrication, manufacturing and design facility was held on Boston's Seaport on Thursday, June 14. Robert Cleary, SIOR, CRE Colliers International and Rob Nahigian, FRICS, CRE, SIOR, MCR of Auburndale Realty Co., Newton, Mass. were the real estate advisors and brokers that took the project from initial planning to its final lease negotiations at 25 Fid Kennedy over the last four years. J.C. Cannistraro, LLC, of Watertown, is relocating its manufacturing facility with more than 200 industrial employees on a 70-year lease.

The lease was negotiated by Cleary and Nahigian and is the first of its type in arguably over 50 years in the Seaport. It is significant both because of its longevity and industrial impact.

The event attracted more than 400 professionals including Boston's Mayor Walsh and the director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, Brian Golden. Cannistraro renovated the 160,000 square foot building at 25 Fid Kennedy (now known as The Fid) and created roughly 200 manufacturing jobs located in Boston's Raymond L. Flynn Marine Industrial Park.

Cannistraro consolidated its trades, and relocated the company's machine shops from Wilmington, Stoughton and

Watertown. They moved these operations into 25 Fid during March, 2018. The building took two years of renovating to bring this former U.S. Army WWII building to its historic preservation stage. In its over 50 years in business, Cannistraro has grown from a plumbing company into a multi-trade contracting company offering plumbing, HVAC, piping, sheet metal and fire protection services. The majority of Cannistraro's work is within greater Boston serving commercial, medical, educational institutions and other facilities.

The property at 25 Fid Kennedy played an integral role in the WWII and post-WWII war effort and is located in the 58 acre South Boston Army Annex, contained within the 167 acre South Boston Naval Annex. After extensive negotiations, EDIC and the Boston Redevelopment Authority awarded Cannistraro Final Designation on June 9, 2016. The lease was executed on August 31, 2016. During the due diligence of the property, Cannistraro developed plans to completely renovate, enhance and redesign the former U.S. Army Annex while preserving the rare Art-Deco character of this massive steel-framed former metal shop. June 14, 2018 was the grand opening to showcase those renovations.



SAN FRANCISCO — Virginia Keurajian Avakian, 93, has just completed a custom Peter Ashe needlepoint scene. The picture includes the famous landmarks of San Francisco, such as Coit Tower, the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz. It took Avakian one year to finish the task. When a photo of the finished needlepoint photo appeared on Facebook, she received a lot of praise. The creation holds a special place in Avakian's San Francisco home. The image was shared by her neighbor, Diane Paskerian, who often visits Avakian in their high-rise building.

## Sylvie Merian to Speak At Morgan Library and Museum

NEW YORK — On Tuesday, July 10, Dr. Sylvie Merian will give a talk at the Morgan Library and Museum Lamont Library, titled "Slash & Burn: How Two Houghton Manuscripts Survived a Violent Past." The talk will take place at the Forum Room followed by Exhibition Viewing and Reception at Houghton Library from 5.30 to 7.30 p.m.

When Raphael Lemkin coined the term genocide he defined not only the intent to destroy a group of people but the deliberate aim of erasing their cultural legacy. Dr. Sylvie Merian will focus on two manuscripts now held at Houghton Library, which she discovered while a Houghton Library Visiting Fellow/Katharine F.

Pantzer Jr. Fellowship in Descriptive Bibliography 2008-2009. Both manuscripts were violently attacked during the 1894-1896 Hamidian massacres in the Ottoman Empire. This brutal attempt to annihilate Armenian literary tradition will be contextualized through several examples of the deliberate destruction of significant cultural artifacts, not only for the Armenians but also in world history. Examining the history of cultural genocide highlights the importance of artifacts as key to the survival of the Armenian people.

Merian received her PhD in Armenian Studies from Columbia University's Department of Middle East Languages and Cultures. She has published and lectured internationally on Armenian codicology, book-binding, silverwork, manuscript illumination, and the history of the book. She is currently Reader Services Librarian at the Morgan Library and Museum in New York City. To RSVP, visit <http://bit.ly/2kEGtpz>



Dr. Sylvie Merian





## COMMENTARY

## COMMENTARY

# Righting Wrongs While Facing Enemies in the Region

By Edmond Y. Azadian

If you were thinking the Velvet Revolution was a colorful movement, the post-revolution period has become even more so. One can consider the situation entertaining if it were not so alarming.

