



St. Vartan Cathedral Complex

Extraordinary Petition Requests Special Session of Eastern Diocesan Assembly On Cathedral Complex Proposal

NEW YORK – A written petition to request a special session of the assembly of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America was submitted on July 22 with enough Diocesan delegates' signatures to meet the requirement of the Diocesan bylaws. The request is for the special session prior to September 22, 2018, and prior to the execution of any agreements or commitments, to review a proposal concerning the sale or conveyance of interests of the Diocesan complex in New York City.

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

A copy of the petition was printed in the June 30 issue of the *Mirror-Spectator*. This is apparently the first time in the history of the Diocese that such a request has been made and indicates the extraordinary attention this issue has been gathering. In fact, the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* has seldom received as many letters, emails and phone calls about any other issue in recent memory.

The original proposal, which was about "monetizing the value of the air rights of the cathedral complex," according to James Kalustian, the chairman of the council of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church, was presented at the Diocesan Assembly on May 3, 2018. Members of the Diocesan community reacted almost immediately and asked that the broader community have input in whatever decision was to be reached (e.g. Hrant Gulian's "Community Input Needed Before Deciding Fate of Diocesan Complex," *Mirror-Spectator* June 2). Various interpretations of the proposal, which has not been made public, spread throughout the

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Activist Academic Makunts Rethinks Armenian Ministry of Culture

By Aram Arkun
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WASHINGTON – Lilit Makunts was appointed as Armenia's minister of culture on May 12. During a visit to the United States at the end of June she spoke about her background, the direction in which she



Minister of Culture Lilit Makunts (photo: Aram Arkun)

wishes to steer her ministry, and her goals there, which in turn shed light upon the workings of the new Armenian government. The interview was conducted in English, which Makunts speaks fluently.

The 34-year-old minister previously was an associate professor at the Russian-Armenian University in Yerevan. She began teaching there in 2005 and in February 2018 became the head of the Department of International Cooperation at this university. Makunts received a master's degree from the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology of Yerevan State University (YSU) in 2005 and the degree of candidate in Philological Sciences in 2014.

From her days as a student of linguistics and discourse at YSU (1999-2003) she was active in Armenian politics and worked for democratic change. She

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Armenian Defense Chief Issues Stern Warning to Baku

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenia will strike back harder if Azerbaijan again launches offensive military operations in Nagorno-Karabakh, Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan said in an interview published on Sunday, July 22.

Speaking to the Russian publication EADaily.com, Tonoyan warned Baku against a repeat of the April 2016 "aggression" against Karabakh which nearly degenerated into an all-out Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

He said the Armenian military has "drawn conclusions" from the four-day hostilities that left at least 190 soldiers from both sides dead. Those include unspecified measures that have "excluded the element of surprise" another Azerbaijani might have, he said.

"I don't want you to be left with the impression that Armenia is a solicitor of peace," said Tonoyan. "I would advise the Azerbaijani side not to be so confident that it controls the issue of escalation of the military situation. It's not that mediators will manage to convince the Armenian side to suspend retaliatory punitive actions if the Azerbaijani side resumes hostilities, even if Baku conducts a military operation of limited scale."

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Armenian Side 'Also Responsible' For Russian Drill Scare

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenian officials are also to blame for a Russian military exercise that scared residents of a village in the northwestern Shirak province, Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan said on July 22.

His remarks contrasted with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's furious reaction to the July 17 exercise held by Russian troops around the village of Panik. The sound of gunfire and explosions terrified many local residents, who had not been notified about the drill beforehand.

Pashinyan condemned the incident as a "provocation against Armenia's sovereignty" when he spoke at a July 19 cabinet meeting in Yerevan. (See related editorial, Page 17.)

Tonoyan sounded more cautious during a visit to Panik where he met with local offi-



Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan speaks to reporters in Panik village.

cials and the commander of a Russian military base, Colonel Vladimir Yelkanov. He spoke of "mistakes committed by both the Russian side and the Armenian side."

"I officially declare that one day before [the exercise] the Russian side informed

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Catholicos Receives Nuncio to Armenia

ECHMIADZIN – On July 11, in the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians; received Archbishop José Avelino Bettencourt, Apostolic Nuncio to Armenia and Georgia, and Titular Archbishop of Aemona of the Roman Catholic Church.

The catholicos welcomed the Papal Nuncio, congratulated him on his appointment and wished him fruitful activity.

The Catholicos of All Armenians stated that the relations between the Armenian Church and the Roman Catholic Church have improved and strengthened during his reign. In this regard, the catholicos reflected on the visits of Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis to Armenia, which testifies to the love towards the nation who first adopted Christianity as a state religion.

Catholicos Karekin II expressed hope that the newly appointed Papal Nuncio will also make efforts to further strengthen the friendly ties between the two churches.

In turn, Archbishop José Avelino extended deep gratitude to the Catholicos of All Armenians for the warm reception. The Papal Nuncio also conveyed the love and support of Pope Francis to the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin and the catholicos.

Attending the meeting were Archbishop Nathan Hovhannisyan, director of the External Relations and Protocol Department of the Mother See and Very Rev. Fr. Shahe Ananyan, Director of the Ecumenical Relations Department of the Mother See.

HayPost Issues Stamp Dedicated to 'Arshak II'

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – On July 19 HayPost CJSC cancelled and put into circulation a postcard with one stamp dedicated to the Spendaryan National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet and the 150th anniversary of the first Armenian operam "Arshak II."

The stamp has been issued with a print run of 500 pcs. The creator of the postcard's design is the designer of HayPost CJSC David Dovlatyan.

The postage stamp depicts a fragment scene from the performance of Tigran Tchoukhadjian's first Armenian opera "Arshak II." The left part of the postcard depicts the Spendaryan National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet.

The postcard signing ceremony was attended by Deputy Minister of Transport, Communication and Information Technologies Armen Arzumanyan, Director and Artistic Director of the National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet Constantine Orbelian, HayPost CJSC Postal Branches Administration Area Manager Lilit Tadevosyan, President of the Union of Philatelists Hovik Musayelyan.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Putin, Pashinyan Discuss Eurasian Union

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Russian President Vladimir Putin telephoned Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on Monday, July 23, to discuss close ties between their countries and the future of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

Putin also had separate phone calls earlier in the day with the presidents of Kazakhstan and Belarus, two other members of the Russian-led trade bloc.

In a short statement, the Kremlin said Putin and Pashinyan touched upon “issues pertaining to the Eurasian Economic Union and bilateral cooperation.” It did not elaborate.

Pashinyan’s press office likewise said that they “exchanged thoughts on further development of integration processes in the EEU framework.”

The two men most recently held talks in Moscow on June 13. In his opening remarks at that meeting, Putin pointed to rapidly growing Armenian exports to Russia. He attributed that to Armenia’s membership in the EEU.

Pashinyan has opposed that membership in the past. However, he made clear that he will not pull his country out of the EEU or the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) after sweeping to power in a wave of mass protests in May.

According to the official Armenian readout of the phone call, Pashinyan and Putin also discussed “a number of issues on the agenda of Russian-Armenian allied relations.” No details were reported.

Last Thursday, Pashinyan strongly criticized Russian troops stationed in Armenia for holding an exercise in an Armenian village that caused panic among local residents. Speaking at a news conference the following day, the premier said Yerevan expects Moscow to prevent Azerbaijan from starting another war in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Homeless Family Moves To Prime Minister’s Personal Apartment

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his wife, Anna Hakobyan, have lent their personal apartment in Yerevan to a homeless family after moving to their official residence.

Hakobyan said that this family had approached her for a number of issues, including an accommodation issue.

“The family has a 23-year-old son with Down Syndrome. The family doesn’t have a [father]. It is just the grandmother, the mother and the children. The mother provides for their living by herself. Until now they’ve been living in an apartment under the sponsorship of the Church, and the apartment’s owner decided to sell it. There was an urgent need to provide them with accommodation,” she said.

President Hosts AGBU Summer Program Students

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The students who arrived to Armenia as part of the AGBU’s Summer Internship Program and the Musical Armenia Program were hosted today by President Armen Sarkissian.

The students and the president held a question and answer on various topics.

“I am here to also see my relatives. I am so attached to this country that I hope to come here many times,” said Lyudmila Avagyan, a young woman from Virginia, who has relatives living in Armenia.

As this is the first visit to Armenia for many of the young people, some of them said this is also a good chance to discover the culture, history and people of their homeland.

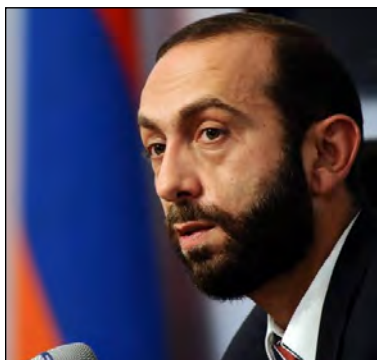
The students were asking the president various questions ranging from the political situation up to the relations with neighboring countries. Sarkissian noted that the changes in Armenia will be continuous.

“We had a great revolution, but at the same time we respect previously established international obligations. Any change brings along new ideas, new plans,” said Sarkissian.

Pashinyan and Trump Meeting May Happen

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — First Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan commented on the possible meeting of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and US President Donald Trump via a video on Facebook.

“Within the frameworks of the upcoming visit PM Pashinyan will depart for the US in September to participate in the UN General Assembly, and therefore on the sidelines of the



Ararat Mirzoyan

visit the Congressmen find it appropriate to organize Pashinyan-Trump meeting; they launched a petition in the Congress for this purpose and address letter to President Trump. The

issue has been raised by the Congressmen, and we assured that it is being discussed, the meeting is possible,” he said.

Mirzoyan also commented on the details of Armenia’s withdrawal from the Millennium Challenge program. “Quite a long time before our visit the World Bank changed Armenia’s rating from a country with low average income to high average income, but according to the criteria of the Millennium Challenge program, those states which meet several criteria, as well as didn’t reach high average, can be considered as possible partners. As a result of the rating change, Armenia thus became a country not being in accordance with this program. And now some US officials also don’t know how to deal with the current situation,” he said, adding that it’s necessary to think about a new mechanism through which the US will be able to provide its support to Armenia’s democracy.

In the video the first deputy PM also talked about the goals of his recent visit to the US. “The primary goal was to participate in the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and introduce Armenia’s national voluntary report. Within the

frames of this event two adjacent events were also scheduled which Armenia had undertaken to implement,” he said.

The Armenian delegation met with the top US officials during which the relations of the two countries were discussed. “We had meetings with the UNDP head, COAF [Children of Armenia Foundation] founder and director Garo Armen, attended the event organized by the AGBU and also met with the AGBU representatives. Thereafter, several bilateral meetings with quite influential Congressmen and Senators were held in Washington D.C., meeting took place with the US Assistant Secretary of State Wess Mitchell, as well as other officials. During these meetings we have introduced Armenia’s new political priority, the recent developments, the revolution, its values, in other words, we have presented the new situation in Armenia to the American administration. We also had very serious discussions on deepening the ties between Armenia and the US, in particular, we discussed the US assistance provided to Armenia, the deepening of commercial ties, the possibility to increase direct investments and other issues beneficial for Armenia,” Mirzoyan said.

President Visits Burakan Observatory

YEREVAN — President Armen Sarkissian visited on July 21 the Republic of Armenia Academy of Sciences Victor Hambardzumian Observatory in Burakan, met with the employees, and familiarized himself with the ongoing activities of the Observatory.

Director of the Observatory Areg Mikaelian provided information on the current works and programs, as well as international cooperation.

During a candid conversation with

the staff, opinions were exchanged on the vision regarding the development of the observatory. The president stressed the importance of defining priorities and formation of a precise vision for the coming decades. “It is important to have a general vision: it is necessary to know where the Burakan will be in ten or twenty years,” the President noted and suggested to

define priorities and to present programs. He also expressed readiness within the scope of his capabilities to assist the Observatory.

The president also toured the premise of the Observatory, visited Hambardzumian’s house-museum, conversed with the staff who informed that this year alone, they have already received nearly 6,000 guests.



President Armen Sarkissian with staff at the Academy of Sciences Victor Hambardzumian Observatory in Burakan

Corrections

An incorrect statement was used in a story in last week’s newspaper about Armenian prisoners in Azerbaijan. The correct statement is: The spokesperson of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation in Armenia said that in accordance with ICRC mandate and working modality, they are in a confidential bilateral dialogue with the concerned authorities with regard to the reported case. Currently, ICRC has visited two Armenians.

In addition, an incorrect photo was used with the story on the Potsdam Garrison Church, written by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach. The correct photo appeared online.



The Potsdam Garrison Church

Armenian Side ‘Also Responsible’ For Russian Drill Scare

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[Armenian officials] about the movement of a military column and said that there will be a training exercise without specifying the site of the training,” Tonoyan told reporters after the meeting. “From the legal standpoint, it had to coordinate.”

“But they have admitted their mistake and officially apologized and we have already drawn conclusions, as a result of which there will be greater coordination,” he said.

The minister added that not only the Russians but also the Armenian side is investigating the incident. “As regards the Armenian side, internal inquiries are being conducted in our agencies with the aim of identifying the guilty,”

he said without going into details.

Panik is located close to one of the two shooting grounds used by the Russian base headquartered in Gyumri, the administrative center of Shirak.

The base has up to 5,000 soldiers mainly deployed along Armenia’s closed border with Turkey as well as tanks, armored vehicles, artillery systems and MiG-29 fighter jets. Moscow has bolstered the base with helicopter gunships and other military hardware since a 2010 Russian-Armenian agreement extended its basing rights in Armenia to 2044.

Successive Armenian governments have regarded the Russian military presence in Armenia as a key element of the country’s national security strategy.



ARMENIA

US Embassy Brings Basketball Greats to Armenia for Training Camps

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – The US Embassy in Armenia brought two professional basketball legends, Ruthie Bolton and Shari Sam, to Armenia for a series of workshops and training camps to help Armenian youth and coaches improve their basketball skills and develop as leaders.

Both of the visiting basketball stars played for the WNBA, the women's professional basketball league in the United States.

Bolton is one of the most accomplished female athletes in the world. A two-time Olympic gold medalist, she was the star player on the WNBA team the Sacramento Monarchs from 1997 through 2004. She also served as a first lieutenant in the US Army Reserves and is the author of several inspirational books in which she shares her story of empowerment.

Sam played for a number of WNBA teams, including the Orlando Miracle, the Miami Sol, the Minnesota Lynx, the Seattle Storm, the Charlotte Sting, the Indiana Fever and the Detroit Shock. Her skills helped several of the teams reach the playoffs and win championships. A WNBA All-Star, she is ranked in the top 50 of all-time in several categories. Most recently, she has been an assistant coach at Eastern Illinois University.

While in Armenia the two are leading a series of workshops for young Armenian boys and girls from several rural communities, helping them develop their skills to become



WNBA great Ruthie Bolton with children in Yerevan

better basketball players. They will also be coaching them on how to develop their self-esteem and motivation, and encouraging them to become leaders on their teams and in their communities.

Along with working with young Armenians, the visiting U.S. basketball legends will also spend time leading masterclasses for Armenian coaches, sharing their experiences of using sports as a motivational force for good in

the community.

The US Embassy arranged the trip through the US Government's Sports Envoy Program, administered by the US State Department, which sends American athletes abroad to hold sports clinics for young people and coaches, participate in community activities, and engage youth in a dialogue on the importance of leadership and respect for diversity.

Armenian PM Stands by Criticism of EU

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan again criticized the European Union (EU) on Friday, July 20, for not increasing its financial assistance to Armenia following mass protests that brought him to power more than two months ago.

Pashinyan said that the EU should reward the new Armenian government for aggressively combatting corruption and launching major reforms. "I am surprised that there are still officials in the EU who do not notice changes that have occurred in Armenia," he told a news conference.

Pashinyan first voiced such complaints after holding talks with the two top EU officials, European Council President Donald Tusk and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, in Brussels on July 12.

The head of the EU Delegation in Armenia, Piotr Switalski, countered on Monday that his government needs to propose specific reform-oriented projects requiring EU funding before demanding greater aid from the bloc. Pashinyan's press secretary, Arman Yeghoyan, said the following day that the government is now working on such projects and will present them soon.

Pashinyan said nothing about those aid proposals when he answered a journalist's question about Switalski's comments. "We have done nothing and will do nothing for financial assistance," he said instead. "What we are doing is aimed at fulfilling the mandate of our people given to us, and I want to make this very clear."

The 43-year-old premier also stood by his earlier criticism of the EU. "For many years, the EU said that it does business with Eastern Partnership countries under the so-called 'more for more' formula and on the basis of values known to all of us: democracy, independent judiciary, transparency, rule of law, fight against corruption," he said. "And before my visit to Brussels there was a statement from the EU to the effect that the EU is going to somehow support Armenia."

"In that context, I expressed my bewilderment [in Brussels] at the fact that the formula put forward by the EU is not working in

the EU policy. I am bewildered by the fact that some of our EU partners ... said at their meetings with me that they expect changes in Armenia as they did before."

"In order to set the record straight, I gave concrete examples," Pashinyan went on. "I said that the current government did more, without spending a penny, to combat corruption in one month than what happened during cooperation between the EU and Armenia's government at a cost of tens of millions of euros [in EU funding.] I said that my

government did more for having an independent judicial system in Armenia in one week or even day than what was done as a result of cooperation between the EU and Armenia's former government costing tens of millions of euros."

The remarks came the day after a senior European Commission official, Katarina Mathernova, arrived in Yerevan on a two-day visit which the EU Delegation described as a "follow-up" to Pashinyan's talks with Juncker. Switalski said on Monday that Mathernova

will discuss with Armenian leaders their "expectations and needs." "This must be a very concrete discussion," the diplomat stressed, adding that the Armenian side should come up with "projects, timelines, budgets and so on."

The EU pledged last year to provide up to 160 million euros (\$185 million) in fresh aid to Armenia over the next three years in line with the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed with the previous authorities in Yerevan.

Armenian Defense Chief Issues Stern Warning to Baku

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"In case of a repeat of a scenario of the April 2016 aggression, the Armenian side may not resist the 'temptation' of using its entire arsenal to counter the enemy in a resolute and large-scale way ... Azerbaijan would not be allowed to retain a monopoly on determining the place, time and scale of escalating the situation," he warned.

President Ilham Aliyev and other Azerbaijani leaders regularly threaten a military solution to the Karabakh conflict. 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.

"The war is not over. Only its first phase has ended," Aliyev said during a military parade in Baku on June 26. He threatened military strikes against "strategic" Armenian targets.

During the parade the Azerbaijani army demonstrated 240 pieces of military equipment, including Belarusian-made Polonez and Israeli-made LORA missiles which were reportedly purchased by Baku in recent months.

While admitting that Yerevan is "worried" about weapons demonstrated during the parade, Tonoyan stressed: "There are

means of countering any type of weapon and the Armenian side not sitting idly by."

Striking a similar bold tone, Karabakh's top military commander said on Tuesday, July 24, that the Armenian military could "paralyze Azerbaijan's economy" with missile strikes if Baku provokes renewed hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh.

"That is definitely part of our tactical plans," Lieutenant General Levon Mnatsakanian said at a news conference in Stepanakert. "In general, the art of warfare requires strikes on these facilities as well as military targets in case of a resumption of hostilities, which will damage the [enemy] economy and won't allow appropriate supplies to the armed forces."

"I see no need for that yet ... But if there is a need to strike [those targets] we will not hesitate for a second," he said.

Mnatsakanian implied that a big hydroelectric power station near the Azerbaijani town of Mingachevir is one such potential target. A recent accident there caused major power outages in Azerbaijan.

Other Armenian political and military leaders have said in the past that Azerbaijan's strategic oil and gas installations could also be targeted in the event of another Karabakh war. The Armenian military can hit them with ballistic missiles,

including state-of-the-art Iskander systems supplied by Russia in 2015 or 2016.