The leader of the Velvet Revolution, Nikol Pashinyan, had been vowing all along that there would not be vendettas or a score-settling with the members of the previous administration, but the recent investigations and revelations are so dramatic that the public is becoming irate.

Almost two decades of lawlessness, looting, corruption and utter indifference toward public welfare have taken the country to the brink of a breaking point. As a result of those abuses of public funds, there has been a steady depopulation of Armenia. Through criminal negligence, this process has amounted to an existential threat to the country.

Although people in Armenia are enjoying the freedom brought on by the revolution, at the same time, they are enraged as security forces make new revelations and new arrests.

By some estimates, during the last two decades, the loss for Armenia's economy has amounted to \$30 billion, while the country's foreign debt has reached \$7.5 billion.

In a country where the majority of the people subsist under the poverty line, former President Robert Kocharyan's family assets are estimated to be more than \$10 billion.

This anomaly could not last long and clearly it did not.

Now, no matter how much tolerance and brotherly love Mr. Pashinyan may offer or dispense to his fellow Armenians, public outrage is incredible.

The recent arrest of Gen. Manvel Grigoryan, a hero during the Karabakh (Artsakh) conflict who had previously won many accolades and positions in the army, has become a symbol for the bottomless corruption. He also served as the head of the influential Yerkrapah Union of Volunteers as well as a well-positioned member of the ruling Republican Party. At one time, he also served as deputy defense minister. However, over the years, he abused all the privileges to oblige his unending (alleged) greed.

After his arrest, the police discovered an arsenal of weapons in his primary residence as well as his summer home — even automatic weapons, hand grenades and army vehicles.

What is tragi-comic is that while young soldiers

were defending the Karabakh borders with primitive weapons and their bare hands, General Grigoryan had been stealing the soldiers' rations, army-issued clothing, fuel for tanks and medical supplies. The police have made a show of the heart-wrenching letters written by children to the soldiers serving on the front lines that had accompanied the canned food donations. All were discovered in the general's personal zoo.

The police have also arrested General Grigoryan's wife, Nazik Amiryan, and son, Karen Grigoryan. The latter, until recently, had been serving as the mayor of Echmiadzin, running a mafia operation and terrorizing the citizens in that supposedly holy city.

Another Republican Party Member in the Parliament, Arakel Movsisyan, has voluntarily surrendered his illegal cache of weapons but he remains under investigation. He is also one of the Karabakh war veterans known by the nickname Schemays.

The investigative noose is tightening around former President Serzh Sargsyan, with the brief incarceration of his brother, Alexander Sargsyan, known as Sashik. For many years, Sashik allegedly had been running an extortion scheme and thus had gained the nickname "50 percent," meaning he extorted half of the income of any enterprise operating in the country. Police seized \$1.7 million in cash from Vachik Ghazaryan, Serzh

Sargsyan's former security chief, who is the co-owner of the upscale restaurant, Yans, in Yerevan.

As the media are flooded with news of the discoveries, people are getting angrier and calling for revenge. They are after the mayor of Yerevan, Taron Margaryan, and other officials. At this time, Prime Minister Pashinyan is trying to control public passions. He vowed that he will never compromise in his fight against corruption, no matter what, but he assured the public that the due course of justice has to be applied to bring to justice all those responsible for past crimes and abuses. He was also shocked about the discoveries from General Grigoryan's home but said "I will not prejudge him and will let the prosecution take its course."

Ordinary people are more interested to see the criminals who have usurped more than their share punished but the political circles are pushing for more. They are demanding the plotters of the parliament murders of 1999 and the leaders responsible for ordering the shooting of demonstrators in 2008 be brought to justice. And all fingers are pointed at former President Robert Kocharyan.