The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry was quick to react to Mnatsakanian's warnings, dismissing them as "absurd" and saying that its missile defense systems adequately protect domestic economic and military facilities. In a statement cited by the APA news agency, the ministry also said Baku itself has sophisticated missiles capable of destroying key Armenian facilities.

"Before making such irresponsible statements, the enemy should think about the fact that in the territory of Armenia there are facilities the destruction of which would make it impossible to live there for centuries," it warned in a clear reference to the Metsamor nuclear power plant.

Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev threatened military strikes against "strategic" Armenian targets during a June 26 military parade in Baku. The parade featured Belarusian-made Polonez and Israeli-made LORA missiles which were supplied to the Azerbaijani army in recent months. They reportedly have a firing range of 200 and 300 kilometers respectively.

Mnatsakanian said that the Armenian side has the capacity to shoot down these missiles. But he did not elaborate.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Paylan: ‘Disgrace that Turkey Uses a Pastor in Its Dirty Deals’

ISTANBUL (Panorama.am) — Garo Paylan, an Armenian member of the Turkish parliament representing the opposition People’s Democratic Party (HDP), has slammed the decision of the Turkish court to extend the detention of US pastor Andrew Brunson.

Brunson, a 50-year-old missionary from North Carolina, has denied espionage and collusion with terrorist organizations charges since being detained in 2016 following accusations he helped insurgents behind a coup in the country that year. He faces up to 35 years in prison.

In a post on Twitter, the lawmaker voices concerns that the American cleric, who is held as hostage in the country as confessed by Turkish President Erdogan, has not been set free after all, Ermenihaber reports.

“Erdogan, who thinks that through Deniz Yucel (a German-Turkish journalist detained by Ankara), he managed to bring Germany to knees, continues its hostage policies,” he wrote.

“It is a disgrace that the presidential office uses a pastor in its dirty deals.”

According to some talks, Turkey seeks the extradition of cleric Fethullah Gulen, who Ankara believes was the mastermind of the 2016 failed coup attempt, in exchange for the release of pastor Andrew Brunson.

Russia Has Delivered Weapons to Armenia

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) — Armenia’s army has received all weapons under a \$200-million loan agreement with Russia, Armenian Defense Minister David Tonoyan said on Sunday TASS reports.

“State-of-the-art Russian weapons have been completely supplied under a \$200-million credit. Some types of such weapons are used in the Russian army,” he noted.

Under the agreement, Armenia purchased Smerch multiple missile launchers and munitions to them, Igla-S surface-to-air missile systems and missiles, Avtobaza-M ground-based radio reconnaissance systems, and other types of weapons.

Armenian Leaders Offer Condolences to Greece After Wildfire Deaths

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — At least 75 people have died and 156 have been injured in forest fires raging near Athens, the Greek Civil Protection Agency said on Tuesday, July 24.

More than 700 have been rescued from beaches, where people had fled from the wildfires.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan offered condolences to his Greek counterpart Alexis Tsipras, the PM’s office said.

“With deep sorrow I learned about the large-scale fires near Athens, which have caused dozens of deaths, injuries and enormous devastation. At this difficult time I express my deepest condolences and support to you, the families of the victims and the good people of Greece, wishing strengths and courage to overcome the consequences of the terrible disaster. I wish speedy recovery to the injured,” he said.

President Armen Sarkissian sent a letter of condolences to Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos.

Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, sent a letter to Ieronymos II, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece. “May God help the Greek people to overcome these hardships and live in peace and safety,” the letter said.

The Embassy of Armenia in Greece has launched a hotline for citizens of Armenia affected.

Armenian citizens contact the Embassy by following hotline numbers: (+30) 2106831130 (+30) 6989479827,” the embassy announced on Facebook.

Aleppo Doctor Helps the Displaced With Career Training

By Constance Vilanova

ALEPPO (International La Croix) — Civilians prepare to leave East Aleppo, Syria, on Dec. 15, 2016. (Photo by AP)

As the situation in Aleppo improves, a medical doctor and the Blue Marists, a group of laywomen, laymen and brothers serving refugees in war-ravaged Syria, are offering professional training to displaced people in a bid to end dependence and enable people to look after themselves.

Doctor Nabil Antaki, who has worked with the most disadvantaged in Aleppo since 1986, wants to “train people to tackle life’s challenges.”

As bombs ravaged the city in July 2012, he launched the “Blue Marists” association together with his wife and Brother Georges Sabé, an Aleppo Marist.

The emergency programs organized by the trio and 70 volunteers now provide milk, water and medical supplies for around 300 Syrian families.

Most are Christian and fled their neighborhood on Our Lady’s Hill, which was taken by the rebels on Good Friday five years ago.

“At the end of 2013, we realized that the displaced spent their time in hiding,” he said. “Their work tools had often been destroyed and they could no longer do anything.”

“We needed to train the young people to enable them to face up to life’s challenges,” he said.

Despite the bombs, Antaki began to

develop a three day professional training program at the premises of the Marist Brothers in the Muhafazah quarter.

The students, who were aged between 20 and 40 learned management, accounting and to draw up budgets from specialists and members of the Blue Marists.

Longer training programs as peace develops

In 2016, the security situation in Aleppo began to improve slowly. Following the expulsion of the armed groups, the city was liberated from Al Nusra terrorists.

Although missiles continued to fall daily in the western areas of the city, the Blue Marists decided that it was time to place “young people back on their feet” by providing them with the training to do so.

“They needed to move away from the food basket that they received each day to complete independence,” said Antaki, a gastroenterologist.

Since the beginning of July, the Blue Marists’ “micro-project” eighth training program has been extended to three weeks. Experts will assist 16-20 participants selected from 100 candidates to develop an action plan.

Rita Yaghlejian, 30, an Armenian Christian who remained in Aleppo throughout the war, wants to open a stationery shop where she plans to offer graphic arts services.

She obtained her license in economics and graphic arts before the local university closed.

“Participating in this program was a now or never opportunity to learn to

make a living from my own resources,” she told La Croix.

In a few days, she will present her project to a jury of six experts, hoping to be financed by the Blue Marists.

At the end of each training program, candidates make a 30-minute slide presentation explaining “the feasibility, profitability and sustainability” of their business plan.

Antaki and his team select a dozen of these projects to be financed for amounts ranging from 3,000 to 5,000 euros.

“We have already financed 50 and now there are 90 families who are able to live from their own resources,” Antaki said, before calling on Ahmad Nourredine and Mohamad Nour, two Muslim candidates, to tell their stories.

“Although most of the displaced are Christians, we are not only concerned for Christians,” he says.

Ahmad and Mohamad want to become partners in opening a workshop to repair fridges and air conditioning units.

“Electricity is now back on in Aleppo,” said Mohamad, who continued his economics studies during the war. “Machines that have been abandoned will need to be repaired.

“We are the only ones able to provide this service,” he said.

Antaki admits that he cannot finance all the projects and that the choice is often difficult.

“These displaced people need to be able to work,” he said. “If we want Christians to remain in Syria, it is essential.”

Germany Treatment of Mesut Ozil ‘Unacceptable’ — Turkey President Erdogan

By Eren Sarigul

BERLIN (ESPN) — Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned the “unacceptable” treatment of Mesut Ozil by the Germany football federation on Tuesday.

Ozil, 29, withdrew from international football on Sunday, saying that “racism and disrespect” over his Turkish heritage directed towards himself and his family were major factors behind his decision.

The Arsenal playmaker felt he was made a scapegoat for Germany’s poor showing at the World Cup in Russia after a meeting with Erdogan in London.

“Such racist treatment towards a young man who has given his all to the German national team for his religious beliefs is unacceptable,” Erdogan told reporters in parliament.

“Furthermore, how do you explain being unable to tolerate Mesut, Ilkay [Gundogan] and Cenk Tosun taking a photograph in London out of respect of their Turkish roots?”

“There are some that could not stomach this, but there are established, responsible politicians who are standing with Mesut.”

Ozil, Manchester City midfielder Ilkay Gundogan and Everton striker Cenk Tosun met Erdogan during the Turkish president’s three-day trip to England in May. All three players, born in Germany of Turkish descent, presented Erdogan with a shirt from their respective club and took a photo with him.

The photograph sparked months of controversy in the lead-up to the World

Cup, both because of Erdogan’s autocratic policies and because Ozil and Gundogan were set to represent Germany. Most of the criticism fell on

porting Ozil.

“The TFF offers its full support to Mesut Ozil and his family and we condemn the treatment, threats and



A picture of Mesut Ozil and Turkey president Recep Tayyip Erdogan is erected in Ozil’s hometown of Devrek. Photo by Gokhan Yilmaz/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Ozil after Gundogan released a statement explaining his part in the photo, but the Arsenal man stayed silent.

The row has now spilled over to the Turkish town, Devrek, where Ozil’s family originate from.

Authorities in the town have removed a street sign on “Mesut Ozil Avenue” of the playmaker wearing a Germany national team jersey. The photograph that initially sparked the controversy featuring Ozil and Erdogan has been erected in its place.

Also on Tuesday, the Turkish Football Federation released a statement sup-

derogatory messages that he has received because of his heritage and background. Every player, no matter whether they are in the public eye or not, has a right to be protected from abuse, discrimination and messages expressing hate.

“All members of the global football community must be united in our continued efforts to drive out racism and intolerance — and we must work together to ensure football can realize its potential to achieve positive social impact that promotes the values of inclusivity and respect.”



INTERNATIONAL

Christian Refugees Admitted to US Down More than 50% under Trump

By Amanda Holpuch

LONDON (*Guardian*) – The number of Christian refugees admitted into the US has dropped more than 50 percent under Donald Trump, as his harsh immigration policies extend even to a group of people he promised to protect.

An analysis of US State Department data shows a fall in US support for these refugees ahead of the department's first-of-its-kind conference on religious liberty, the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, on Wednesday.

Israel Rebukes Turkey's Erdogan Over 'Hitler' Comparison

TEL AVIV (BBC) – Israel's prime minister has angrily rebuffed comments by the Turkish president who called Israel the "most fascist, racist state" in the world.

Benjamin Netanyahu accused Recep Tayyip Erdogan of "massacring Syrian and Kurds," after Erdogan compared Israeli political leaders to Hitler.

Netanyahu tweeted that under Erdogan's rule, Turkey had become a "dark dictatorship."

The two countries have a recent history of tense relations.

Once close allies, Turkey broke off diplomatic ties with Israel in 2010 after 10 pro-Palestinian Turkish activists were killed in clashes with Israeli commandos who boarded a Turkish-owned ship trying to break Israel's maritime blockade of the Gaza Strip.

Relations were restored in 2016, but they expelled each other's top diplomats in May this year in a dispute over Israel's killing of Palestinians amid protests on the Gaza-Israel border.

Human rights groups have accused Israeli troops of using excessive force. Israel says they only opened fire in self-defence or on Palestinians trying to infiltrate its territory under the cover of the demonstrations to carry out attacks.

'Spirit of Hitler'

In a speech to his Islamist-rooted AKP party, Erdogan sharply criticised a controversial law passed by Israel last week which characterised the country as principally a Jewish state.

"This measure has shown without leaving the slightest room for doubt that Israel is the world's most Zionist, fascist and racist state," Erdogan said.

"There is no difference between Hitler's obsession with the Aryan race and Israel's understanding that these ancient lands are meant only for Jews.

"The spirit of Hitler, which led the world to a great catastrophe, has found its resurgence among some of Israel's leaders," he added.

Israel considers comparisons with the Nazi regime, which murdered six million Jews in Europe in the Holocaust, as an egregious insult.

Responding swiftly on Twitter, Netanyahu accused Erdogan of "massacring Syrians and Kurds and imprisoning tens of thousands of his fellow citizens."

He added: "The fact that the 'great democrat' Erdogan attacks [Israel's] national law is the greatest compliment."

"Turkey under Erdogan is becoming a dark dictatorship, while Israel is meticulously maintaining equal rights for all its citizens, before and after the [national] law."

It is not the first time Erdogan has launched a verbal attack on Israel. Earlier this year, Erdogan called Netanyahu "an occupier" and "a terrorist."

Netanyahu responded by saying Israel would "not be lectured to on morality from someone who for years has been bombing civilians indiscriminately."

There was no explicit mention of refugees in the prepared schedule for the three-day meeting, though one session was scheduled to discuss the "needs of displaced minorities."

"There will be a range of religious freedom issues discussed at the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, including support and care to victims of religious violence or persecution, and advocacy and assistance for displaced religious minority communities," a state department official said in a email to the Guardian.

The Trump administration capped refugee admissions for the 2018 fiscal year at a record low of 45,000 refugees, but with only three months left of the fiscal year, only 36 percent of that target has been admitted, according to State Department data. From October 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018, the US admitted 16,230 refugees.

Trump targeted the refugee program on the campaign trail, and in office has added extra security vetting to an already rigorous vetting process. In October 2017, refugee admissions were halted for 90 days for people fleeing "high-risk" countries.

For Christians, refugee admissions have shrunk to 10,955 in the first nine months of the fiscal year that began on October 1, 2017. In the

same period from October 2016 to 30 June 2017, more than 23,000 Christians were admitted.

The drop in Christian admissions is a shift from the promises Trump made in his first week in office to help Christian refugees more than previous administrations.

In January 2017, Trump told the Christian Broadcasting Network it was "at least very tough" for Christian refugees to enter the US and claimed it was much easier for Muslims to enter in comparison.

"If you were a Muslim you could come in, but if you were a Christian, it was almost impossible and the reason that was so unfair, everybody was persecuted in all fairness, but they were chopping off the heads of everybody but more so the Christians," Trump said. "And I thought it was very, very unfair. So we are going to help them."

He did not provide evidence that the two groups were treated differently.

Christians now make up the largest share of refugee admissions for any religious group, at 67% of the refugees allowed in. But the number of Christian refugees admitted still falls far short of previous years.

The number of Muslim refugees has fallen ever farther, from more than 21,459 from the

first nine months of the 2017 fiscal year to 2,421 in the first nine months of the 2018 fiscal year.

Ahead of Wednesday's meeting, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) urged the US to increase refugee admissions, highlighting that the legal definition of refugee includes people fleeing persecution based on religion, as well as race, nationality, politics, or membership in a particular social group.

"The consequences of a failure to return to robust refugee admissions are immeasurable and far reaching in terms of those refugees left behind, families awaiting reunification with their loved ones here in the US, refugee-hosting countries who continue to take on more than their fair share, and waning US influence abroad," the IRC said in a statement late on Monday.

The state department official said the US had admitted more refugees than any other country in the world since 1975 and had provided more than \$8bn in humanitarian assistance worldwide. The official said: "The United States will continue to resettle the most vulnerable refugees, including those who have fled religious persecution, while prioritizing the safety and security of the American people."

Kurds Discouraged by Hard-Liners in Turkey's New Cabinet

By Mahmut Bozarslan

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (Al Monitor) – Turkish President Abdullah Gul told journalists in 2009, "Some great things are going to happen on the Kurdish problem soon."

Everyone was excited by what appeared to be a door finally opening to resolving Turkey's volatile relationship with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which is considered a terrorist organization by Turkey and the United States. Four years later, a message from PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan from Imrali prison to mass crowds at Nowruz celebrations amplified hopes when he sensationally called for giving up guns and pursuing a political solution. Ocalan is serving a life sentence for treason.

Then an unexpected accord was reached in February 2015 at Istanbul's Dolmabahce Palace between the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP) and government officials. The deal generated widespread optimism that a solution was imminent. But President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced he would not recognize the Dolmabahce Accord one month later. Now the resumption of clashes, trench warfare in towns and Erdogan's declaration of a state of emergency have wiped out any hope for a solution.

The prevailing opinion was that Erdogan's softening Kurdish policy was causing him to lose support in parts of western Turkey where anti-Kurdish sentiment ran high, and that's why he reverted to a policy of force. The government, which kept saying it was in a struggle against terror, resisted any opening to possibly solving the Kurdish issue and even discarded what minor progress had been made. It seemed the Kurdish issue could no longer be even mentioned.

Debates eventually resumed just prior to the elections held last month. At that time, one of two outcomes seemed likely: The government would change or Erdogan would be re-elected, become even stronger and solve the issue. Erdogan did win and Kurds again turned their attention toward Ankara, wondering if any solution was in the making. But discussions were quickly shelved when the hard-line interior minister was reappointed and a hawkish senior general was named as the new defense minister.

"If there had been changes in these two ministries and the language of war, threats and insults had been abandoned, there could have been hope for a solution," but that can't happen with the same people in charge and the same forces at work, Diyarbakir citizen

Kadir Karagoz told Al-Monitor.

Ayhan Bilgen, a parliament member and HDP deputy who won 52% of the votes in the mainly Kurdish southeast, said finding a resolution is essential, but there is not enough political will for it. He told Al-Monitor, "Turkey may delay the Kurdish issue, but that will make the issue even more complicated, more bloody. There is no other way but to solve this problem [quickly]."

Bayram Bozyel, deputy secretary-general of the Kurdistan Socialist Party, also believes the new administration has no intention of solving the problem peacefully. He said the appointment of hard-liners to the new Cabinet – including Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu and Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, a former chief of staff – proves his point.

"The current interior minister is a politician who made his career by opposing the Kurds. To reappoint him as the minister of interior in the new Cabinet tells us that the new government approves the current policy and wants to continue with it," Bozyel told Al-Monitor.

"The president immediately mobilized his new powers after the elections, which means he is after absolute power, immune to audit by the legislature, the judiciary and the media. These are signs that the situation can only get worse for the Kurds," he added.

Mehmet Vural, chairman of Dicle Social

Research Center in Diyarbakir, is also among the pessimists, but he said the new administration can't just ignore the situation. He told Al-Monitor, "Today's regime is far from a solution," but that it must end its intransigence over the Kurdish issue. "There is no other way out. How long can they delay a solution?"

Vural went on, "There are no Kurds in the government, [only a] minor presence in the parliament. The current regime doesn't have the will or the intention to tackle the issue. Kurds are citizens and partners in this country. No matter how hard the regime resists, the Kurdish issue won't go away."

Like the others, Vural is even more pessimistic when he looks at the Kurd-free Cabinet. "There is no one who identifies himself as a Kurd. To the contrary, there are members known to be hostile to Kurds who see the issue only in terms of terror. If you ask me, the current government doesn't even acknowledge the existence of the issue, never mind searching for a solution."

Until now, the government has blamed the delays in resolving the Kurdish issue to the PKK's violence, repeating, "A solution can't be discussed with guns in their hands." But even though over the past couple of years, the PKK has suffered military setbacks that have left it no other option than to seek a political solution, one is no closer to materializing.

Armenia's Diaspora Minister Travels To Cyprus for Meetings

NICOSIA, Cyprus (Armenpress) – Armenia's Minister of Diaspora Mkhitar Hayrapetyan, who is in Cyprus on an official visit, on July 24 met with Photis Photiou, Presidential Commissioner for Humanitarian Issues and Overseas Cypriots.

Hayrapetyan thanked the country's leaders for the invitation and stated: "The fact that I paid my first visit to Cyprus is already a signal that we really highly value our relations and are ready to further strengthen them."

Photis Photiou thanked for accepting the invitation. "I see how active you are, I follow your meetings. Our peoples have many commonalities, and perhaps this is the reason that we always assist you and vice versa", he said.

During the meeting Photiou also touched upon the Armenians living in Cyprus and their problems, stating that they always try to assist the Armenian community so that they can maintain their Armenian identity. "We do this by assisting the Armenian schools and churches. We want that Armenians will not be away from their roots. We also have a Diaspora and are well aware what problems people face while living not in the homeland".

The officials also discussed the possible joint programs, highlighting the need to include youth in these programs as much as possible.

Hayrapetyan arrived in Cyprus on an official visit. He was scheduled to meet with President of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades. Thereafter, he will participate in the World

Community News

Richard Hovannisian In Republic of Armenia Centennial Conferences

LOS ANGELES – Prof. Richard Hovannisian of the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), University of Southern California (USC) and Chapman University has traveled extensively in 2018 to participate in conferences dedicated to the centenary of the Republic of Armenia and the neighboring republics of the South Caucasus. In March, Hovannisian, along with Drs. Rubina Peromian and Vicken Cheterian, engaged in discussions in Canada on the theme “From Genocide to Statehood” at McGill University in Montreal, Carleton University in Ottawa, and the University of Toronto, sponsored by the Quebec and Ontario Armenian Student Associations. Hovannisian then traveled to the Catholicosate of Cilicia in Lebanon to join scholars from around the world and a delegation from Artsakh led by President Bako Sahakyan in an intense three-day Armenian-language conference on the Republic. During the concluding session, Aram I bestowed on Hovannisian and Lebanese Armenian educator, editor, and historian Yervant Pamboukian the title and medal of “Prince of Cilicia.”

In April, Hovannisian was at the American University of Armenia (AUA) for a three-lecture filmed series on the republic, organized by AUA and the Armenian General Benevolent Union. The same month, he was honored, along with the Shoah Foundation, by the Los Angeles City Council (Paul Krikorian) and by the California State Legislature in Sacramento (Adrin Nazarian, Laura Friedman, Scott Wiener, Scott Wilk, Anthony Portantino, and others) for his scholarship, advocacy, and civic activities.

In early May, Hovannisian was honored during centenary conferences at California State University, Northridge, and at Columbia University in New York, under the auspices of Armenian Revolutionary Federation, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, *Armenian Review*, and the host institutions. There, he reflected on his fifty years of research and study of the First Republic. Later that month, Hovannisian delivered a keynote address at the state-sponsored centennial conference held in the Armenian Academy of Sciences in Yerevan.

Hovannisian also traveled to Tbilisi, Georgia in May to discuss with Prof. Stephen Jones of Mount Holyoke College the centenary of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, as well as Armenian-Georgian relations, in a program sponsored by the rector of Ilia State University and organized by upcoming scholar Beka Kobakhidze. At the end of June, he returned to Tbilisi for a week-long conference and summer school on Georgia and the Caucasian republics, held at the Ivane Javakhashvili State University, Georgian National Museum, and Georgian National Archives. In each of his trips to Yerevan and Tbilisi, Hovannisian gave a number of television, radio, podcast, and newspaper interviews.

During his intervals back in Los Angeles, Hovannisian continued with his brisk schedule by making presentations on the Armenian Genocide to social studies teachers of the Glendale and La Crescenta school districts and subsequently to all principals of the Glendale Unified School District. In addition, he led a workshop of the Facing History and Ourselves Foundation and placed the Armenian Genocide in historical and ethical contexts in a program sponsored by the Friends of the Whittier Public Library, whose featured book this year was Aline Ohanesian’s *Orhan’s Inheritance*.

Richard Hovannisian is currently working with the Shoah Foundation on the integration of his large oral history collection of Armenian survivor testimonies into the Shoah archives and website.



Diocesan youth leaders in Jerusalem

Eastern Diocese Leads 22 Youth Leaders on Holy Land Pilgrimage

JERUSALEM – Twenty-two young adults from across the Eastern Diocese came together at Newark International Airport on June 5, 2018, to embark on a 10-day pilgrimage to the Holy Land as part of the Eastern Diocese’s Annual Young Adult Pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

The group extensively toured Jerusalem’s holy sites as well as historic Biblical areas such as Bethlehem, where Jesus was born; the Sea of Galilee, where Christ walked on water and preached to his disciples; Nazareth, where Jesus grew up; Mt. Tabor, where the Transfiguration took place; and the Jordan River, where a blessing of water service was held near the place where Jesus is believed to have been baptized by John the Baptist.

For many of the young pilgrims, the journey awakened them to the vital role Armenians and their spirituality have played in the story of the Holy Land.

“I learned that the Armenians have had a presence here for a very long time, centuries longer than I would have guessed,” said participant Emily Movsesian (of the Holy Trinity Church in Cheltenham, PA). “And that we have privileges in places like the Holy Sepulchre that are very special compared to other Christians.”

Like generations of Armenian pilgrims before them, the Diocesan youth group was welcomed to the Sts. James Armenian Patriarchate, and had an audience with the current Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, Archbishop Nourhan Manougian.

The group was led by the Rev. Fr. Vasken Kouzouian, pastor of Holy Trinity Church of Cambridge, Mass.

He was assisted by Arpi Nakashian from the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern), and Armen Terjimanian, a St. Nersess Armenian Seminary student. Shake Derderian (St. Sahag and St. Mesrob Church, Wynnewood, PA) of Nour Travel accompanied the group throughout the trip.

Most stops on the itinerary included Bible Studies led by the leaders, allowing the young adults to reflect on their faith and deepen their knowledge while visiting the holy sites of Biblical history.

“I learned many things on this pilgrimage, including facts about the Holy Bible and Jesus Christ’s path all the way to his death and rising,” said Alen Dokmecioglu (Holy Martyrs Church, Bayside, NY). “I also learned a lot about Jerusalem and the way of life here. I need to analyze the information I received when I go back home.”

Three times during the pilgrimage, the group participated in the celebration of the *badarak*. During the group’s first full day of touring, Kouzouian celebrated the *badarak* at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, at the birthplace of Christ. Later in the week, he celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the tomb of St. Mary near the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem.

“Having the opportunity to unpack the Gospel in an intimate setting in the places Jesus was born, performed his ministry, and died was truly transformational. This pilgrimage has especially impressed on me the importance of Mary and the strength of her faith,” said Elizabeth Shahnasarian (St. Hagop Church, St. Petersburg, Fla.).

A highlight of the trip was an overnight visit at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where the group received an extensive tour of the numerous chapels and sites inside the church – including Golgotha (where Jesus’ cross stood when he was crucified) and the tomb of Christ (where his body was interred for three days). The visit culminated in an Armenian Divine Liturgy at 4 a.m., with all the pilgrims participating.

Reflecting on 10 days of spiritually-awakening experiences, Greg Norsigian (St. George Church, Hartford, Conn.) noted the value of “being part of a community of like-minded people.”

“In America young adults are often faithless. But on this pilgrimage, having a chance to connect with all these people on a spiritual level was very moving to me.”

He added: “It’s something I’ll carry with me for the rest of my life.”

Senate Appropriations Committee Ensures Continued Aid to Armenia

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.

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.

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 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 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 buildup. The United States and the other co-chair countries need to be investing in confidence building measures and sending see APPROPRIATIONS, page 9



COMMUNITY NEWS

AGBU Facilitates a New Engagement Between Armenia and Diaspora

NEW YORK – On July 15, at the invitation of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), a delegation of senior officials from Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's administration, during its first official visit to the United States, met with AGBU community members for an open dialogue in Manhattan. Speakers included three government representatives who had traveled to New York to attend the High-Level Political Forum at the United Nations on July 16 and 17 to present Armenia's progress on the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): First Deputy Prime Minister Ararat Mirzoyan; Deputy Minister of the Diaspora Babken DerGrigorian; and First Deputy Minister of Transport, Communications, and Information Technologies Hakob Arshakyan.

Given the Pashinyan government's stated intentions to reinvigorate diaspora-homeland relations, AGBU structured the dinner as the first step in giving the diaspora a seat at the table of ideas and strategies, as the new government formulates a bold agenda for

Chatham House Rule, which creates a safe space for speakers and participants to share ideas, ask questions and impart information with the understanding that nothing expressed is attributed to any individual or organization. Guests had the opportunity to explore issues in greater depth in round table discussions with the official representatives.

Based on participant feedback, this seemed to be a welcome and refreshing approach. As one guest remarked at the end of the evening, "This was an amazing opportunity to have an audience with a senior Armenian government official for several hours, to express my views and perspectives and probe the responses. It was a deep dive into so many areas of mutual relevance and concern." Another guest said this exercise was "extremely important to the future of Armenia-diaspora relations. Much was learned about government services and opportunities for diaspora involvement that were previously not accentuated."

The evening's key theme was how Armenia-diaspora relations can be reimagined in a spirit of true collaboration and partnership versus the charity-driven paradigm of the past. The relationship should be defined as an equal partnership, characterized not only by financial engagement but also knowledge transfer and expertise sharing. Another question addressed was how diasporans can "take ownership for the country's development as investors, technical advisors and industry specialists while also seeing themselves as global Armenian citizens whose identity takes on an added dimension through civic engagement." As one participant put it,



From left, Republic of Armenia (RA) First Deputy Minister of Transport, Communications and IT Hakob Arshakyan; AGBU Central Board Member and the evening's moderator Arda Haratunian; AGBU President Berge Setrakian; RA First Deputy Prime Minister Ararat Mirzoyan; RA Deputy Minister of the Diaspora Babken DerGrigorian; and AGBU-Armenia Outreach Director Lilia Planjyan.



Hakob Arshakyan, first deputy minister of Transport, Communications and IT, presents the new government's vision for innovative technologies as a key driver of Armenia's economic growth.

putting the country on a new track to economic and social development. Both AGBU and Armenia's leadership agreed that creating a new model for engaging with and leveraging the Armenian diaspora is long overdue.

In setting the tone for the evening, AGBU reinforced the importance of embracing the idea of one global Armenian nation, which incorporates Armenia, the Church and the diaspora, each needing the other to complete the whole.

To encourage an open and candid dialogue, AGBU decided to follow the British-derived

"Diasporans should have skin in the game."

As the evening progressed, concrete proposals to encourage diasporans to do business in Armenia were offered with special emphasis on the tremendous potential in high tech innovation. Recommendations were summarized and provided to AGBU Armenia as input for crafting the partnership and presenting it to the appropriate decision-makers in Yerevan.

Among the AGBU's current initiatives are a women's empowerment program that supports women who are starting or scaling up a small business, and its BRIDGE for CSOs,

which provides opportunities for mentors from the diaspora to register with the Together4Armenia online platform and match their skills with local civil society organizations looking to increase capacity. AGBU is also a partner of the Armenia National SDG Innovation Lab—a space for citizen engagement, experimentation, collaboration and analytics to help unlock Armenia's development potential and accelerate the implementation of the 2050 sustainable development goals. Three industry sectors critical to Armenia's economic development were identified – Tourism, Information Technologies and Agriculture.

For the Armenia delegation, the evening was conducive to an open discussion as well gauging the immediate feedback to the ideas presented, allowing them to return to Yerevan with a clearer understanding of the aspirations for the next phase of co-equal nation-building in a free and open society.

After the event, Berge Setrakian, president of the AGBU, expressed his satisfaction with the progress made in the three hours of conversation in the small group setting. "AGBU has time and again stressed the idea that for both Armenia to succeed as a nation and for the diaspora to flourish as a community, we must think and act as one global nation. With the hopes of Armenia's citizens raised since the Velvet Revolution's peaceful transition of power, the diaspora must also look toward the future with fresh eyes, open minds and a full heart for the important work that lies ahead. AGBU applauds this new climate of inclusion and is committed to playing its vital role in improving the lives of Armenia's citizens through programs that encourage direct diasporan involvement and support."



From left, Deputy Minister of the Diaspora Babken DerGrigorian; Advisor to the First Deputy Prime Minister Syuzanna Avetisyan; AGBU Central Board Member Sarkis Jebejian; and First Deputy Minister of Transport, Communications and IT Hakob Arshakyan.

Koutoujian Participates in Roundtable Hosted by House Bipartisan Heroin and Opioid Task Force

WASHINGTON – Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian represented the National Sheriffs' Association before the House Bipartisan Task Force on Heroin and Opioids during a roundtable discussion in Washington, D.C. focused on medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for incarcerated individuals.

The task force, chaired by Representatives Annie Kuster (D-NH) and Tom MacArthur (R-NJ), is comprised of over 100 members of the U.S. House of Representatives from across the country.

"I want to thank the chairs and members of the task force for the opportunity to participate in today's discussion," said Sheriff Koutoujian. "Everyday sheriffs from across the country are innovating in an effort to address the opioid epidemic that is crippling families and communities from Massachusetts to Ohio, and beyond."

Koutoujian presented on the Middlesex Sheriff's Office Medication Assisted Treatment And Directed Opioid Recovery (MATADOR) Program which is one of the longest running MAT programs in the country.

Speaking on behalf of the NSA, he underscored the importance of flexibility to cus-

tomize programs that meet the needs of diverse communities across the country and ensures that federal funding gets to the local

level without unnecessary restrictions that can impede participation.



Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian (first from left) addresses members of the House Bipartisan Heroin and Opioid Task Force including Co-Chair Congresswoman Annie Kuster (D-NH).

Executive Director and CEO Jonathan Thompson. "We are excited to share with Congress the impactful solutions law enforcement brings to the table to thwart this crisis, including the Sheriff's MATADOR Program."

Launched in late 2015, MATADOR is a voluntary program for those with opioid use disorders returning to the community following incarceration. MATADOR, which uses an injectable form of naltrexone, is a multifaceted program that combines enrollment in health insurance with navigation services and critical casework follow-up.

Since its inception more than two years ago, 82 percent of those who completed six months in MATADOR have not recidivated. And while a comprehensive evaluation spearheaded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health showed recently incarcerated individuals are 120 times more likely to die from an opioid overdose than the general population, as of June 2018, 96.2 percent of MATADOR participants – regardless of whether they completed six months – have not succumbed to a fatal overdose post-release.

"America's sheriffs are proud to take part in this important discussion and they are well represented by Sheriff Koutoujian," said NSA



OBITUARIES

Southern California Developer Finds Big Opportunity for Solar on Megamalls

By Kathie Zipp

LOS ANGELES — Solar Optimum is celebrating a decade of residential and commercial solar installations. One key to its success is embracing new market opportunities.

Several years ago, the company was contracted for a solar project on a large shopping mall. Ara Krikorian, vice president of commercial development for Solar Optimum, said opportunities to install on other megamalls just ballooned from there.

"We've constructed solar projects for nearly every large mall from the Central Valley through Southern California," he said.

Krikorian said solar makes sense in all industries, and large malls are no exception. Malls have high cooling and lighting costs. Solar helps offset those loads producing significant savings as well as providing environmental benefits that can bring malls some positive PR.

"Operating expenses are factors that every business deals with, and if there is a practical and economical way to decrease those costs, any business will do it," he said. "Solar's value exists; articulating it well enough for executives to understand is all that's needed to bridge the gap."

Although traditional malls in many parts of the country have struggled to stay open,

California malls have been able to adapt by moving away from enclosed buildings and toward more mixed-use, open space areas. No matter the design, malls offer plenty of room for solar on roofs or parking structures. Adding solar to decrease operating costs gives malls a fighting chance to compete against the increasing online shopping market.

But these projects don't come without challenges.

"You have tens of thousands of customers entering and exiting these facilities daily, dealing with a thorny engineering endeavor, having multiple interconnections thousands of feet away, navigating the logistical nightmare of staging and coordinating utility shutdowns and backup power," Krikorian said. "Safety for both our personnel and retail patrons is paramount, and most of the industry doesn't think about that regularly. It is even more essential for projects like this."

Despite the hurdles, he said Solar Optimum's experience and vertical integration allows the company to plan for and navigate the complexities of massive retail centers.

"Finding markets that are underserved, understanding what value you can bring them and scaling to further grow that value is what's necessary for any company," Krikorian said. "Large malls aren't our core business, but it's definitely a market that we serve well."

OBITUARY

Richard Melik Simonian

Veteran Attorney

WORCESTER — Richard "Dick" Melik Simonian, 86, a prominent attorney and founder and partner of the law firm of Simonian and Murray, passed away peacefully on June 8, at Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston.

He was born in New York City and lived most of his adult life in Worcester. He also maintained a residence in Watertown for 30



years. His law firm focused on the representation of lending institutions, commercial enterprises, real estate developers and closely-held businesses throughout Massachusetts.

He graduated Magna Cum Laude from Harvard College in 1954 and Columbia Law School in 1958. He spent his junior year at the Paris Sorbonne University where he

enrolled in French Studies and learned to speak French fluently. He would later visit Paris numerous times throughout his life where he loved immersing himself in the Parisian culture. He also traveled to other countries and in his later years enjoyed his numerous trips to Armenia. He was a member of the Massachusetts Bar Association, the Worcester County Bar Association, the Armenian Bar Association, a trustee of the Armenian Museum of America and a director of Sage Bank.

His legal skills were on display when he represented the Executor of the Estate of Sarita Kenedy East and successfully rebuffed a challenge to her will by relatives. The drama and intrigue of the case inspired the publication of a non-fiction book recounting the history of the case and the events leading up to it.

A proud Armenian, Simonian was involved in the Armenian community in Worcester, Watertown, Washington, DC and Armenia. He was a supporter of the Society for Orphaned Armenian Relief and became actively involved and supportive of individual orphans and their pursuit of higher education. He also worked tirelessly to have the United States and other countries recognize and acknowledge the Armenian Genocide.

Predeceased by his parents, Rose and Avedis Simonian (a Genocide survivor) and a sister, Jean Benglian, he leaves his brother Edward Simonian and his wife Karen of Mystic, Conn.; his sister, Carolyn S. Moberly of Worcester, and many loving nieces and nephews.

A funeral service was performed by Rev. Aved Terzian of the Armenian Church of Our Savior.

AIWA Chicago Affiliate Hosts Luncheon Meeting, Gains New Members

CHICAGO — The Chicago Affiliate of the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) held its annual membership luncheon meeting on Saturday, June 16, at Maggiano's Restaurant in downtown Chicago. The keynote speaker for the meeting was Oscar Tatosian, Honorary Consul of the Republic of Armenia.

Greta Doumanian-Harley, who served as the mistress of ceremonies, welcomed Tatosian and the other 45 members and guests in attendance. To commence the meeting, Deacon Narek Garabedian sang the national anthems of the United States and Armenia, accompanied by Rebecca Boelzner on viola. Following the anthems, Father Tavit Boyajian of Saints Joachim and Anne Armenian Apostolic Church gave a blessing before lunch was served.

After lunch, Doumanian-Harley introduced AIWA Chicago President Shaghig Danielle Galian, who spoke about how she was inspired to join the organization after learning about AIWA's programs in Armenia, particularly the Women's Support Center, which offers services and support to victims of domestic violence. Galian introduced Tatosian, who discussed the Honorary Consulate in Chicago and its focus on promoting trade between Armenia and the United States in the following areas: agricultural products, technology, tourism and wine. Tatosian encouraged AIWA Chicago to set its priorities for the year ahead and reach out to the consulate in order to achieve shared goals. A lively and informative question-and-answer followed Tatosian's presentation. At the conclusion of the program, Prof. Ann Lousin, a lifetime member of AIWA, presented Tatosian with a book about ancient Armenia on behalf of the Chicago Affiliate.

AIWA Chicago's luncheon resulted in the addition of 14 new members. The AIWA Chicago Affiliate was founded in October 2012 by lifetime member Sonya Doumanian, who gathered several young professional women in her home to launch the new group.

For more information about AIWA, visit aiwainternational.org.



Oscar Tatosian



Greta Doumanian-Harley, left, and Shaghig Danielle Galian

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Amazon's Three-Year Investment in Wisconsin Brought \$1 Billion to Economy

KENOSHA, Wisc. (*Milwaukee Independent*) – Between 2014 and 2017, Amazon's investments contributed more than \$1 billion into Wisconsin's economy, indirectly creating 5,500 additional jobs on top of the 4,000 the company employs directly.

For 2018 Amazon will celebrate its third year fulfilling customer orders from Wisconsin and surpassing the milestone of 4,000 full-time employees in the state with job opportunities for people with all types of experience, education and skill levels – from human resources, engineers and facilities technicians, to those seeking entry-level positions and looking for on-the-job training.

"Since our first day at the Kenosha facility, we've received amazing support from the community and we couldn't be prouder to be part of the Wisconsin family," said Mark Stewart, Amazon's Vice President of North America Customer Fulfillment. "We're honored that our team of more than 4,000 in the Badger State have picked Amazon as their employer of choice and innovate on behalf of the customer, raise the bar on our operational excellence, and provide outstanding customer experiences – every day."