Ironically, that will complicate the investigation further because the prosecutors have to rely on some witnesses who are former partners in crime. For example, the prosecution will end up getting into a plea-bargaining deal with General Grigoryan, who claimed to have incriminating evidence which he has used thus far as a bargaining chip against President Kocharyan.

During a recent interview, Gourgen Yeghiazariyan, the former deputy chief of the National Security Service, revealed that there has always been collusion between the highest levels of

the Republican Party leadership and the criminal mob and has also described General Grigoryan as a small fish in the large criminal pond of Armenia.

At this time, Armenia is undergoing a national catharsis, which is a necessary process for healing.

To bring the Velvet Revolution to its rational conclusion, new elections have to take place, hopefully under free conditions, applying the revised electoral legislations, to endow the country with a new leadership.

The new administration's goal should not simply end in damage control. It has to go further and meet the economic and political expectations of the people who overwhelmingly support the revolution.

Then comes the thorny issue of Armenia's foreign relations. The country is at a stage of quasi-war and President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan is even reluctant to meet with Armenia's new leadership, all along repeating his threats and intensifying border skirmishes. It is ironic that while the noose is tightening around Serzh

Sargsyan, there is talk that his expertise will be needed down the road of negotiation.

The situation in the region is getting tenser. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's convincing electoral victory does not auger well for Armenia. He seems to have given up hope of joining the European Union and he will be looking toward the east, even if that entails some tensions with fellow NATO members. The formula of "one nation, two states" is working well for Turkey. That country's foreign minister, Mevlut Çavusoglu claims that he also represents Azerbaijan, and that his colleague Elmar Mammadyarov can take leave at his pleasure.

In addition, Turkish military aircraft have been spotted in Nakhichevan. To top all those developments, the director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Science of Armenia Prof. Ruben Safrastyan states that Nakhichevan has been featured on one of the recent maps as part of Turkish territory.

All those developments are behind the tensions rising on Armenia's border with Nakhichevan.

Perhaps, it is time for the signatories of the Kars Treaty of 1921 to question whether Nakhichevan has changed hands or is about to.

*continued on next page*



# Mirror Spectator



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## COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## US State Department Slams Turkey in its Annual Religious Freedom Report

The US State Department just issued its 2017 report on International Religious Freedom in about 200 countries, including Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. This week, we will focus our attention on the section on Turkey.

In general, all religious groups that are not Sunni Muslim suffer from discrimination and persecution in Turkey. Alevi, who constitute over a quarter of Turkey's population of 81 million, are viewed by the state as "Heterodox Muslims" whose houses of worship are not recognized. Anti-Semitic articles vilifying Jews are frequently published in Turkish newspaper. President Erdogan constantly provokes the public by his anti-Israel rhetoric.

The State Department reports that "Religious minorities said they continued to experience difficulties obtaining exemptions from mandatory [Islamic] religion classes in public schools, operating or opening houses of worship, and in addressing land and property disputes. The government restricted minority religious groups' efforts to train their clergy.... [Islamic] religion classes are two hours per week for students in grades four through 12. Only students who marked 'Christian' or 'Jewish' on their national identity cards may apply for an exemption from religion classes. Atheists, agnostics, Alevi or other non-Sunni Muslims, Bahais, Yezidis, or those who left the religion section blank on their national identity card may not be exempted."

Approximately 90,000 members of the Armenian Apostolic Church live in Turkey, of which 60,000 are citizens and 30,000 are migrants from Armenia without legal residence. The US Report states that "children of undocumented Armenian migrants and Armenian refugees from Syria" could

attend public schools. "Because the government legally classified migrant and refugee children as 'visitors,' however, they were ineligible to receive a diploma from these schools."

The Turkish government, as required by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, grants a special status to "non-Muslim minorities" (Armenian Apostolic Christians, Jews, and Greek Orthodox Christians). However, according to the US Religious Report, the government does not acknowledge "the leadership or administrative structures of non-Muslim minorities, such as the patriarchates and chief rabbinate, as legal entities, leaving them unable to buy or hold title to property or to press claims in court. These three groups, along with other minority religious communities, had to rely on independent foundations they previously organized, with separate governing boards, in order to hold and control individual religious properties. The foundations remained unable to hold elections to renew the membership of their governing boards because the government, despite promises to do so, had still not promulgated new regulations to replace those repealed in 2013 that would have allowed the election of foundation board members."