Amazon's 1-million-square-foot fulfillment center in Wisconsin opened in 2015 with a team of 1,000 full-time employees. In addition to the Kenosha fulfillment center, Amazon has also opened a Prime Now hub, an Amazon Fresh site, a sortation center, and a delivery station in the Badger State.

The average hourly wage for Amazon's more than 4,000 full-time employees in Wisconsin, including cash, stock, and incentive bonuses, is over \$14.50/hour before overtime – twice the



Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian

state's minimum wage. Wisconsin is also home to Shopbop, the global online retail destination for style inspiration and discovery, employing hundreds of full-time employees. BOP LLC, headquartered in Madison, was acquired by Amazon.com, Inc. in 2006, enabling Shopbop to expand its services to enhance the customer experience.

This expansion has resulted in Amazon investing millions of dollars into Wisconsin's economy, both in fulfillment infrastructure and compensation to its 4,000 current employees. Amazon's investments in Wisconsin from 2014 through 2017 resulted in an additional \$1 billion to the

state's economy. Using Input-Output methodology and multipliers developed by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Amazon's investments in the state have created an additional 5,500 indirect jobs on top of the company's direct hires.

"Reaching more than 4,000 full-time, permanent employees is an incredible milestone for Amazon and Wisconsin," Governor Scott Walker said. "The fact that Amazon more than tripled its initial job-creation projections in Wisconsin is a monumental success story. Thanks to Amazon for its continued commitment to our state and our people. The Wisconsin Comeback is real!"

"We appreciate Amazon's investment in Kenosha, which has created thousands of jobs and opportunities for our residents at the two fulfillment facilities in the city," said Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian. "We are pleased to see Amazon finding success in our community."

Amazon in Wisconsin by the numbers:

2 fulfillment facilities in Kenosha

3 locations in Milwaukee city proper: a Prime Now hub, an Amazon Fresh site, and a delivery station

A Shopbop headquarters building located in Madison

4,000+ full-time employees across Wisconsin

5,500+ estimated indirect jobs created as a result of Amazon's investment between 2014 and 2017

14,000+ Wisconsin-based small and medium-sized businesses are growing and reaching new customers selling on Amazon

\$100,000+ donated to charities in Wisconsin through monetary and in-kind donations

\$1 billion added into Wisconsin's economy between 2014 and 2017 due to Amazon's investments

More than 1,500,000 sq. ft. footprint for the two fulfillment facilities

Amazon's statewide impact can be seen in the local small and medium-sized businesses it empowers. For example, Sherri Yukel is a Wisconsin resident and founder of Big Dot of Happiness, an independent, woman-founded brand that sells bespoke party decorations for one-of-a-kind celebrations. Big Dot of Happiness uses Fulfillment By Amazon, a service that enables small and medium-sized businesses to use Amazon's resources to sell directly to customers.

"Selling on Amazon has been a complete game changer. We love creating new products for all of life's celebrations and Fulfillment by Amazon allows us to get our product to customers FAST. When we started selling on Amazon in 2012, we had 40 employees: now, we proudly employ 83 people and are still growing strong! Amazon has allowed us to be the company we've always wanted to be."

In addition to competitive wages, full-time fulfillment center Amazon associates receive a comprehensive benefits package, including healthcare, 401(k) and company stock awards starting on day one. Amazon also offers regular full-time employees maternity and parental leave benefits and access to innovative programs like Career Choice, where it will pre-pay up to 95 percent of tuition for courses related to in-demand fields, regardless of whether the skills are relevant to a career at Amazon.

"Career Choice made it extremely easy for me to get my EMT certification and Amazon worked with me to adjust schedules so I could make my classes," said Mike Fina, an associate at Amazon's fulfillment center in Kenosha. "It's an amazing benefit and having classes onsite saved me a lot of money and time. Amazon also took care of tuition ahead of time, which is great because a lot of people don't have the money to pay out-of-pocket and wait to get reimbursed later. I'm now taking the commercial driving license class."

Since the program's launch, more than 16,000 employees have pursued degrees in game design and visual communications, nursing, IT programming, and radiology, to name a few.

Senate Appropriations Committee Ensures Continued Aid to Armenia

APPROPRIATIONS, from page 6
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 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (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.



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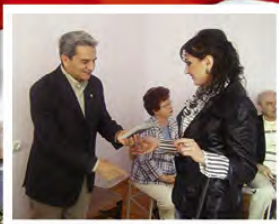
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COMMUNITY NEWS

Activist Academic Makunts Rethinks Armenian Ministry of Culture

CULTURE, from page 1

dramatically declared, in a recent interview (<https://www.evnreport.com/raw-unfiltered/lilit-makunts-from-civic-to-political-to-cultural-engagement>) conducted by Maria Titizian for EVN Report, “I was in my third year of university when I realized that I have the soul of a soldier of justice who wants to fight for things people will benefit from.” After graduation, she became professionally engaged in politics. She became a board member of the Liberal Party of Armenia (*Hayastani Liberal Kusaksutyun*, not to be confused with the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party), and remained the head of its youth organization until 2012. In the following years she decided to take a different approach and pulled out of the direct political arena in order to teach youth in civil society how to work for social change. She declared to the *Mirror-Spectator*, “I was taking part in the elections, and I was at the polling stations, and I would witness that unless we change ourselves, unless we change as citizens, we are not going to witness any change in the political arena.”

Makunts was able to do her political activity while teaching at the Russian-Armenian University. She said, “I was there because it was one of those universities where professors, teachers and students had the most freedom.” For example, during the 2008 presidential elections, YSU expelled a number of professors and students for their political activities, unlike her university. She also held more than one job, so did not worry as much about the effects of her actions. She said, “I was never limited with my opportunities. I knew that if I lost this job I could get another one. Probably this was the reason that I felt free. ... Fortunately, I had the luxury and I had the opportunity of not being confined to one job.”

She studied at the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC) Summer Institute (also known as the Fletcher Summer Institute for the Advanced Study of Nonviolent Conflict, at Tufts University, <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/fletcher-summer-institute-2015/>) in the summer of 2015 and was an ICNC Curriculum Fellow from 2016 to 2017, meaning according to the ICNC website, she received support for “teaching, course development and implementation of new curricular on civil resistance in universities and high schools around the world.”

Since 2016, she has been a contract specialist for the American Peace Corps. She also worked with the German nonprofit Friedrich Ebert Foundation, which has an office in Yerevan. For example, in October 2017, at the Fourth Eastern European Academy for Social Democracy, sponsored by this foundation in Georgia, she led a session on media training, teaching about media propaganda and manipulation.

While she has known and worked with Prime

Minister Nikol Pashinyan for many years, she said she did not join his Civil Contract political party. She explained, “I did not become a part of that political party because of personal reasons, and you can call it psychological reasons. I was a member of a different political party and it was hard for me to switch. It was just a personal principle and that’s it. I was not on the frontline but I was always ... supporting my friends who were struggling for civil justice, just not in the frontline.”

The position of minister of culture, Makunts said, is a political one. When people have asked her how she will be able to deal with varied fields of culture, when her background is a different one, she said, “This is my personal opinion: whoever is in charge of this particular position, say a painter or a person in a specific field of art, this does not mean that this person must master all other fields professionally and profoundly. Basically, this position is about proper management and listening to the people working in the field and implementing the bottom-up approach. This is the approach of the whole government currently including mine as a minister of culture.”

Makunts said that she has begun a review of the strategy of the Ministry of Culture, both in terms of policymaking and administration. She said that she envisages the creation of an advisory body for the ministry which would make decisions on the level of cultural content. The members, she said, “are definitely going to represent different fields of art and culture and they are going to be...specialized in those fields.” These people would give recommendations and also have a critical approach toward policymaking. At this stage, she said, the talks she is holding with interest groups and people representing various fields will lead to nominations of such advisors. Advisory positions will have a rotation scheme.

In addition, for the short term, the ministry will undertake structural change internally, and work to further cooperation of the private and public sectors on cultural affairs. An initial example of the latter is the signing of a memorandum for cooperation with Creative Armenia, a foundation established in Los Angeles and Yerevan in 2017. Makunts said, “With this cooperation, I hope that we are going to open the closed circle and have wider opportunities for the people working in the field.” One of the first joint efforts will attempt to assist artists with funding, strategy and mentorship.

Makunts believes the government still has an important role to play in the arts and culture. She said, “We need to do our best to provide equal opportunities to people. We speak about monopolies in the economic field and business but there are monopolies in the field of culture too. It is one of our priorities to give opportunities to all of those people who want to have their position or want to act in the field. ... We need to take all those measures, both legal and

the ones that are connected only with political will.”

She finds that there is both stagnation and vitality in Armenian culture today “because we have so many bright cultural individuals and groups which produce masterpieces, really great pieces of art, but they are not visible in the arena.” She said that despite the artistic potential in Armenia, there are “great artists who unfortunately do not have the proper opportunities to produce their work.” She is not sure why, though it might have some connection with past public policy, and thus, she said, “I think it is both a problem of cultural management and a matter of attitude.”

She stressed that “if we want new elements in whatever we have in our heritage, we need to make an effort ourselves. It is not only because the government is going to give subsidies that culture is going to develop.” If, she said, the public and private sectors work in tandem this is going to foster competition, which in its turn is going to be reflected in the quality of whatever we see in the field of art.

At present, there are 70 state nonprofit cultural organizations, including 16 theaters under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture, and museums, galleries and other institutions receiving subsidies from the government. The government pays for the salaries of the employees of these institutions, the building management and utilities. Makunts said, “We do not have any intervention in content management. It is they [each institution’s leaders] who need to offer things or develop whatever they are doing.”

This leads to the interesting question of what happens when an institution is failing in its task. Makunts said, “We need to review this as well,” and gave the example of different types of theaters. Apparently, the Gyumri Ajemian Theater offers the most plays on a monthly basis of any theater in Armenia, and it gets the largest audiences. Makunts said, “The problem—the interesting thing—is that they get the same amount of subsidies as the other theaters which might offer, for example, only one play per month, instead of 20. This gives the feeling of unfairness which has to be addressed somehow.” She declared that “this approach might sound radical, and it would be painful for a lot of those organizations that are under the patronage of the ministry, but I think we should address this. She said a solution has not yet been developed, but it must be found so that incentives will be provided to cultural institutions which do more work.

Makunts encourages closer work with the Armenian diaspora, stating, “I consider the role of the diaspora very, very important, and not in the sense of financial input. We also need intellectual input here.” Cultural management skills are needed in Armenia. She said that cultural exchange programs are also very important. She declared, “We feel this hunger and thirst

for bringing new things and incorporating them—not just sharing ideas but doing things.”

Makunts said that her ministry must work very closely with the ministries of education and diaspora. She said, “the gap that we have in the field of culture is also because the education programs are not linked to the cultural programs.” To remedy this, her ministry was discussing with the minister of education and deputy ministers a pilot program to connect students with cultural institutions, so that they go to museums, galleries and theaters and do projects there. Her ministry’s link with the Ministry of Diaspora, she said, “is just inevitable.”

When asked whether there was a greater role of women in government and her ministry in particular now, she replied that the governing body of her ministry consists of two men and two women, but overall there were more women than men in her ministry. In general, in government there are many more women, including more deputy ministers and women in city councils, though women are still a minority in the cabinet. The newly appointed mayor of Echmiadzin, for example, is a young woman, she pointed out. She said that more and more women would become involved in politics.

As far as the Western orientation or education of many in the new government, Makunts said, “I wouldn’t look for a conspiracy here.” She noted that statistically Armenian students today are getting advanced education more in Western countries, not just in the US but in Europe. This is due to a variety of reasons, and so is not a situation unique to the new government.

When asked about the difficulties in changing ubiquitous corruption in Armenia, and whether the Ministry of Culture was at all involved in this struggle, Makunts stated that the way the new government was combatting corruption was by changing the dominant mentality to include obedience to laws, starting at the top. She said, “When the governors of the state themselves, including the president, prime minister and other ministers, are the ones who do not break the laws, that is how the mentality changes.”

Makunts concluded that “this new government represents the concept that government or governors or ministers are not about posh lives, are not about top-down governance. This is about service, and we are here and we have this idea of service and serving the country and the people due to whom or because of whom we are now where we are. We hope that this is not going to be short term and this is going to be long term. Whoever later comes to power, whoever later takes office, this is going to be the number one priority for them, serving the people. ...

“The way we started this whole movement, the process, it needs to be continued with the same logic, in terms of solidarity, love and consistency.”

Diocese Names Dr. Christopher Sheklian as New Director of Zohrab Information Center

NEW YORK — The Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) announced recently the hiring of a new director for the Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center, the Diocese’s research and information facility, housed in the St. Vartan Cathedral complex.

Dr. Christopher Sheklian has accepted the position, effective September 1. He will succeed the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan, the Zohrab Center’s previous director, who was elected Primate of the Eastern Diocese in May this year. Earlier Zohrab Center directors have included Dr. Rachel Goshgarian, Aram Arkun and the Very Rev. Dr. Krikor Maksoudian.

“I am thrilled to be joining the Zohrab Information Center as its director, to work with the new Primate, as well as the Director of Ministries Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, and everyone at the Diocesan Center,” Sheklian said. “I hope to support the work of all the Diocesan ministries.”

Sheklian is a native of Visalia, Calif., who was baptized, raised, and was an altar-server

at the St. Mary Armenian Church of Yettm. At the University of California, Berkeley, he majored in anthropology; during his college years he was ordained a deacon by Western Diocesan Primate Archbishop Hovnan Derderian.

Prior to taking up graduate studies he spent a year as a substitute teacher, and took his first, formative trip to Turkey, visiting various Armenian sites and his ancestral village of Chomaklou. During his graduate education in Anthropology at the University of Chicago, he spent a year studying at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary.

Living in Istanbul in 2012-2014, he conducted ethnographic fieldwork involving the local Armenian community. In 2017 he defended his doctoral dissertation, “Theology and the Community: the Armenian Minority, Tradition, and Secularism in Turkey,” and he received a PhD from the University of Chicago.

Dr. Sheklian was most recently a Manoogian Postdoctoral Fellow in Armenian Studies at the University of Michigan, where



Dr. Christopher Sheklian

he was affiliated with the Department of Anthropology and taught a course called “Singing the Community: Armenian Liturgy and the Anthropology of Ritual and Sound.”

He continues to pursue his research related to secularism, religious minority rights, and the role of emotion and the senses in religious life.

As the Zohrab Center director, Sheklian looks forward to continuing the center’s engaging series of lectures and presentations, and is currently organizing such events for the coming autumn season. He has a special goal of developing resources and programming that engage both academic and church audiences.

“The Zohrab Center is the ideal setting for me, as my work cuts across boundaries of the university and the church,” Sheklian observed.

“My hope is to engage audiences of all levels, using the Zohrab Center’s vast repository of material to present the Armenian tradition for the 21st century.” He added: “I also plan to take the center on the road, to benefit of the entire Diocese — our local parishes, schools, or organizations. I’m looking forward to being in touch with people throughout the larger community.”



COMMUNITY NEWS

Knights and Daughters of Vartan Host Annual Convocation in Michigan

DEARBORN, Mich. — The Knights of Vartan's 100th Annual Grand Convocation and the Daughters of Vartan 78th annual meeting was held July 11-14 here at the Edward Hotel with over 150 Knights and Daughters and their family members in attendance. The loyal Knights and Daughters got together for a series of innovative workshops, meetings, discussions, city and cultural tours and elegant evening events. It was also a time to acknowledge and present awards to individuals and lodges for outstanding service to the Armenian community.

The Knights and Daughters of Vartan, Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge #6 and Zabelle Otyag (Lodge) #12, hosted the 100th Grand Convocation. The Convocation Committee was led by General Chairman Past Matron Gloria Korkoian, Co-Chairman Past Commander Kazar Terterian and coordinated by Knights and Daughters from Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge and Zabelle Otyag (Lodge).

Wednesday, July 11 included a city tour of Detroit with visits to the Motown Museum, St John Armenian Church and the Alex and Marie Manoogian Museum.

On Thursday, July 12, Dr. Taner Akcam was invited as a special guest to speak about his recently published book, *The Killing Orders: Talat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide*, which provides undeniable proof that the Young Turks intended to exterminate the Armenian people. For the evening guests enjoyed dining and entertainment in the revolving hotel Rotunda with the singing group "Detroit All-Stars" who took everyone back in time for a Motown experience. Those in attendance had wonderful time with exceptional food, singing and dancing.



Knights and Daughters Vartan Group at 100th Grand Convocation (Photo credit by David Medzorian of Ararat Lodge)

The Grand Commander Dr. Gary Zamanigian led a number of business meetings regarding the past years accomplishments and achievements and about future projects. The Knights of Vartan appropriated financial support for certain key charitable initiatives: the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia NGO in honor of the late Past Commander Rev. Dajad Davidian, a good friend of Fuller Center; Scholarships for Armenian American Students; and Scholarships for Students in Armenia who attend the American University of Armenia, Yerevan State University and the National Polytechnic University of Armenia. In addition, the following projects will continue to be funded: Partnership with CASP (Children of Armenia Sponsorship

of the Armenian Genocide, Paylan counted the names of ethnic Armenian politicians who were deported and then killed during the Armenian Genocide. In addition, Dr. Mary A. Papazian received the Knights of Vartan 2018 Person of the Year and the Daughters of Vartan Woman of the Year Awards. She is a seasoned leader with nearly 30 years of experience as a university professor, academic and administrative leader. Dr. Papazian joined San Jose State University as its 30th president on July 1, 2016. Before coming to SJSU, she was president of Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, Connecticut. Previously, Dr. Papazian was the provost and senior vice president for Academic Affairs at Lehman College of The City University of New York. She also served as the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Montclair State University in New Jersey, and as Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Science at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, where she began her academic career as an assistant, associate and tenured professor of English.

The 2018 Grand Convocation saw the re-election and reinstallation of the Grand Commander of the Knights of Vartan, Dr. Gary Zamanigian of Bloomfield Hills, Mich., and Grand Matron of the Daughters of Vartan, Diana Tookmanian of Pasadena, Calif.

The Grand Lodge has seven officers, including Grand Commander, and during 100th convocation the re-elected officers were: Lieutenant Grand Commander Howard Atesian, Grand Chaplain Garry Javizian, Grand Recorder Deacon Richard Norsigian, Grand Treasurer Ed Bedikian, Grand Master of Ceremonies Deacon George Boyagian, and Grand Sentinel Ray Boujoulian.

The Grand Council of the Daughters of Vartan re-elected along with the Grand Matron Ms. Diana Tookmanian were: Salpy Mankerian, Zovig Tashjian, Taline Kedjidjian, Barbara Khazoyan, Barbara Tchalikian and Claudia Hardy.

The Knights of Vartan Inc. is a fraternal leadership and service organization of Armenian men dedicated to safeguarding



Grand Commander Dr. Gary Zamanigian presenting one of the 2018 Persons of the Year award (Photo credit by David Medzorian of Ararat Lodge)



Dr. Taner Akcam presenting his book (Photo credit by David Medzorian of Ararat Lodge)

One of highlights of the Grand Convocation social events was dinner and dancing at the Henry Ford Museum among the historical and interesting collection of the museum. Armenian music was provided by the All-Star Armenian Band: Richard Hagopian, Hachig Kazarian, Mal Barsamian and Vaughn Masropian and DJ M-Kay who inspired guests to dance throughout the night. Guests enjoyed traditional Armenian dancing including Detroit's "Michigan Hop" and others.

The closing event of the Centennial Grand Convocation was



Knights and Daughters of Vartan group at Motown Museum (Photo credit by David Medzorian of Ararat Lodge)

the Gala Banquet with Knights and Daughters present as well as many other guests who enjoyed the beautiful dances performed by the Detroit Hamazkayin Dance Group and the breath taking music of violinist Harry Hovakimian.

Program) to benefit needy children in Tavush; the Armenian Schools Support Project in Armenia in partnership with the World Bank; grants from the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies; and the Annual Times Square Armenian Genocide Commemoration in New York.