Nevertheless, "The Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate and the [Greek] Ecumenical Patriarchate continued to seek legal recognition, and their communities operated as conglomerations of individual religious foundations. Because the patriarchates did not have legal personality, associated foundations controlled by individual boards held all the property of the religious communities, and the patriarchates had no legal authority to direct the use of any assets or otherwise govern their communities," the US Report states.

The Turkish government also obstructs the election of a new Patriarch for the Armenian Church in Turkey to succeed the incapacitated Patriarch. The US Report states that "in March [2017] the Istanbul governor's office suspended a decision by the Spiritual Assembly of the Armenian Patriarchate to elect a trustee to start the process for the election of a new patriarch. Incumbent Patriarch Mesrob II remained unable to perform his duties because of his medical condition, and an acting patriarch continued to fill the position. Some members of the community criticized the governorship's notification as interference in the internal affairs of the church. Patriarchate sources said the government later recognized the March election to elect a trustee. In July the elected trustee applied to the government to hold the patriarchal election in December. At year's end, the community had not received a response

from the government about how to proceed with the patriarchal election."

According to the US Report, "Religious communities continued to challenge the government's 2016 expropriation of their properties damaged in clashes between government security forces and the terrorist group Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). The government expropriated those properties for their stated goal of 'post-conflict reconstruction.' By the end of the year, the government had not returned or completed repairs on any of the properties, including the historic and ancient Sur District of Diyarbakir Province, Kursunlu Mosque, Hasirli Mosque, Surp Giragos Armenian Church, Mar Petyun Chaldean Church, Syriac Protestant Church, and the Armenian Catholic Church. In April the Council of State, the top administrative court, issued an interim decision to suspend the expropriation of Surp Giragos Armenian Church."

Armenian and other religious minority foundations had submitted 1,560 applications since 2011 for the return of their properties confiscated decades ago. The government returned only 333 properties and paid compensation for 21 others.

The US Report also states that "various self-defined Islamist groups continued to threaten and vandalize Christian places of worship. In September an unidentified group threw stones at the Armenian Surp Tateos Church in the Narlikapi neighborhood of Istanbul, breaking windows. Some witnesses said the attackers shouted anti-Armenian slogans while a baptismal ceremony took place inside. In September the president of the Surp Giragos Armenian Church Foundation said unidentified looters had burglarized the church in Diyarbakir multiple times, despite a continuing curfew in the area."

As expected, the Turkish Foreign Ministry rejected the US Report of the violations of religious rights calling it "a repetition of certain baseless claims." However, the repetition confirms that there has not been an improvement in the protection of the religious rights of minorities. The Turkish government has continued to blatantly ignore the rights of Armenian, Assyrian and Greek religious minorities, as well as Jews and Alevi.

As an indication of the reign of terror prevailing in Turkey under President Erdogan, the religious leaders of the Jewish, Armenian Apostolic, Armenian Catholic, and Syriac communities felt obligated to issue congratulations last Sunday for the re-election of Erdogan, the tyrant of Turkey!

## Righting Wrongs While Facing Enemies in the Region

from previous page

As Ankara veers towards the east, Moscow will gleefully embrace the move to draw a wedge in the NATO structure and that could be at the expense of Armenia's security.

Further deterioration of the region comes with the recent massive demonstrations in Iran, presumably for economic reasons. If Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his ilk have given up post-power the military option, it does not mean that they have given up on the project of regime change in Iran. It is a textbook case of regime change, as all those movements in Libya and Syria started with bread-and-butter issues, to force those repressive regimes to retaliate with force to provide an excuse to intervene. The Islamic leaders in Iran must have learned something from these cases to use caution.

As the storm clouds gather in the region, Armenia does not have the luxury of being trapped in an introverted psychological exercise. This national exorcising of old ghosts has to come to a halt as the law takes its course and more urgent matters need to be tended. Polarization is not in the best interest of the country. People have been traumatized and they rightfully look for retribution. But beyond that, the young leadership have to brace for extended dangers.

At this time, the wounds are fresh and raw to look for precedents of national reconciliation.

In South Africa, the Apartheid regime lasted from 1948 to 1994 and was a brutal regime of segregation. African National Congress conducted an equally fierce campaign which brought down the walls of Apartheid, Nelson Mandela, was released from prison, he faced his nemesis, President F. W. de Klerk, and a new nation was born.

In the process, thousands fell victim. Eventually the truth and reconciliation committee was formed to rectify old ills. Archbishop Desmond Tutu was instrumental in the process of national healing.

A more recent example is Colombia, where 52 years of conflict with 220,000 casualties came to a resolution. President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon and (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army) FARC leader Rodrigo Londono (Timoshenko) met in Havana and worked out an end to the fighting which allowed former 14,000 FARC militants to become integrated into the police force and army.

Armenia's precarious situation in the region and need for the speedy healing of wounds are imperative to restore the country on its course of revival.

## Request to Convene Special Session of Diocesan Assembly over Fate of St. Vartan Plaza

A petition to convene a special session of the Diocesan Assembly of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern Diocese) is currently being circulated. The special session would give the Diocesan Council the chance to present to the Diocesan Assembly a full report on considerations and decisions taken to date regarding the sale or transfer of any portion of the Diocesan Center and development rights associated with St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral and the cathedral's plaza. It would also give the clergy, chairpersons and delegates of the Eastern Diocese the chance to properly review and consider a proposed transaction.

Please encourage your priest, parish council chairperson and duly elected delegates to sign the petition.

During the May 2018 Diocesan Assembly, the Diocesan Council Chairman informed Diocesan Delegates that the Council had been negotiating for some time and signed a letter of intent to sell the Diocesan Center's administrative building and development rights of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral and the cathedral's plaza to a developer who would erect a, more or less, 33-floor, multi-use commercial and residential tower in place of the Diocesan Center. The letter of intent is dated December 18, 2017.

Diocesan Delegates, who represent the parishes, were blindsided. The planned sale was not included on the Assembly Agenda. Delegates were not informed about this matter before the Diocesan Council raised it on the floor of the Diocesan Assembly. No written information about the terms of the negotiated deal was given to delegates.

While the Diocesan Assembly gave a vote of confidence to the proposed transaction, the value of such a gesture is limited by the complete lack of opportunity given to delegates to review relevant materials and formulate an informed opinion about the NYC market, any alternative options to use or monetize development rights, whether the proposed transaction represented a viable offer for property that had been appraised at \$95 million one year earlier, and the impact of the sale on Diocesan operations, parishioners, and reputation.

Following the surprise announcement of the intended sale, many members of the community, including clergy, church members, former Diocesan Council members, National Ecclesiastical Assembly Delegates, benefactors and others, have raised significant questions and concerns.

In reaction, the Diocesan Council announced that it will convene a "public forum" to promote "mutual understanding."

This is a positive step. However, a public forum, which remains to be scheduled, has no authority over the affairs of the Eastern Diocese. It is insufficient to remedy the flawed way the proposed sale was presented to the Diocesan Assembly. A special session shall give the Diocesan Council the opportunity to present to the Diocesan Assembly a full report on considerations and decisions taken to date.

The fundraising and construction of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral and the Diocesan Center was conceived even earlier but formally launched by surviving victims of the genocide at the 1945 Diocesan Assembly. They chose the heart of NYC, only blocks from the planned United Nations, to send a message. The undertaking was meant to be, and remains, a testament to the vitality of the Armenian Church, the survival of the nation and the memory of the Holy Martyrs.

The planning and construction of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral and Diocesan Center was an impressive labor of faith that would span decades. Its future should not be relegated to that of an unannounced addendum to the agenda of a Diocesan Assembly.