Under the leadership of the Knights of Vartan, Grand Commander, Dr. Gary Zamanigian of Bloomfield Hills, MI and Daughters of Vartan Grand Matron, Diana Tookmanian of Pasadena, a successful year of service has been completed. The Grand Commander Dr. Zamanigian commented, "During the meetings, the Knights of Vartan once again voted to continue to support vital projects in Armenia and the United States confirming the finest characteristics of Knighthood". Merit awards were presented to Gomidas Lodge, San Diego, Vahan Lodge, Orange County, Ani Lodge, Washington DC, Mamigonian Lodge, New York, and Yeprad Lodge, Fresno.

After being hired in July 2017, the Liaison of Knights of Vartan Communications Office in Yerevan, Gohar Palyan, was present at the 100th Grand Convocation and provided her annual report which consisted of tasks managed at the Communication Office as well as suggestions on future projects. During her trip to US she also visited Knights and Daughters of Vartan Lodges on the East and West Coasts.

The Knights and Daughters of Vartan have always tried to encourage Armenians in leadership positions and honor them for the worthy deeds they have implemented throughout the past year both in and outside of Armenian communities. During the Grand Convocation for their exceptional work, the Knights of Vartan recognized Garo Paylan, as one of two 2018 Persons of the Year. Paylan is a Turkish-Armenian member of parliament representing the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). He became one of the first Armenian members of Turkey's parliament in decades. After he was elected, Garo Paylan vowed to fight against Armenian Genocide denial and that the Armenian Genocide be acknowledged in Turkey. In April 2016, during a speech in parliament he made concerning the 101st anniversary

and perpetuating the Armenian heritage and cultural traditions. Its membership represents the spectrum of the leadership of the Armenian community. It was founded in 1916 in Philadelphia and is based the United States with 25 local chapters which support Armenian causes around the world.

The Daughters of Vartan is an Armenian Sisterhood associated with the Knights of Vartan. It was organized in 1933 in Philadelphia. The Daughters of Vartan is an organization of women whose members are committed to the intellectual, personal and leadership development of Armenian women and families around the world, while also promoting Armenian heritage and Christian values through its 19 chapters across the US.



Dr. Mary A. Papazian receiving the Knights of Vartan 2018 Woman of the Year Award from Grand Matron Ms. Diana Tookmanian (Photo credit by David Medzorian of Ararat Lodge)

Arts & Living

YMCA Features Armenian National Institute Exhibit On American Humanitarians During First Republic of Armenia

WASHINGTON – The YMCA welcomed the April release of the special digital exhibit issued by the Armenian National Institute (ANI) exploring the role of two exceptional individuals, who volunteered to stay in Armenia during the critical year of 1918 when fellow American relief workers were withdrawn in view of the intensification of warfare in the region.

The ANI exhibit profiles the two Americans, John Elder and James O. Arroll, sent to Armenia by the YMCA, and explains their numerous contributions towards relieving the humanitarian crisis in April and May 1918 when the armed forces of Ottoman Turkey invaded the country. Based on John Elder's photographs and testimony, as well as additional material from the YMCA Archives, the exhibit pays tribute to the extraordinary efforts of these two men, whose achievements were widely recognized at the time.

Ryan Bean, Reference and Outreach Archivist at the YMCA Archives, who supported the project, remarked: "The Armenian National Institute has done a fantastic job telling this story. It is both tragic and heartbreaking on the one hand, and inspiring and humbling on the other. The timeliness of this exhibit is very appropriate, and I believe we could all learn a lesson from Elder and Arroll."

In its April 24 posting on its Facebook page, where the exhibit could be viewed, the YMCA Archives extends "Congratulations to Dr. Rouben Adalian and the Armenian National Institute on the release of the digital exhibit 'The Critical Role of the YMCA and American Relief in Armenia a Century Ago.' This exhibit both illuminates a tragic humanitarian disaster as well as highlights the capacity of the human spirit to persevere and do good in the face of a seemingly hopeless situation."

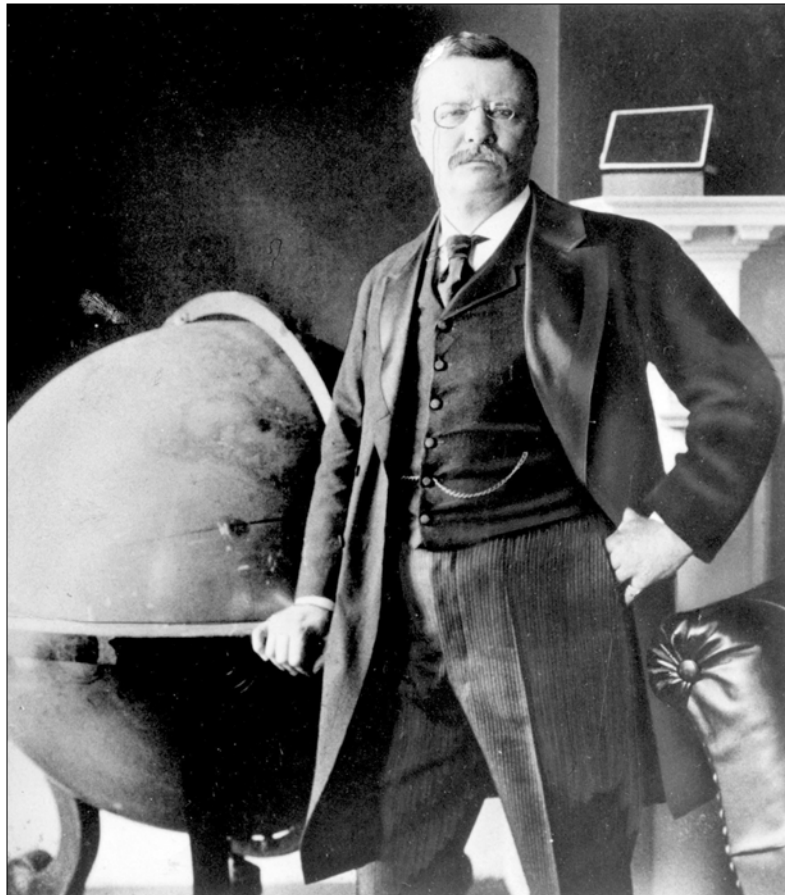
YMCA Europe, which encompasses 43 countries, also highlights the exhibit titled "American Relief in the First Republic of Armenia 1918-1920: John Elder and James Arroll in Yerevan, Gyumri, Sevan & Etchmiadzin," on its website.

Vardan Hambardzumyan, who heads the YMCA in Armenia and presently serves as Executive Secretary of YMCA Europe, wrote that he was "absolutely grateful to ANI for disclosing so eloquently the story of the YMCA in the Republic of Armenia back in 1918."

Elder and Arroll were in Armenia when the critical Battle of Sardarabad was waged in May 1918 securing the independence of the country. Working in Yerevan, Elder and Arroll focused on caring for orphans and refugees. Their contributions were recognized as critical under the circumstances, and their personal heroism, taking the risks that they did by remaining at their posts, was widely appreciated by Armenians. Celebrating their special role, a memorial postcard was issued in Yerevan featuring the two young Americans.

John Elder recorded the hair-raising news from the battlefield in his journal, describing, blow by blow, the major developments of the day. On April 30, he wrote: "Discouraging news from Tills. The British staff preparing to leave. We were advised to leave at once." On May 16, he asked: "Has the end come at last? Official telegrams report that the Turks are bombarding Alexandropol [Gyumri]...The Turks have cut the railroad on both sides of Alexandropol, which means we are cut off from funds." On May 21, he reported: "Alexandropol has fallen. The Turks demand the railroad to Julfa in order to transport their troops, and the Armenians are prepared to give it." Two days later, on May 23, he gloomily wrote: "The storm clouds are rapidly approaching Igdir, only 25 miles away is reported in Turkish hands, so things look desperate."

see YMCA, page 15



Theodore Roosevelt

President Theodore Roosevelt and the Armenians

By Haykaram Nahapetyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WASHINGTON – During his recent trip to Washington, in connection with the Armenian Folklife Festival in the American capital, President Armen Sarkissian of Armenia visited Roosevelt Island. He honored the legacy of the 26th president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909), and his support to the Armenian people during the tragic days of our history.

"The Armenian massacre was the greatest crime of the war...", Roosevelt wrote in a letter to Cleveland Hadley Dodge in May of 1918 after he left the White House and was residing at his house in Oyster Bay, NY. Dodge, along with US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, oversaw the creation of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, later to be renamed Near East Relief.

The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, published by Harvard University Press in the 1950s, included the above-mentioned document. Roosevelt, who was historically known for his energetic and straight forward policy, was against Washington's initial attempts to remain somewhat neutral during World War I. As is well known, even though World War I started in the summer of 1914, the US joined the war later, in April of 1917, first against Germany and later against the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In his aforementioned letter, Roosevelt continued as follows:

"The Armenian horror is an accomplished fact. Its occurrence was largely due to the policy of pacifism this nation has followed for the last four years. The presence of our missionaries, and our failure to go to war, did not prevent the Turks from massacring between half a million and a million Armenians, Syrians, Greeks and Jews – the overwhelmingly majority being Armenians."

In 1900, in his book called *A Strenuous Life*, which technically was a collection of Roosevelt's earlier speeches and essays, he referred to Armenia on several occasions, this time criticizing Europeans for not going into war against the Ottomans. "The great blot upon European international morality in the closing decade of this [i.e. 19th - H.N.] century has been not a war, but the infamous peace kept by the joint action of the great powers, while Turkey inflicted the last horrors of butchery, torture, and outrage upon the men, women, and children of despairing Armenia. War was avoided; peace was kept; but what a peace! Infinitely greater human misery was inflicted during this peace than in the late wars of Germany with France, of Russia with Turkey," Roosevelt wrote referring to the Hamidian massacres of the 1890s.

Interestingly, four years later, during a meeting with the Armenian delegation at the White House, when presidential adviser James Bronson Reynolds (1861-1924) said that "since 1895, more men, women and children have been massacred

see ROOSEVELT, page 13

William Saroyan House-Museum to Have Grand Opening in Fresno

FRESNO – The William Saroyan House-Museum will open to visitors on Friday, August 31, on the 110th anniversary of the birth of the writer. To celebrate this occasion, a grand opening celebration will be held at the Satellite Student Union at Fresno State on August 31. Doors to the Satellite Student Union will open at 6:30 p.m. with an exhibition devoted to Saroyan's life. At 7 p.m. the formal program will begin with a movie about the Saroyan House-Museum project, speakers, and several musical performances. The event will conclude with a reception.

Entrance is free for the grand opening, but registration is required, by going to the website: <http://saroyanhouse.com/> and



clicking on the subscribe button.

In 2016, Arthur Janibekyan, founder of the Renaissance Cultural and Intellectual Foundation, purchased William Saroyan's house, thus saving it from foreclosure. The process of establishing the William Saroyan House-Museum began after that.

Saroyan was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1940, New York Drama Critics' Circle award, and in 1943 won the Academy Award for Best Story for the film adaptation of his novel "The Human Comedy."

The house at 2729 W. Griffith Way, in Fresno, where Saroyan spent the last 17 years of his life, will serve as his permanent address.

The museum is full of interactive and innovative exhibits, thus making it unique in the region. Due to the newest technology, William Saroyan will be "revived" and his hologram will greet visitors.

The House Museum will feature a large digital archive on William Saroyan, including exclusive pictures, examples of his graphic work, and examples from his works.

In addition, according to William Saroyan's will, a research area will be created within the house. This will give an opportunity for students, scholars and other interested individuals to benefit from the vast heritage which William Saroyan left.



A young William Saroyan



ARTS & LIVING

President Theodore Roosevelt and the Armenians

ROOSEVELT, from page 12

in Armenia by the Turkish soldiers and their auxiliaries than were killed on both sides in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870," Roosevelt interrupted him, saying: "You are quoting from my own book: *The Strenuous Life*. It was I who first made that statement." The president was obviously referring to his statement we cited earlier.

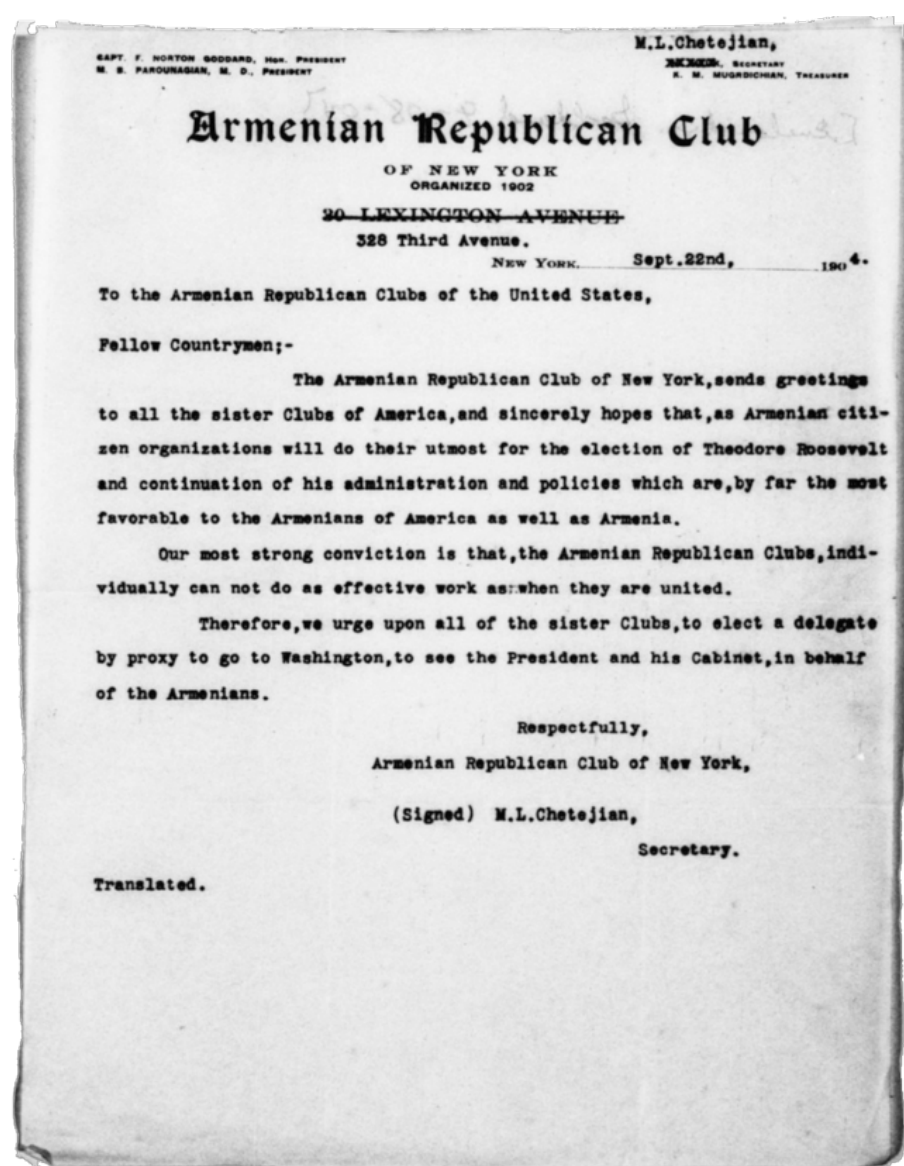
Reynold's presence at this meeting was not accidental: in 1901 he edited a book called *Two Centuries of Christian Activity at Yale*. This publication featured the history of Christianity at a prominent educational establishment, also conveying the stories of overseas missionaries that

far, the most favorable to the Armenians as well as Armenia." Republican Armenians were also planning to send a representative to Washington, DC to meet the President.

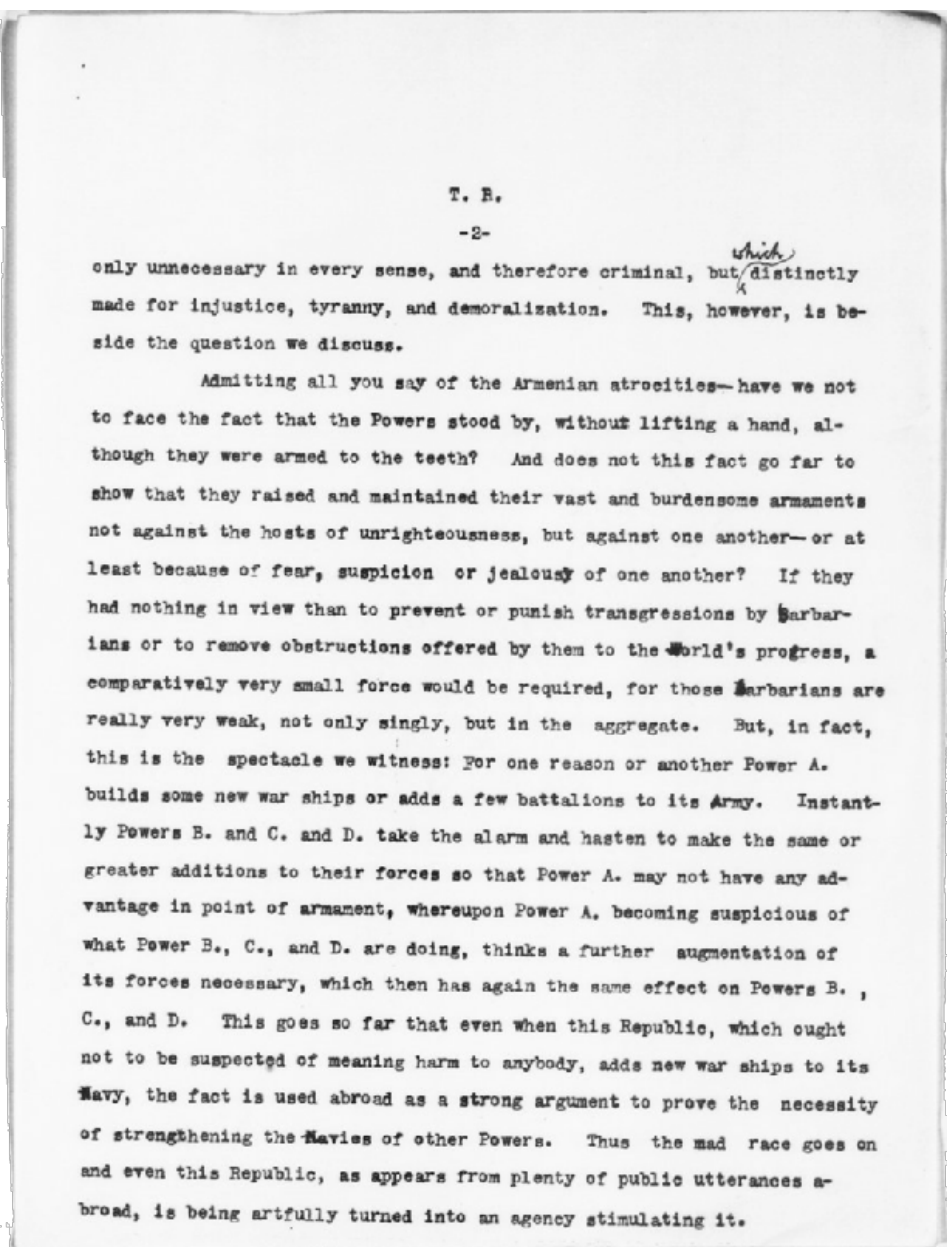
In December 1904, in his State of Union statement, the president mentioned: "In Turkey our difficulties arise less from the way in which our citizens are sometimes treated than from the indignation inevitably excited in seeing such fearful misrule as has been witnessed both in Armenia and Macedonia."

In this important annual address, the president also mentioned that Americans gave expression to their horror on occasion of the massacre of Jews in in the town of Kishinev as well as on the cruelty and oppression of which the Armenians had been the victims.