### The Petition

WHEREAS, Paragraph 58 of the Bylaws of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern Diocese) provides that special sessions of the Diocesan Assembly may be called by written request of one-third of the delegates; and

WHEREAS, the Bylaws state that the Diocesan Assembly shall exercise supervision and control over all ecclesiastical-administrative bodies within the jurisdiction of the Diocese, which authority the Diocesan Assembly reserves and may choose to exercise over the Diocesan Council and Board of Trustees regarding a proposed sale or conveyance of interest in any portion of the Diocesan Center, its underlying land, development rights of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, and development rights of the cathedral's plaza;

NOW, THEREFORE, the delegates of the Eastern Diocese hereby respectfully request that the Primate, officers elected at the 116th Diocesan Assembly and Diocesan Council convene a special session of the Diocesan Assembly;

FURTHERMORE, the agenda of the special session of the Diocesan Assembly shall include, but not be limited to, 1) a discussion of a proposed sale or conveyance of interest of the Diocesan Center, its underlying land, development rights of

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# First Armenian Art Fair Dazzles Yerevan

ART, fom page 1  
days included a lecture-performance by “The Slavs and Tatars” art collective courtesy of the Goethe Institute; a fashion performance inaugurating an exhibit of the paintings of Narek Barseghyan organized by the HAYP Pop Up Gallery; and a panel discussion featuring Austrian art critic and curator Georg Schoelhammer, director of the Art and Cultural Studies Laboratory Susanna Gyulamiryan and Director of the Institute for Contemporary Art Nazareth Karoyan, with moderator Dr. Randall Rhodes from the American University of Armenia.

Approximately 700 guests and 2,000 visitors were in attendance, with 10 works sold to private buyers and 5 commissioned. Visitors including prominent cultural figures, actors, politicians and even the current president of the Republic of Armenia.

At the opening, fair cofounders Nina Festekjian and Zara Ouzounian-Halpin welcomed the guests. It was a trilingual affair, with Ouzounian-Halpin speaking in Russian and Festekjian in English, with translation into Armenian. United Nations Resident Coordinator and United Nations Development Program Resident Representative for the Republic of Armenia Shombi Sharp, speaking in English with an interpreter translating into Armenian, declared that the UN is interested in



“Power is a suitcase,” performance by artist Samvel Saghatelian, at left, with group

said, “When Zara approached me and asked whether I would be interested in embarking on such a project, I really loved the idea. Always having had that art background in me and wanting to do something in Armenia to help the people and the infrastructure, this was the perfect project for me....We had this vision that it should be at a high caliber and scale.” Over the past two years, the two were constantly communicating and planning.

Ouzounian-Halpin in turn explained that it was a very complex project, and even deciding when and where it should be held took much effort. They established an organization called Aragil Art Foundation which is nonprofit, and this foundation produced the art fair. They put together a team for the work, which turned out to be seven women plus one man, an internet technologies specialist. Each person is a specialist in her own field.

The Yerevan Expo Center on H a k o b H a k o b y a n Street was chosen as the venue. Though it is somewhat distant from the center of the city, it was designed for expos, meaning that services like electricity and internet would be available. Then the team had to reach out to galleries and artists through

networking. All participating artists had to have representation.

Ouzounian-Halpin said that at first, “everybody was watching to see how serious we are.”

She continued, “It was the right time and the right place for it. We were working in a very traditional format before, and this was interactive on a big scale.”

Now they have a track record. She said that the broader region targeted by the expo is the Caucasus, Iran and Russia. It is easier to travel to Armenia for many than to Russia, so this is an advantage for making Armenia a regional hub for selling international art. She said that this project “is not only for Armenians. It is also for the region to explore Armenia – for Armenia to become international and the international to come to Armenia.”

Festekjian said that since at first no one understood the vision, it had to be financed privately, but now that people understand what is possible, hopefully the government will become involved on a bigger scale. The infrastructure was not yet in place so there were many logistical issues. She said that even the professional tax accountant firm they hired, with specialized lawyers, did not know all the rules. Sometimes there are no rules in place. The notion of non-profit is also very different in Armenia than in the US, she stressed, while the art fair was one of the first examples of combining commercial and non-profit behavior.