Following his reelection, Roosevelt received a telegram from the then Catholicos of Armenians Mkrtich Khrimian, known also as Khrimian Hayirk. "I pray Your Excellency accepts my profound respects and heartfelt



Armenian Republican Club call to support Theodore Roosevelt's election as president in 1904 (Theodore Roosevelt Library and Museum, Dickinson State University, North Dakota)



The second page of Carl Schurz's letter to President Roosevelt (Theodore Roosevelt Library and Museum, Dickinson State University, North Dakota)

had graduated from Yale. As the book specified, among the "Yale men on the foreign mission field," several were in Van, Erzerum, Sebastia, Tigranakert and other historic Armenian settlements. Overall, there were 25 Yale-affiliated missionaries in Ottoman Empire, and one American-Armenian — Hovhannes Der Sahagian, was among them. The book also referred to the Hamidian massacres by saying that Rev. Frederick D. Greene, an 1888 graduate from the Faculty of Theology of Yale, "did more than any other man in awakening Gladstone [Prime Minister of the United Kingdom at the end of 19th century — H.N.], and later the world, to the awful needs of the suffers from the Armenian massacres, for whom he raised a fund of \$260,000." In other words, Reynolds, who edited the book, doubtlessly, was aware of Armenian issues. In 1915, Reynolds was the communication official between the Armenian community and Roosevelt.

In September 1904, when he was running for reelection, the New York City-based Armenian Republican Club appealed to fellow Republican Armenians, "hoping that Armenian citizen organizations will do their utmost for the election of Theodore Roosevelt and continuation of his administration and policies which are, by

thanks for the very kind reception accorded to my delegates, the two Archbishops, who were commissioned to plead the cause of the suffering Armenian people in Turkey. I cherish the hope that the powerful voice of Your Excellency's Government will eventually aid in bringing peace and justice to the people of unfortunate Armenia," Catholicos Khrimian wrote. As the message implies, President had met high-ranking Armenian members of the clergy in Washington earlier.

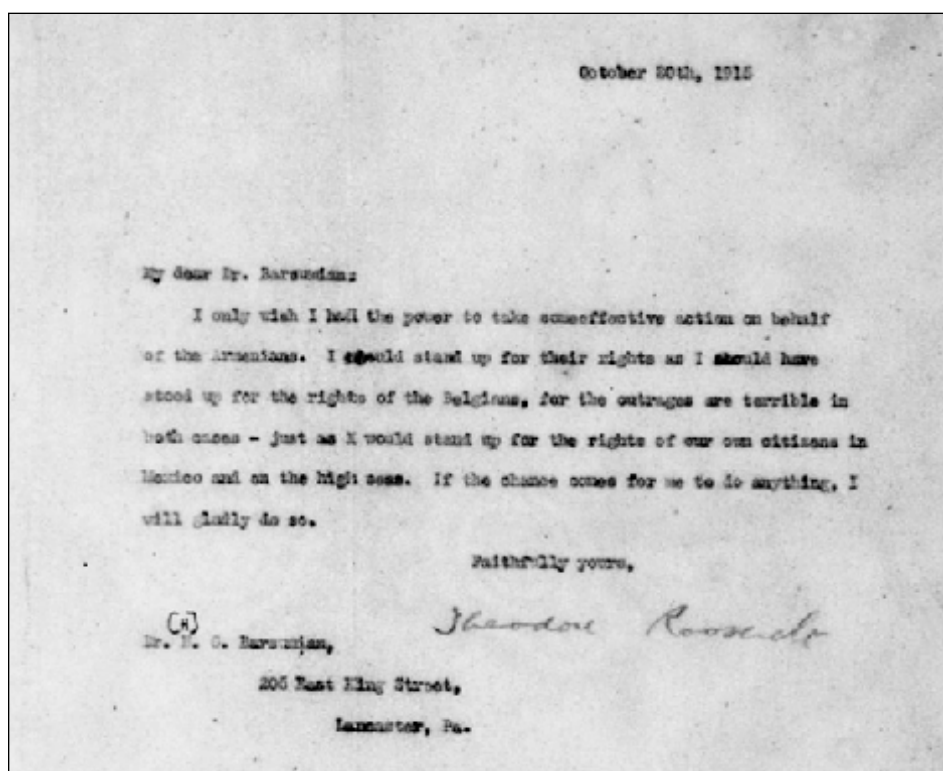
US Sen. Carl Schurz is known for his saying, "My country right or wrong; if right to be kept right, and if wrong, to be set right." After his retirement, Schurz was living in Northwest Bay on Lake George, New York, where in September of 1905 Roosevelt sent a letter in which he raised his concerns in regards to what was happening to the Armenians. This time, Christians were being attacked in the Caucasus by local Muslims, later to be known as Azerbaijanis. On September 14, Schurz got back to the president saying, "admitting all you say of the Armenian atrocities — have we not to face the fact that the Powers stood by without lifting a hand, although they were armed to the teeth?"

In September 1915, when the Armenian Genocide was in process, in a letter to Philadelphia-based Armenian community

activist Dr. Barsoumian, the by now former-president Roosevelt mentioned that he wished he had the power to take some effective action on behalf of the Armenians. He developed his perspective later, in a different message to a Boston-based organization called Armenian National Defense Committee of America: "Gentlemen, I wish could help you, I am horrified and shocked beyond measure at the atrocities committed to the Armenians. If there is anything I can do, I shall always do for you." This document, along with many others, is kept at the Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University, North Dakota.

Roosevelt wrote in his correspondence shortly before his death: "I am doing everything I can, and shall continue to do everything I can for the Armenians."

In 2015, the American Political Science Association ranked Roosevelt as the fourth greatest American president, leaving only Lincoln, Washington and Roosevelt's nephew Franklin Delano Roosevelt ahead of him. The New York Times's Presidential Greatness Ranking from February 2018 confirmed these results. In the 1920s, Roosevelt was chosen to appear on Mount Rushmore, California as one of four iconic American presidents.



Theodore Roosevelt letter to Dr. Barsoumian, 1915 (Theodore Roosevelt Library and Museum, Dickinson State University, North Dakota)

According to other sources, Roosevelt was knowledgeable on Armenian history. In 1912, during an interview granted to Armenian students he said: "I want Armenians to be able to bear arms just as they did in the days of King Tigranes, so that in the next generation no one can say that the Christian population of Turkey cannot fight."

According to another bit of research,

One of America's greatest presidents supported Armenians and the righteousness of the Armenian case, so it was completely fitting that the current president of Armenia, Armen Sarkissian, visited Roosevelt Island and laid a wreath at the former's monument to show his respect and gratitude.

(See a video on www.mirrormirror.com about the visit.)

MRT Premieres Reading of Play about Armenian Writer, Activist, and Feminist Zabel Yessayan

LOWELL, Mass. – Merrimack Repertory Theatre (MRT) presents the world premiere reading of “Zabel in Exile” by R. N. Sandberg, a play about the extraordinary life of Armenian writer, political activist, and feminist Zabel Yessayan, at 4 p.m. on Sunday, August 12, at the Nancy L. Donahue Theatre, 50 E. Merrimack St.

Megan Sandberg-Zakian, who won the IRNE Award for Best Director for “The Royale” at MRT last season, directs.

Zabel Yessayan harnessed the power of the pen to fight for equality and peace and often found herself at odds with the authorities in the tumultuous world of early 20th-century Europe. The play takes place while she is interrogated by the Soviets for espionage during Stalin’s purges. As she fights to survive, Yessayan must come to terms with the whole of her life and the impact of her writings and actions.

Playwright Sandberg said, “Yessayan’s writing always stirs the senses and, frequently, tears at one’s heart. Her life was an inspiration for facing bullying, brutality, and dislocation with unwavering compassion.” Sandberg’s works have appeared at American Repertory Theatre, McCarter Theatre, and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

The play is partly based on Yessayan’s book *In the Ruins*, which is her eyewitness testimony of the 1909 massacres of Armenians in Adana, Turkey, and her memoir, *The Gardens of Silihdar*. Other works include her novels *My Soul in Exile* and *In the Waiting Room*, which confront the isolation and alienation faced by women.

A co-founder of Maia Directors, a consulting group for artists and organizations

engaging with stories from the Middle East and beyond, director Sandberg-Zakian said, “Though she witnessed some of the worst atrocities of the 20th century throughout her life, she continued to think and write with fierce compassion, not only for her own people, but for all people.”

As a recipient of the prestigious Princess Grace Theater Award, Sandberg-Zakian served as director-in-residence for the MRT 2017/18 Season. In addition to “The Royale,” she directed Eleanor Burgess’

“Chill” at MRT. Other recent credits include Nathan Alan Davis’s “Nat Turner in Jerusalem” at New York Theatre Workshop and Dominique Morisseau’s “Skeleton Crew” at the Huntington Theatre Company.

Celebrating its 40th Anniversary Season, MRT, the only professional theatre in the Merrimack Valley, is an integral part of Lowell’s identity as the cultural heart of the region. MRT’s mission is to share theatrical stories of human understanding that reflect and engage our community. Under the lead-

ership of Artistic Director Sean Daniels and Executive Director Bonnie J. Butkas, the company is known as a leader in producing new plays, especially world and regional premieres.

RSVP for the free reading at www.mrt.org. MRT presents Judith Saryan’s commission of “Zabel in Exile” in partnership with the Armenian International Women’s Association, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, and the Armenian Museum of America.



Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

Grilled Eggplant, Tomato and Cheese Salad



Zabel Yessayan as a young woman



Zabel Yessayan later in life

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 pounds eggplant, cut into (1/2-inch-thick) slices (about 2 medium)
- 5 Roma or medium tomatoes, cut into 1/4-inch slices or 12 cherry tomatoes halved
- 4 medium red, yellow, green or mixed bell peppers, cut into thick slices or wedges
- 3/4 pound Jack or Mozzarella cheese, cut in 1/4-inch slices or wedges*
- 1 large red onion, sliced thickly
- 1 medium head Romaine or red leaf lettuce, washed and separated, or choice of arugula, Belgian endive, kale, butter lettuce or spinach
- 1 cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves
- 1/2 cup chopped flat leaf parsley
- 1/2 cup black or Kalamata olives, sliced or diced
- 1 small bunch green onions, washed and chopped
- Sea or Kosher salt, black pepper, red pepper, crushed red pepper flakes
- Sprigs of fresh mint and fresh lemon wedges
- 1/4 cup toasted pine nuts, optional
- 1/4 cup garbanzo beans, washed and drained, optional

PREPARATION

Arrange eggplant slices on a rack set over a large tray and sprinkle both sides with salt. Let drain for about one hour, turning once. Pat eggplant slices dry and wipe with paper towels.

Brush eggplant with Garlic Lemon Vinaigrette and place on an oiled rack to grill. Grill for 5-6 minutes and turn and grill for 5-6 minutes or until eggplant is tender and browned. Remove from grill to a plate. Grill bell peppers and onions until lightly browned and remove to a plate.

Line a tray or platter with choice of lettuce or spinach and alternately layer eggplant, tomatoes, bell pepper, onions, and cheese. Garnish with basil leaves, parsley, green onions, olives and sprigs of mint, and sprinkle with salt, pepper, red pepper, and crushed red pepper flakes. Drizzle salad with Garlic Lemon Vinaigrette or fresh tomato sauce and top with toasted pine nuts or garbanzo beans, if desired.

Serve with a rustic French, garlic or pita bread and fresh lemon wedges.
Serves 6.

GARLIC LEMON VINAIGRETTE

- 3/4 cup olive oil
- 4-5 tablespoons red wine or balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 3 large cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon zest
- Sea or Kosher salt and black pepper

Minced parsley and/or snipped fresh chives to taste

Place mustard in a medium bowl and whisk in vinegar, garlic, lemon juice, sugar, lemon zest, salt, pepper and herbs to taste. Slowly add olive oil and continue to whisk until mixture thickens. Taste and adjust seasonings. Cover and chill until ready to use. This vinaigrette is best made just before it is to be used. Whisk again before serving. Makes about one cup.

*Instead of using Jack or Mozzarella cheese for this recipe, you can top salad with crumbled Feta or blue cheese, if desired.

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





ARTS & LIVING

Dr. Helen Evans Appointed Nikit and Eleanora Ordjanian Visiting Professor at Columbia for Fall Semester

NEW YORK – Dr. Helen Evans, the Mary and Michael Jaharis Curator for Byzantine Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has been appointed the Nikit and Eleanora Ordjanian Visiting Professor in the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies at Columbia University for Fall 2018. She will be teaching a course titled “Origins of Armenian Art: Creating An Identity,” which will be oriented around the Metropolitan Museum’s upcoming major exhibition “Armenia!”

The exhibition, which will feature more than 140 objects, most of which will be on view in the United States for the first time, was organized by Evans. It will open on September 22 and run through January 13, 2019, and will explore the arts and culture of the Armenians from their conversion to Christianity in the early 4th century through their leading role on international trade routes in the 17th century. The course will use the works in the exhibition to examine how a tradition of Armenian art came to be defined, its character and its connections to the arts of other cultures.

This seminar style course (MDES GU4347, Section 001, Call # 23800) will be taught on Fridays from 10:10 a.m. – 12 p.m. at the Metropolitan Museum and is open to auditors as well as matriculating students. Registration for auditors begins on August 25 and classes begin on September 5.

In addition to the course, Evans will be a lecturer at the Metropolitan Museum, as part of the MetSpeaks series, on October 18 at 6:30 pm, in the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium, on the expansion of Armenian art and culture from the 4th century near Mt. Ararat westward through the 17th century to the newly established towns, monasteries and kingdoms reaching the Mediterranean. Tickets for the lecture start at \$30 and can be obtained by going online at www.metmuseum.org/tickets.

Evans received her PhD from New York University’s Institute of Fine Arts. She co-curated the previous blockbuster exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum, “The Glory of Byzantium,” and co-edited the accompanying book. In addition, she co-curated the Morgan Library’s exhibition, “Treasures In Heaven: Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts From American Collections.” She has taught, lectured and published widely on Armenian art and has been a previous Nikit and Eleanora Ordjanian Visiting Professor at Columbia University in 2000, 2007 and 2014.

The Ordjanian Visiting Professorship program at Columbia is made possible by an endowment established by the late Dr. Nikit and Eleanora Ordjanian in 1988. Previous Ordjanian Visiting Professors have included Levon Abrahamian, Vardan Azatyan, Peter Balakian, Melissa Bilal, George Bournoutian, Seta Dadoyan, Roberta Ervine, Rachel Goshgarian, Arman Grigoryan, Robert Hewsen, Armen Marsoobian, Khatchig Mouradian, Ara Sarafian and Khachig Tololyan.

The Ordjanian Visiting Professorship is one of several programs of the Armenian Center at Columbia, the organization that raised the initial funds to establish a Chair of Armenian Studies at Columbia in 1979 and which continues to provide funds for schol-



One of the tapestries at the exhibit



Dr. Helen Evans

arships, library acquisitions, academic publications, lectures, conferences and symposia.

There will be a full-day symposium in conjunction with the “Armenia!” exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum on November 3 which will begin at 10:30 a.m. The symposium will be free of charge and open to the public. More information about the symposium and reservation forms will be forthcoming and will be available on the Metropolitan Museum’s website at www.metmuseum.org.

YMCA Features Armenian National Institute Exhibit on American Humanitarians During First Republic of Armenia

YMCA, from page 12

On May 26, he jotted down a different kind of news: “Well you never can tell what may happen. Just as the end seems at hand the pendulum swings the other way and the terrible Turk is in full retreat...After a two day battle at Sardarabad the Turks have been completely routed.”

With the establishment of peace, Elder witnessed the momentous event of the restoration of government, which he appreciated for its historic importance, recording on August 11: “I had the thrill of attending the opening session

described in detail in the exhibit, John Elder received a letter from John R. Mott, General Secretary of the International Committee of the YMCA in New York, applauding his outstanding record of service and expressing concern for his well-being. The letter begins with reference to Dr. Clarence D. Ussher “testifying to the very high value of the service which you have rendered in Armenia.” The story of Dr. Ussher was covered in a digital exhibit previously issued by ANI under the title “The First Refuge and the Last Defense: The Armenian



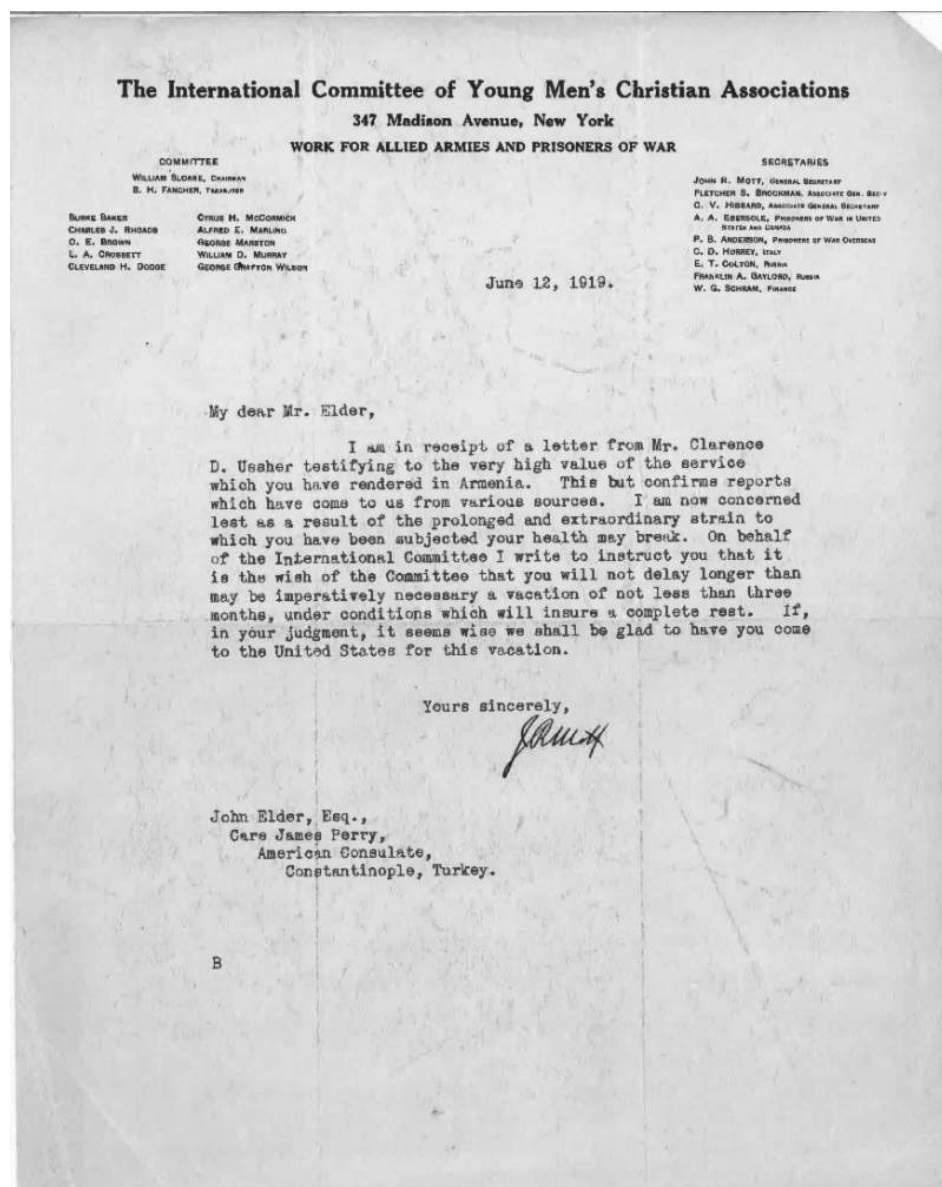
James O. Arroll (left) and John Elder (right)

of the Parliament of the Republic of Armenia. What an exciting time it was. A free and independent Armenia for the first time in 600 years or more! There was a great crowd present, and through an interpreter I gave an address of congratulations on the historic occasion.”

After more than a year of strenuous effort,

Church, Echmiadzin, and the Armenian Genocide.”

All of the digital exhibits posted on the ANI website are freely downloadable, and are provided to the public in high resolution to be readily printable anytime and anywhere from standard-size up to poster-size.



The letter from the YMCA to Arroll and Elder



ARTS & LIVING

C A L E N D A R

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

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

AUGUST 26 — Armenian Church at Hye Pointe Picnic, 12 to 5 p.m., to be held at our new Family Life & Cultural Center, 1280 Boston Road (RTE. 125) Haverhill. Music by the fabulous Jason Naroian Ensemble. Menu includes Lamb Shish, Losh, & Chicken Kebab Dinners, Kheyma, Pastries, & Beverages. Raffles for Cash Prizes & Gift Certificates. Air Conditioned Hall. Bring your lawn chairs for sitting outside. For more info visit www.hye-pointearmenianchurch.org or call (978) 372-9227. Take RTE. 495 N to exit 48, bear right at the end of the ramp and follow the signs. Additional parking at Osgood Landing, 1600 Osgood Street, North Andover, with free shuttle bus to the picnic grounds.

SEPTEMBER 9 — Trinity Family Festival, 12-5 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Sunday. Delicious Armenian food — shish, losh, and chicken kebab — paklava, khadaif, and more with take-out available. Armenian music for your listening and dancing pleasure featuring The Greg Krikorian Ensemble with Greg Krikorian, oud and vocals; Mark Der Mugrditchian, clarinet; Kevin Magarian, guitar and vocals; Charles Dermenjian, dumbeg; and Seve Surabian, tambourine. Lots of activities for children including the Moonwalk. Blessing of the Madagh at 4 p.m., followed by raffle drawing for cash prizes. For further information,

log onto www.htaac.org/calendar/event/575/, contact the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632, or email office@htaac.org.

SEPTEMBER 10 — Holy Trinity Men’s Union welcomes Boston Celtics’ Great Sam Jones, Monday, 6 p.m., Social Hour, 7 p.m., Dinner. Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge MA. Everyone Welcome for this unique opportunity to meet a Boston sports legend. Book signing following talk. Donation for losh kebab and kheyma dinner: \$15 per person. RSVP required, call the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632, or email tmuhtaac@gmail.com. For further information, log onto www.htaac.org/calendar/event/584/.

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 4 — Celebrating the Life and Work of Diana Der Hovanessian, Organized by the Armenian Cultural Foundation and co-sponsored by Amaras Art Alliance, Armenian General Benevolent Union-New England, Armenian International Women’s Association, Hamazkaine-Boston, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, New England Poetry Club, Tekeyan Cultural Association. Sunday, November 4, at 4 p.m. Armenian Cultural Foundation, 441 Mystic Street (Route 3) , Arlington.

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

SEPTEMBER 21 — St. James Hye Café. Join us for delicious food and fellowship! Kebab, Falafel, Imam Bayeldi, and more. Doors open at 6:15pm. For more information visit www.stjameswatertown.org. St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown.

SEPTEMBER 23 — “Lights, Camera, Stories!” An evening with award-winning filmmaker Bared Maronian, Sunday, 5 p.m. Take 1) Screening of Women of 1915; Take 2) Exclusive footage of Armenia’s recent Velvet Revolution; Take 3) Reveal of Bared’s Titanic Love. Co-sponsored by AIWA & AWWA, proceeds to benefit the Women’s Support Center in Yerevan, and Hanganak Elderly Clinic in Stepanakert. Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library, 33 Marrett Rd., Lexington. Tickets: \$75 - Reception to follow.

OCTOBER 12-13 — St. James 71st Annual Bazaar. Delicious Armenian Food and Pastries. Silent Auction, Attic Treasures, Booths and Vendors. Raffles, Children’s Activities, and more. Details to follow. St. James

Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown. For more information contact 617.923.8860 or info@sthagop.com or visit www.stjameswatertown.org.

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.

DECEMBER 16 – Candlelit Labyrinth Peace Walk, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston, Sunday, 4:30-5:30 p.m., Walk the Candlelit Labyrinth. Tie a Ribbon on the Wishing Tree. Hot Chocolate & Desserts, hosted by The Bostonian Hotel . RSVP appreciated hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

SEPTEMBER 18, 2019 – SAVE THE DATE! InterContinental Hotel, Boston. Extraordinary Benefit for Armenian Heritage Park’s Endowed Fund for Care

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

WASHINGTON, D.C.

SEPTEMBER 24-25 — Armenian Assembly of America’s National Advocacy Conference will take place in Washington, D.C. Join us on Monday for the conference and welcome reception, and on Tuesday for the advocacy day on Capitol Hill, cocktail reception, and gala honoring Annie Simonian Totah. Special hotel rates are available at the Marriott Marquis. Visit www.aimhye.com for tickets and more information.

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.

Honoring Memory of Zabel Yessayan in Yerevan Awards Ceremony

YEREVAN — At this year’s “International Young Women’s Peace Award” ceremony organized by the NGO “Democracy Today,” Zabel Yessayan was featured for her role as a social and human rights activist and author (1878-1943).



This year women activists and journalists (and a few men) from 20 countries — Armenia, Georgia, North Caucasus (Karabakh, Ossetia, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Chechnya), Russia, Ukraine, Cyprus, Iraq, Syria, Poland, France, Italy, Germany, Burma (Rohinga), Colombia, Israel-Palestine — participated in the program. Above are some of the award winners.



The French Ambassador, Jonathan Lacôte, also spoke at the ceremony about Zabel Yessayan and her legacy in France. Yessayan studied and wrote while at the Sorbonne in Paris. In 2017, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo rename an alley in honor of Yessayan.

Judith Saryan gave the opening address outlining the important work Yessayan accomplished throughout her lifetime. She is quoted as saying, “Literature is not an ornament, a pleasant pastime, a pretty flower. Literature is a weapon to struggle against injustice.”

The French Ambassador, Jonathan Lacôte, also paid tribute to Yessayan and her legacy in France at the awards ceremony. Yessayan studied and wrote while at the Sorbonne in Paris and in 2017, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo renamed an alley in honor of

Yessayan.

The winners of this year’s award are: Human rights activist Khin Omar (Burma), photo-journalist Adriane Ohanesyan (US), and human rights activist Mine Balman (Cyprus) were awarded for their exceptional work in the field of peace and human rights.

Yessayan is quoted as saying, “Literature is not an ornament, a pleasant pastime, a pretty flower. Literature is a weapon to struggle against injustice.”

During the event the special diplomas were awarded to Catherine Herzog (Belgium) received a special diploma “For outstanding work in the field of peace and human rights education.” Journalist Taus Serganiov (Chechnya) also received a diploma “for human rights and peace journalism.” And the final special diploma was awarded to the EVN Report (Armenia), who as “women journalists have contributed to democracy and human rights.”



Judith Saryan gave an inspiring opening address outlining the important work Zabel Yessayan accomplished throughout her lifetime at the Seventh International Young Women’s Peace Award Ceremony sponsored by Democracy Today.



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

From Panik to Panic

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Many people cannot locate the village of Panik in the Shirak Region of Armenia. It is a small community on the outskirts of Gyumri, where Russia's 102nd military base is located. A seemingly insignificant incident brought to a head an uneasy situation that had been brewing for some time between Armenia and Russia.

The village of Panik almost overnight became a mini-Sarajevo with global ramifications.

On July 17, the nearby air base decided to hold unannounced military exercises, frightening the residents of villages in the vicinity. Although the commander of the base issued an apology to the population of the area, it seems that it was not enough for the government of Armenia, which raised the issue, with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan characterizing the incident as a violation of Armenia's sovereignty, in a harsh statement.

Many observers were already suggesting that political tensions between Armenia and Russia were rising. Therefore, the Panik incident proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back. It turned out that an insignificant event became the tip of the iceberg as the divide between Moscow and Armenia was widening.

The exercises were certainly designed to shock by Moscow.

Azerbaijan is not a strategic ally of Russia and it can freely associate with Europe, the US and even with Georgia, Moscow's nemesis in the region, but Russia continues its normal relations with Baku.

But Russia will not tolerate deviance from the political script where Armenia is concerned. In plain terms, Moscow is defining Armenia's role in the region, indirectly messaging that Yerevan must not expect any better treatment than its political clout allows, ally or no ally.

Armenia is in a strange bind as a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) military alliance, two of whose members have close relations with its enemy; Armenia's strategic allies Russia and Belarus have been supplying Azerbaijan with modern armaments and another ally, Kazakhstan, has a historic common cause with Baku as a Turkic nation. Thus, Armenia is ensnared in a cobweb of contradictions as a member of an organization that should make it supposedly feel secure.

Once Armenia began courting Europe, Moscow started to show its irritation. Although there has been no official pronouncement from Kremlin, sources close to the power centers have been extremely critical of Armenia's move, despite assurances from Pashinyan that Armenia will continue to treat Russia as its strategic ally and that there will not be any sudden changes in its foreign policy. That approach leaves open the possibility that gradual changes may be in the offing. And Russia is already anticipating such changes, leading to increased unease towards Armenia.

A political analyst close to the Kremlin circles, Stanislav Tarassov, speaking with the news outlet Regnum, criticized Pashinyan's reaction to the Panik incident as "unfriendly politics." Many other articles have also appeared in the same vein in Lenta.ru, Gazeta.ru and other news outlets.

The Russian media criticism of Pashinyan has shifted from the Panik incident to his visit to NATO headquarters in Brussels. He has also been criticized for Armenia's participation in the upcoming NATO military drills in Georgia.

At the same time, Russia had sent a delegation to Azerbaijan to participate in a forum titled "Azerbaijan is Russia's only strategic ally in the Caucasus."

As if that were not enough, the members of the delegation visited Lele Tepe, the piece of strategic territory which Azerbaijan took from Armenian forces during the surprise

attack of April 2016.

One of the participants of the forum was a fanatical nationalist, Alexander Dugin, who gave an extensive interview to the First News outlet (Arachin Lratvakan) where he made revealing statements on Moscow's anger over Armenia's recent moves. He stated that Serzh Sargsyan had almost agreed to return to Azerbaijan five out of the seven regions under Armenian control and following the Velvet Revolution, that understanding does not seem to be valid any longer, adding, "Azerbaijan's importance to Russia has been enhanced recently, and also Russian-Turkish relations have taken a positive turn."

When asked why he visited the territory occupied recently by Azerbaijan from Armenia, Dugin answered that he considers Lele Tepe part of Azerbaijan and as a matter of fact, all of Karabakh is considered part of Azerbaijan by Moscow. He further encouraged the Armenian side to cede peacefully the five regions seized to Azerbaijan, which in return would yield some economic advantages, along with Baku's good offices to improve relations between Armenia and Turkey and help lift the blockade.

Whatever Armenia agrees to give in terms of territory can only be taken by bloodshed and whatever the Turkish-Azeri side is willing to offer is easily reversible.

In fairness, Russian concerns are there for a reason. Armenia is not only giving subtle signals about its foreign policy shift, but some analysts close to Pashinyan's administration have also been verbalizing that policy shift to make it audible to Moscow.

For instance, an analyst, Garnik Gevorgyan, writing in the First News outlet, made the following statement: "Russians understand that as a result of the Velvet Revolution, Armenia will move out of the Russian zone of influence gradually, not abruptly. And then there will come a time when Armenia will question the existence of Russian military presence on its soil, or at least will renegotiate the terms of stationing its forces there."

Anticipating those developments, Moscow has signaled that a similar move will cost Armenia a painful outcome in dealing with the Karabakh conflict.

At this time, Moscow's intention is to move the stalemate and implement the plan for Karabakh devised by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. Unlike the Madrid formula, the Lavrov plan foresees the return of five regions to Azerbaijan and as a security guarantee, station peace keeping forces between two opposing forces and those forces will come from the Eurasian Union or CSTO, extending Russian military presence along the Iran in border.

As we can see, Armenia is caught in between the power play of world politics; the West, by enticing Armenia to its side intends to curtail Russian presence in the region, while Russia, using the Karabakh card, tries to even expand its influence in the Caucasus.

Armenians are excited that Europe and the West will enhance democratic rule and offer higher stands of living. The system in Russia and its immediate allies are fraught with incurable corruption. As long as Armenia remains captive in that zone of influence, democracy may not take root.

But on the other hand, Armenia's place in the European or Western political system cannot be any better than the status of Greece in the NATO structure, where Greece is always the underdog, whenever European powers need to choose between the interests of Athens or Ankara.

Armenia's road towards Europe is not covered with roses. Russia will not help Armenia in solving the Karabakh conflict but it will not also allow Armenia to move towards the West freely, compromising its military assets in the Caucasus.

The impending crisis began with military exercises in Panik but as we can see, it is growing into a panic of global magnitude.



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COMMENTARY

Remembering Fr. Dajad, Our Pastor

By Michael Zeytoonian

LIKE THOUSANDS OF OTHERS here in Massachusetts, around the country and the world, my life pauses this week to remember and honor the memory of Fr. Dajad Davidian, the pastor of my youth and longtime friend and mentor, who passed away on July 14. If we are fortunate enough, sometimes our lives cross paths with someone extraordinary, who by being the person he or she is, helps shape the kind of person we become, helps crystalize the “why” we do what we do in our lives and in our careers and the way we do it. I would not have become the kind of lawyer and conflict resolution advocate I am today if not for the influence of my pastor during my teen, college years and adult life. While there were countless memories of how profoundly he influenced me – along with thousands of others he touched – a few are shared here. I’m certain that no matter what we chose to do with our lives, in some way, Der Dajad contributed to the way we do it, transforming it to higher and deeper level of serving others.

Fr. Dajad was my priest in Watertown, at St. James Armenian Church at a critical time in my life, from age 15 through graduate school. In my adulthood, he was my friend, counselor and mentor. After he “retired” in 1999, after 30 years as pastor at St. James, he served people’s needs by going to Armenia every year for months at a time, leading youth groups, counseling young people, leading Bible study and prayer groups in Armenia, and just doing what he did best – being there, in the moment, for people – up until the last week of his life. I am proud and feel blessed to be able to call him “my pastor.”

When people think about what goes into the training of a lawyer and a mediator – or for that matter any profession – the contribution of one’s pastor is probably not on the list of ingredients. There’s college, law school, training and direction from veteran lawyers, reading laws and court decisions and continuing legal education, all shaping the legal mind. But that technical training has little to do with the soul of the lawyer, the care, attention, compassion and service that a lawyer – or any service providing profession – gives to our

clients and those we touch. That is where a pastor like Fr. Dajad comes in and fills a huge void. What he gave us, you can’t get from any law books or law school training.

Fr. Dajad, born in Worcester (1934) was one of the first American-born priests to serve in the Armenian Church. Among his gifts were the ability to relate to everyone, from the smallest child to those in their last years, and everyone in between. He was a rare man who could balance being a brilliant mind – well-read and conversant on any subject – with being able to humbly sit down with any person or group, just be there as one of us, and also counsel us when we sought out his good counsel. Most clergy, parishioners and people that knew him agreed that Fr. Dajad was the gold standard for what a pastor in an ethnic, traditional Christian Church in America should be. In 50 years, I have not heard a better preacher in the entire Orthodox Church, and I have not seen a better pastor in my lifetime.

One great quality he modeled for us was always being centered and grounded, totally comfortable with who he was, never needing to put on any airs about who he wasn’t, and able to relate to and respect all types of people. To his last days, he lived life on his own terms, always serving others. Those of us that were lucky enough to pick this quality up from him know its value in any chosen profession – for me as a mediator or lawyer. He was someone who was perfectly at ease being one of the guys hanging out talking about the Red Sox, Celtics or Patriots, what the editorial page writers and columnists had to say in the morning’s *Boston Globe*, quoting

[FR. DAJAD] COULD EASILY CONNECT THE DOTS FROM THE SIMPLE YET PROFOUND TEACHINGS OF JESUS TO ST. AUGUSTINE TO A WRITING OF AN OBSCURE ARMENIAN CHURCH FATHER TO “WHY IS ALL THAT IMPORTANT TO 17 YEAR OLD ME TODAY, HERE?”

a high-level economist or theologian, and offering his opinion that Congressman Barney Frank was right about some political issue. The beauty of this was that he could do it in the same conversation, shifting gears seamlessly, and keep everyone engaged! Who does that?

Picture this scene: I can easily imagine my pastor causally sitting down at a coffee house, pub or a picnic table, joining an ongoing conversation with (then House Speaker) Tip O’Neill, (columnist) Mike Barnacle, (psychologist) Amos Tversky, (songwriters) Dave Matthews and Alanis Morissette, (writers) Bill Reilly and William Saroyan and (sportswriters) Frank Deford and Karen Guregian, along with a couple of guys that happen to be sitting at the bar, and a homeless panhandler, all at the same time! The human glue and junction of the group would have been Fr. Dajad, who could easily connect with each of them. A conversation for the ages!

My pastor was a man who could listen with empathy, give you his support, guidance and love, and also subtly challenge your thinking, get you to improve yourself and move you out of your comfort zone – especially when it came to the important issues of our lives. During Lent each year, he would gather the teenagers in the church chancel one evening a week –

and none of us wanted to miss any of these sessions – sit on the floor and have “Lenten Dialogues” in which we discussed all kinds of life issues, and in which he offered us teachings from Scripture that were right on point, insights from a variety of other sources and challenged us to do better and drill deeper (before drilling deeper was a concept). If you mentioned a story that moved you from Profiles in Courage about Sen. Edmund G. Ross, he would nudge you up a notch and suggest that you read *The Clash of Civilizations* and the *Remaking of World Order*, by Samuel Huntington.

If you commented on something you related to in his Sunday sermon, he would connect it to Scripture (or sports) and throw in something he recently read by theologian Paul Tillich, always showing why those were relevant to our lives. He could easily connect the dots from the simple yet profound teachings of Jesus to St. Augustine to a writing of an obscure Armenian Church father to “why is all that important to 17 year old me today, here?” Then, he would segue that to a political article he read that week in the *Wall Street Journal* or the *New Republic* magazine, and as we are walking out of church after the dialogue, without missing a beat, suggest some basketball advice to me: “You know, you should have driven to the hoop more and taken less jump shots in the past weekend’s church league basketball game. You know your driving inside is a stronger skill than your streaky outside shooting.” (He was right about that, too.)

My pastor didn’t just meet people or know who they were; he listened to us deeply and got to know our lives well. He listened to what you were saying but also heard what you weren’t saying. He gave every person, no matter what one’s station in life, the same level of attention and care. Because he knew us all well and loved us all fully, he could give us a true friend’s comfort as well as a wise man’s advice. It was tough advice to hear sometimes, but we always knew that as much as it came from his vibrant mind

and life experience and was worth thinking about and applying, it also came from a place of love, always from his heart. Applying it to my profession, his was the model for how to actively listen to a client, or parties in mediation.

His teachings, advice on life, modeling a life of serving others and his just being there for people were as much a factor for me to go to Boston College (in part because a priest that reminded me of him – Fr. Robert Drinan, dean of the law school and later a Congressman at the time – was there), to write, starting with the church youth group’s Golden Cross monthly magazine, to later go to seminary and serve the community, later in life to pursue being a lawyer (at the age of 33), and then think about how to better serve others as a lawyer (at the age of 55). The thousands of people he touched, the families we raised, the friendships we engaged in fully, the involvements in our respective faith communities, and the professions through which we have worked to serve others have all benefited from a once in a lifetime gift and blessing: The presence in our lives of this one man, our pastor and friend, Fr. Dajad – back then, now and always.

(Michael Zeytoonian is an attorney in Wellesley, Mass.)

ATP Pays Tribute to the Inspirational Life and Grassroots Work of Fr. Dajad Davidian

WOBURN, Mass. – The Armenian world lost one of its pillars with the passing of Rev. Fr. Dajad Davidian on July 14, 2018. Fr. Dajad served as Pastor of St. James Armenian Church in Watertown from 1969 to 1999, and was known for his faith, eloquence, sense of humor, and down to earth style that endeared him to many.