Prior to the 2019 art fair, the organizers plan to do small events and lectures to keep the art fair in people’s minds, while they contact more international organizations and people in the field. In the future they might try to represent the Armenia Art Fair at other international fairs. Furthermore, Festekjian said, this year “we have seen artists who should be in fairs in Miami or New York, and we are now trying to help make these connections for several of them.”

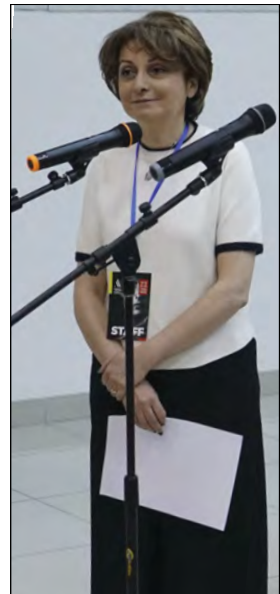
Aside from support from Raffi and Nina Festekjian, the primary outside private donors for the fair were Nazareth and Nila Festekjian and Carolyn Mugar. Beeline was the main corporate sponsor for the fair, and support was received from the Goethe Institute. Yerevan City Magazine and Regional Post Caucasus magazines promoted the event. A number of other organizations as well as the Armenian Ministry of Culture provided some financial assistance, transportation or refreshments.



Armenia Art Fair cofounder Nina Festekjian, left, with team member Armine Aghayan

this event because art is an effective tool to address global challenges and transform the world. He congratulated “the Armenia Art Fair team for creating a breakthrough – something fresh, something dynamic here in Armenia.”

During an interview in Boston after the fair was over, Festekjian declared that the art fair idea had a long gestation period. She knew her co-founder Ouzounian-Halpin for a long time, and some four years ago worked on the art exhibit at the Armenian Tree Project’s 20th anniversary celebration together. Festekjian



Zara Ouzounian-Halpin



From left, Lizzy Vartanian, a curator and art blogger from the United Kingdom who is a member of the Armenia Art Fair team, Sarah Watterson, also a team member, Nina Festekjian, President Armen Sarkissian of Armenia, and at the far right, Zara Ouzounian-Halpin



“Judith,” 2016, bronze, by Sahak Poghosyan

## Request to Convene Special Session of Diocesan Assembly over Fate of St. Vartan Plaza

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St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, and development rights of the cathedral’s plaza, 2) discussion of such other matters that the Diocesan Assembly may choose to consider, and 3) taking such actions that the Diocesan Assembly deems desirable or necessary;

FURTHERMORE, the special session shall convene 1) on or before Saturday, September 22, 2018 and prior to the execution of any agreements or commitments in connection with a sale or material conveyance of interest in buildings, land or development rights described herein or 2) on such other date the Primate and Diocesan Council may deem appropriate provided it is held prior to the execution of any sale or conveyance agreements or commitments. It shall be held at the Diocesan Center or an appropriate venue.

To request a special session of the Diocesan Assembly, print the above section, sign, print your name, parish and date, and scan and email to specialassembly50@gmail.com, photograph and text to 917-837-1297.

By requesting a special session of the Diocesan Assembly, you are not committing to attend.

Signed,

- Hilda Adil- Delegate from Holy Martyrs Armenian Church, Bayside, NY
- Ara N. Araz- Delegate from St. Leon Armenian Church, Fair Lawn, NJ
- Thomas V. Ashbahian- Delegate from St. Leon Armenian Church, Fair Lawn, NJ
- Sevan Aydin- Delegate from Holy Cross Church of Armenia, New York, NY
- Lyle Dadian- Chairperson of St. John the Baptist Armenian Church, Greenfield, WI
- Ramelann Kalagian, Chairperson of St. John the Baptist Armenian Church, Greenfield, WI
- Ara Karamanian- Chairperson of St. Kevork Armenian Church, Houston, TX
- Lisa Kouzoujian- Delegate from St. Gregory the Enlightener Armenian Church, White Plains, NY
- Van Krikorian- Delegate from of St. Gregory the Enlightener Armenian Church, White Plains, NY
- Michelle Ouzounian- Delegate from St. Mesrob Armenian Church, Racine, WI