Fr. Dajad, whose baptismal name was Arthur, was the husband of the late Yeretzgin Rosemarie (Abrahamian) Davidian, father of Ari Davidian, Susan and her husband Joseph Ferro III, and Raymond A. Davidian and his wife Seta. He was the brother of Raymond Davidian and Albert Davidian and his wife Patty.

“Fr. Dajad leaves us all with the eternal inspiration for growth. We are grateful that he has designated Armenia Tree Project as a place that we can now invite people to remember – and also participate – in the thrust of his life’s work,” stated ATP founder Carolyn Mugar.

The Davidian family has requested that in lieu of flower memorial donations be made to St. James Church or to Armenia Tree Project. ATP is exploring various project sites in Armenia that would best reflect Fr. Dajad’s interest in supporting Armenia’s youth and the most disadvantaged populations in rural areas.

“We know there are countless youth he engaged by listening and sharing,” added



Photograph by Winslow Martin

Carolyn Mugar. “We will identify a program that best exemplifies his unique qualities and deeds. We are grieving the loss of such a great friend and committed activist who worked on the ground, with the people.”

Fr. Dajad was present at most of ATP’s events in Armenia, offering a prayer even bringing volunteers along to plant trees. These grassroots actions were an expression of renewal and a belief in the future health and well-being of Armenia. “We consider this offering from Fr. Dajad as a sacred trust to carry out his work of inspiring people to become engaged citizens,” concluded Mugar.



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Azerbaijan Organizes its Own Diaspora To Compete With the Armenian Diaspora

For many decades, the Turkish government has had an inflated image of the Armenian Diaspora, describing it as a giant worldwide force. In recent years, Azerbaijan has been infected with the same fear of the global Armenian Diaspora. Pres. Ilham Aliyev has described the ‘Armenian lobby’ as the greatest enemy of Azerbaijan. Consequently, the Azeri leaders have started pouring massive resources into the formation of their own diaspora in various countries as a counterpart to the “powerful Armenian lobby.”

Ironically, while the Armenian government is making plans for the repatriation of Armenians from overseas, Azerbaijan is trying to do the exact opposite by encouraging Azeris to move to formerly Soviet countries, Europe and the United States in order to enlarge its Diaspora.

Nazim Ibrahimov, Chairman of Azerbaijan’s State Committee for Work with the Diaspora, recently announced that “the establishment of coordination centers for world Azerbaijanis continues and that this affair is one of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s priorities.... The state of Azerbaijan has created massive financial conditions for this.

Upon the president’s orders, we offer support to our diaspora organizations around the world. On account of this

activity, the Azerbaijani diaspora not only responds to the Armenian lobby decently, but also overpowers them at times.”

Last year, Sergey Rumantsev, a graduate of Baku State University, wrote an article in the OpenDemocracy.net website, titled: “Long Live the Azerbaijani Diaspora,” stating that “Baku is going to great lengths to mobilize, or even create, an international Azerbaijani diaspora.” The main purpose of the Azeri Diaspora is to counter Armenians in the Karabagh (Artsakh) conflict. Azeri leaders view the Armenian Diaspora “as immensely influential and strongly united in solidarity,” hence, “for Azerbaijan’s ruling Aliyev regime, a diaspora is synonymous with an overseas political lobby.”

Azeris have such an exaggerated view of the Armenian Diaspora that when the Russian Supreme Court decided to annul the registration of the All-Russian Azerbaijani Congress last year, “many [Azeri] commentators rushed to conclusions about Armenian plots and intrigues,” Rumantsev wrote. The truth is that the Azeri organization had violated Russian laws. Armenians had nothing to do with its closing.

Azeri authorities were so impressed by the Armenian Diaspora’s political clout that since the early 2000s they “have invested large sums of financial and symbolic capital into this project. They’ve tried to conjure up a diaspora to their liking as quickly as possible.”

It all started when Heydar Aliyev, the father of the current president, was the leader of Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1970’s-80s. He arranged for the education of many Azeri students in universities throughout the Soviet Union and encouraged the relocation of Azeris to various Soviet Republics.

Prior to the Second World Congress of Azerbaijanis, held on March 16, 2016, “the state committee for working with Azerbaijanis abroad produced a documentary film with the telling title, ‘we’re a nation of 50 million,’” Rumantsev wrote. The committee stated that 10 million Azerbaijanis were living in about 70 countries.

Rumantsev asserted that Azeris living overseas are not a coherent group; there is a considerable difference among

Azeri immigrants: “Azeri Diaspora activism is generally limited to quite a small circle of ethnic Azerbaijani businessmen and their family members.”

Rumantsev described the origins of the organizational efforts for Azeris abroad: “In November 2001, Baku held the inaugural World Congress of Azerbaijanis at the initiative of Heydar Aliyev. The following year saw the foundation of the state committee for working with Azerbaijanis abroad—Nazim Ibrahimov was appointed its permanent leader. Its first convention led to the creation of yet another body, the ‘Coordinating Council of World Azerbaijanis’, led by, of course, pan-Azerbaijani president Heydar Aliyev. The success of diaspora-building henceforth came to be measured in how many organizations existed, and how to unify them into one structure.”

The World Congress of Azerbaijanis consists of local/regional bodies, followed by Azeri organizations in various countries and finally by the World Congress which takes its orders directly from the Azeri government.

President Ilham Aliyev proudly told attendees of a recent conference of World Congress of Azerbaijanis: “if we had 336 diaspora organizations five years ago, now we have 416.” At the Fourth World Congress in 2015, “delegates stated that there are now 462 such organizations.”

The few activities Azeris participate in worldwide are represented by Azerbaijan’s official media in an exaggerated fashion, as if a large number of Azeris in Europe or the U.S. are involved in pro-Azerbaijan activities, in support of the Aliyev regime. For example, when Armenia’s President Serzh Sargsyan visited Berlin in 2016, a small number of Azeris held a protest, and sent the following message to Pres. Aliyev: “Mr. President – you have the support of Azerbaijanis across the world!”

Rumantsev concluded his article by stating that the Azerbaijani Diaspora cannot be compared to the classical Diasporas of Armenians, Jews or Greeks. Most Azeri organizations overseas “exist only on paper.”

LETTERS

Knights of Vartan Declare Opposition to Sale or Lease of Diocesan Complex

(The following letter was sent by Knights of Vartan Avak Sbarabed Dr. Gary Zamanigian and Avak Tbrabed Deacon Richard Norsigian to Very Rev. Daniel Findikian, Primate, Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, Eastern.)

Dear Fr. Daniel:

The Brothers of the Knights of Vartan are concerned and strongly oppose the recent efforts to either sell and/or lease all or part of the property of St. Vartan Cathedral Complex in New York City.

Even as a non-church affiliated Christian organization, the Knights of Vartan recognizes the importance of the St. Vartan Cathedral Complex in New York City and is dedicated to its preservation. This complex is recognized both nationally and internationally as a symbol of the survival of all Armenians as Christians, regardless of what church, political affiliation, or even religious persuasion one may or may not have as an Armenian. It is as well of national significance to all Armenians regardless of where they geographically live in the United States.

This holy edifice and its campus is the legacy of both our Genocide Saints who gave their lives and the Genocide survivors. Upon its completion in 1968, it represented, and after 50 years, still represents, the fulfillment of a broad collection of the dreams and aspirations of our forefathers. Historical documents reflect the crucial involvement of the Knights of Vartan in the realization of this Cathedral and Diocesan project, which is also reflected in the Cathedral being named after our namesake, Vartan Mamigonian. This property also needs to be preserved as possible the most valuable single asset of Armenians in the world.

On July 13, 2018, at its annual convocation, the Knights of Vartan, with delegates from throughout the United States and from all churches and political persuasions, unanimously approved the sending of this letter as its formal opposition and objections to the sale and/or lease of any portion of either the land or buildings of the St. Vartan Cathedral and Diocesan Complex in New York City.

Dr. Gary Zamanigian
Deacon Richard Norsigian

Answers Needed from Diocesan Council

To the Editor:

Members of the Armenian Apostolic Church of the US Eastern Diocese deserve a response and explanation from the Eastern Diocesan Council to the disturbing news that St. Vartan Cathedral, home to the Eastern Diocese, is “on its way to purportedly selling its air rights for \$50 million” “which real estate savvy individuals say is well below market value.”

This information appears in a detailed and informative article, “Diaspora Must Do Better in Keeping Institutions” by Taleen Babayan in the 7-21 issue of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*.

– Dorothy Piranian
Boston

Artsakh Karabakh – First Memories

By Raffi Bedrosyan

My first trip to Armenia was not really to Armenia, but to Artsakh, known internationally as Nagorno Karabakh, right after the war with the Azeris ended in 1993 with victory for the Armenians. The united goodwill, cooperation, sacrifice and courage of Armenian leaders, peoples of Armenia, Artsakh and Diaspora had made the miraculous victory possible in those early days, followed by enthusiastic rebuilding and reconstruction projects. Unfortunately the winning spirit was replaced over the years by selfish greed, power grab, corruption and bribery by the leaders, while bringing disillusionment, disappointment, frustration and poverty to the people. It is my hope that the leaders and people of independent Armenia and Artsakh as well as the Diaspora learn from the lessons and memories of the first quarter century, build on the good deeds and avoid the bad ones.

I remember the Hayastan All Armenian Fund or Himnadram was just formed then to provide desperately needed funds and know-how to construct civil infrastructure such as highways, water distribution networks, gas pipelines, schools and hospitals, either destroyed during the recent war or left in ruins during decades of neglect. As a civil engineer specializing in public works infrastructure in Toronto, I volunteered to go to Karabakh and help the Himnadram engineers in implementing these essential projects. I informed the Armenian Ambassador to Canada: “The leader of Himnadram is Mrs. Manoushag Bedrosyan, the leader of Karabakh is Leonid Bedrosyan (assassinated along with other politicians in the Armenian Parliament in 1999), the leader of Armenia is Levon Ter-Petrosian, and since my name is also Bedrosyan, I have no choice but to volunteer and go to Armenia and Karabakh.” Therefore, I boarded the Tupolev jet of Armenian Airlines in Paris and landed in Yerevan around 3 am one night. Himnadram engineers picked me up at the airport, and we travelled in pitch dark from the airport to a downtown hotel, with electricity and streetlights off. There were several gas tanker trucks parked along the road, selling gas by container, as gas stations didn’t function. In the morning, I saw beautiful Mount

Ararat and beautiful Yerevan for the first time, but also the makeshift pipe chimneys sticking out from all apartment windows and the thousands of chopped down trees all over the city for heating and cooking purposes.

We started our long journey to Karabakh, six people including two young soldiers going to the front, all crammed into a small Niva. We stopped for breakfast by the Arpa River in Yegheknadzor, not with tea or coffee but with the obligatory mulberry vodka, *tuti oghi* in Armenian. As we left Goris and entered Karabakh through the Lachin corridor, we could see the violence of the war all around us, the burnt houses as well as hundreds of destroyed Azeri tanks strewn on the side of the road. One of the Himnadram engineers who knew the heroic commander Monte Melkonyan explained how Monte changed the course of the war when he told the Armenian fighters: “Why do you destroy the gift of the Turks (Azeris) to us?” After that, the Armenians changed tactics to preserve the captured Azeri tanks instead of destroying them, and won the war against the Azeris by using Azeri tanks. To understand the realities of the war and the enormity of the victory, one should visit two sites in Shushi, Karabakh. The beautiful white church in Shushi, Ghazantchetsots Church, was used as an arms depot by the Azeris on the assumption that Armenians would not fire on their own church. The Azeris controlled Shushi, which is situated on high cliffs literally on top of Stepanakert, enabling the Azeris to target and rain hundreds of rockets on any Stepanakert building that they wished to destroy. But Armenian commandos accomplished the impossible, climbed the almost vertical cliffs at Jdrdruz near Shushi in one night, and gained control of Shushi, which paved the way to victory.

I worked for a while on the highway construction project joining Armenia to Karabakh, known as the Goris-Stepanakert Highway, which became a lifeline and replaced an almost unpassable mountain road reducing the trip from Yerevan to Stepanakert from 11 hours to 5 hours. During the war, even this road was blocked and the only connection between Armenia and Artsakh was via helicopters, bringing supplies, medicine, arms into Artsakh, and returning with wounded soldiers back into Armenia. I then moved on to the water supply and water distribution project for Stepanakert, capital of Karabakh. Before fleeing, Azeris had destroyed all the plans for existing infrastructure, making it even more difficult for our contractors. Without knowing the location of underground gas, electric or telephone ducts, it was slow and dangerous work to dig the streets for new water pipes. Almost everyone that I met in Karabakh had

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Artsakh Karabakh – First Memories

ARTSAKH, from page 19

participated in the war or had lost a family member to the war. The main contractor, Felix, told me his story. He was sitting with his friend on the front steps of his contractor's office one day, to smoke cigarettes. He couldn't find matches and went inside to get some. Just then, an Azeri Grad missile landed at his friend's feet, blowing him to pieces. Seeing this, Felix just grabbed a Kalashnikov, stopped being a contractor and became a soldier. From the highest government official to the lowest construction labourer, every person regarded these construction projects as a patriotic mission. Donations poured in to Himnadram, from Diaspora as well as from within Armenia and Artsakh, large and small, even from a beggar on a Yerevan street.

I learnt a lot about land mines on this first Karabakh trip. They are one of the most cruel and sinister inventions. Years after the war ended, children playing in the countryside would blow up, or a farmer working in the field, or a grazing cow. Some mines are weight sensitive, which will not detonate when several cars pass over it, but will blow up if a heavier bus or truck rolls by. Some mines have counter mechanisms, designed to blow up after a certain number of passes over them. Other mines are designed to blow up even at the slightest touch. On a rural road, we had a close encounter. The road had a huge failure creating a pothole the size of a car, filled with water like a pond, virtually impossible to pass. We had no choice but leave the road and find a way through the forest nearby. As we started weaving a passage through the trees, we suddenly came by a car blown up by a mine in the forest... When planning the route of water supply or gas pipelines in the mountains or countryside, I learnt that we had to walk behind one another in a single

line, with the most experienced engineer familiar with the area or the mine tracker in front. In the western world, a sign of respect is to give way to someone and tell him/her: 'Please, after you', whereas in Artsakh, a sign of respect or care is: 'Please, walk behind me'.... I doubt if any engineering contract in the western world has a tender item making the contractor responsible to detect and clear land mines along the project route.

We went to northern Artsakh near Sarsang Reservoir, to provide preliminary engineering and cost estimate for another water project. The flowers were budding in the beautiful spring weather, and we picked up some of them. The village leader and his three year old grandson greeted us. When the little boy, Armen, saw the flowers in our hands, he started calling 'Baba, baba', leading us and his grandfather in a certain direction. Curiously, we followed him and his grandfather... until we reached a home-made cemetery with a tombstone covered by flowers. In tears, the grandfather explained that his son, Armen's father, was recently martyred in the war, and every day the grandfather and Armen would bring flowers to the grave. The grandfather had two sheep, and he offered to slaughter one of them for us so that we can have dinner together, basically offering half of his entire assets as a donation or present to us for bringing water to his village...

We also went into Aghdam with my Himnadram engineer buddies, Azerbaijan's third largest city before the war. In a calculated way to keep Karabakh Armenians isolated, Azeris had not built any roads within Karabakh and one had to go through Aghdam, in order to travel from north to south Karabakh. As we know, Armenians have now built an economically and militarily critical north-south highway within Artsakh joining most cities and villages

to one another, as well as a second lifeline link between Armenia and Artsakh through Kelbasha. Aghdam was evacuated in panic by the Azeris due to the superior military tactics of the Armenians, even though Armenians were outnumbered both in men and equipment. There were even restaurant menus intact in Aghdam for the day of the rout. The city had become an open air building materials supply centre for the Karabakh Armenians, a virtual Home Depot... Armenians would come and pick up housing materials, furniture, even pots and pans from the abandoned city. With some of the army commanders and contractors, I helped transport pipes, electric poles, even hydro transmission towers to the Armenian side. But when one of the contractors proposed to use the precast concrete girders from a recently blown up bridge as the sides of a water reservoir, I had to object... Perhaps this was the first time in Armenians' history that instead of being plundered, Armenians had become plunderers.

In one of our travels, we brought a wealthy

Armenian lady from California with us to Aghdam. She was in her 80s and in a wheelchair, but very feisty and determined to see Karabakh, as she had donated substantial sums to Himnadram. We stopped at the Aghdam mosque as some of the engineers wanted to climb the minaret to see the entire city from up above. This lady told us that she also wanted to go into the mosque. Our objections that it may be unsafe or difficult to take her in a wheelchair were to no avail, and she insisted that we carry her into the mosque. We had no choice but to comply. Once inside, she knelt, lifted her skirt, and urinated. And she said: "Now I can die in peace." She told us her story, that she was an orphan of the 1915 Armenian Genocide, and most of her family was put to the sword by the Turks who had then urinated on the dead Armenians...

Armenians of Armenia and Artsakh have paid and continue paying a high price for Karabakh/Artsakh but it is worth it, for many survival reasons – strategic, military, economic, and last but not least, historic.

Extraordinary Petition Requests Special Session of Eastern Diocesan Assembly On Cathedral Complex Proposal

PETITION, from page 1

community, including that part of the Diocesan land as well as air rights were being sold, and some even feared the ultimate sale of the complex.

Organizations such as the Knights of Vartan, involved in the development of St. Vartan Cathedral more than 50 years ago, recently weighed in the controversy and objected to any sale or lease of any part of the Diocesan complex (see letter this issue). Questions have been raised by others about the overall state of Diocesan finances which has led to the present situation.

The Diocese has not officially issued any circular or report to the public about this issue up until the present. Unofficially the word was that

a fact sheet or explanatory article would be released to dispel misunderstandings.

Diocesan officials contacted via email by the Mirror-Spectator to verify their receipt of the petition with signatures or comment on the situation did not respond. Officials at the Diocese contacted by phone and email during the past two months with regards to this issue have declined to make any public statements.

The Mirror-Spectator has seen a copy of the set of signatures and the original email sent to Diocesan officials. Among the signatories are many Diocesan priests.

The proposal for taking advantage of the value of the Diocesan property is not the first such attempt, as a number of differing proposals have been made since the 1980s.

Reception in Honor of Foreign Minister Of Armenia Held in New York

NEW YORK – On July 20, a reception in honor of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan was held in the Ceremonial Hall of St. Vartan Cathedral.

UN officials, Ambassadors accredited in New York and members of the diplomatic corps, religious leaders of the Armenian Apostolic Church, leaders and representatives of the community structures were present at the reception.

Vartan Gregorian, president of Carnegie Corporation of New York in his opening remarks noted that it is an opportunity not only to welcome the newly appointed Foreign Minister of Armenia, but also to bid farewell to the representative of Armenia to the UN. Highly appreciating the efforts of the Minister Mnatsakanyan in presenting Armenia in this multilateral platform, Vartan Gregorian wished him all the success during his next, most responsible stage of his diplomatic career.

In his opening remarks, Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan, the Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, underscored that our Republic is not limited only to certain geographical borders. It is also a culture, a civilization, a vibrant and demanding youth both in Armenia and the Diaspora.

The Primate of the Diocese conveyed his best wishes to Mnatsakanyan as well as to the new government of Armenia in their efforts towards establishing justice for the Armenian people and, by our example, for all the peoples of the world.

Expressing gratitude to the attendees for effective cooperation and support provided for years, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan underlined that by assuming the post of the Armenian Foreign

Minister, he is ready to share the great political responsibility for the processes in the country, which are based on the broad mandate and trust of the people.

"And our actions based on this very mandate are clear. to ensure that the justice, democracy, rule of law prosper in our country. This was the history of our country during these past two months, and this process will continue.



Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan

"Maybe we are a small nation, but I represent a very proud people who are well aware of their history, their national identity, and I represent the nation with a high sense of justice, a very strong faith in humanity, international cooperation, peace," stressed Mnatsakanyan.

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