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## Eastern Diocesan Council Chair Kalustian Presents Further Information on Cathedral Property Proposals

By **Aram Arkun**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN – James Kalustian, chair of the Diocesan Council of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, on August 6 gave an interview concerning the efforts of the Council to pursue what Kalustian several months ago called “monetizing the air rights of the cathedral complex” of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America in New York City.

Over the past few months an unusual public discussion has been waged on social media and even in the press on the proposal presented by Kalustian and several others on May 3 to this year’s Diocesan Assembly. Although the proposal had not been made public, a number of community leaders and even organizations like the Knights of Vartan had expressed opposition to what they considered to be the essence of the proposal.

This culminated in the submission on July 22 of a written petition requesting a special session of the assembly of the Eastern Diocese, together with enough Diocesan delegates’ signatures to meet the requirement of the Diocesan bylaws. The request was for the special session to take



One proposed rendering of a plan for development of the St. Vartan Cathedral Plaza (from “Facts on the Diocesan Development Plan Proposal: Architectural Renderings and Elevations,” Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern))



James Kalustian

place prior to September 22, 2018, and prior to the execution of any agreements or commitments, and to review any proposed sale or conveyance of interests of the Diocesan complex in New York City. This is apparently the first time in the history of the Diocese that a request for an extraordi-

nary assembly session. The Diocese did not provide any public information on the situation until August 11 (see “Statement” in this issue).

In his August 6 interview, Kalustian referred to the forthcoming “Statement” see CATHEDRAL, page 10

## Armenian and American Ambassadors Discuss Cultural Diplomacy

By **Aram Arkun**  
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WASHINGTON – The results of cultural diplomacy and American efforts in Armenia are often encountered, but it is rare to hear diplomats publicly define and discuss this oft ambiguous tool of governments. The Smithsonian Folklife Festival, this year dedicated to the cultures of Armenia and Catalonia, gave the public a glimpse of the thinking of two ambassadors on this topic. Armenia’s ambassador to the United States Grigor Hovhannisian, and America’s ambassador to Armenia, Richard M. Mills, Jr., participated on June 28 at a special program of the festival, “Cultural Diplomacy with Two Ambassadors,” held at the Hyurasenyak pavilion at the Washington Mall.

Jay Ramen, director of the Cultural Programs Division of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the US Department of State, served as moderator.

Hovhannisian, born in 1971 in Yerevan, Armenia, studied Arab and Oriental Studies at Yerevan State University, and did graduate work at Haigazian University in Beirut before earning a master’s degree in 2001 from the see DIPLOMACY, page 9



Amb. Richard M. Mills, Jr.



Serj Tankian with Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at a rally in Armenia

## Musical Luminary Serj Tankian Gives His Take on Armenian Issues

LOS ANGELES – Serj Tankian, a revolutionary musician, founding member and lead singer of one of the most iconic bands of modern rock, System of a Down, has started to transition to full-time Armenian philanthropy and activism.

By **Michael Melkonian**  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Tankian, an Armenian born in Lebanon and raised in Los Angeles, California, has been a staple of the Armenian community for quite some time. System of a Down was one of the most known bands in the world in the early 2000s, having sold over 40 million records while garnering MTV nominations and wins along with multiple Grammy nominations and a Grammy win for Best Hard Rock Performance in 2006.

This type of success made him a role model with a cult following around the world, including within the Armenian community, but Tankian’s influence didn’t stop there. Most famously, Tankian was involved in the recent Armenian Velvet Revolution, which encouraged acts of peaceful civil disobedience by Armenia’s people to overthrow the ruling party. Tankian over the years publicly spoke about the injustices in Armenia and the need to address them peacefully. He wrote open letters to President Serzh Sargsyan and was unabashedly critical of his leadership.

see TANKIAN, page 20

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Russian, Kazakh Leaders Discuss CSTO Leadership

AKTAU, Kazakhstan (RFE/RL) – The presidents of Russia and Kazakhstan spoke on August 12 about who should run the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) following criminal charges brought by Armenian authorities against the Russian-led bloc’s current secretary general, Yuri Khachaturov.

Khachaturov, Armenia’s former top army general, faces coup charges stemming from the 2008 post-election Yerevan unrest. Russia has strongly criticized an Armenian law-enforcement agency’s decision late July to prosecute him. Following the criticism he was allowed to return to Moscow to perform his CSTO duties for the time being. Moscow has said that Yerevan must formally “recall” Khachaturov before asking the other CSTO states to pick his replacement.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan telephoned Kazakhstan’s President Nursultan Nazarbayev on August 7 to discuss the issue and had a phone conversation with Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko on July 28.

Nazarbayev singled out “the issue of the CSTO secretary general” in his opening remarks at a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Aktau. He said it “has become a problem.” Putin noted they will discuss “issues of problematic character,” including the selection of the next CSTO secretary general. Neither leader made public statements to that effect after the talks.

### Russian, Armenian Defense Chiefs Meet in Moscow

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) – Armenia’s Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan has met with his Russian counterpart Sergey Shoigu in Moscow to discuss Russian-Armenian military ties and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. According to the Armenian Defense Ministry, Tonoyan and Shoigu “attached importance to consistent implementation of agreements based on mutual trust and joint strategic interests,” adding in an apparent reference to Russian arms supplies to Armenia, “Speaking about military-technical cooperation, the Armenian and Russian defense ministers stressed the importance of timely realization of ongoing programs in this area.”

Speaking to RFE/RL’s Armenian service in Moscow on August 10, Tonoyan expressed confidence that all Russian-Armenian defense agreements will be “mutually realized.” “At least, we are getting no indications to the contrary,” he said. In its press release on Shoigu’s talks with Tonoyan, Russia’s Defense Ministry only cited the Armenian minister’s comments on the International Army Games organized by the Russian military.

## INSIDE

### Cold War Plane Crash

Page 3

### INDEX

Arts and Living . . . . .	12
Armenia . . . . .	2,3
Community News. . . . .	6
Editorial . . . . .	17
International . . . . .	4,5





## News From Armenia

### ARF Free to Join or Leave Government

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) - The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) said in late July that coup charges levelled against former Armenian president Robert Kocharyan "can be interpreted as political persecution." Accordingly, 3 of its parliament deputies joined last week more than 40 other lawmakers in signing a joint petition calling for his release. The move was endorsed by the party's leadership.

Commenting on the ARF criticism, Pashinyan said: "I want to make clear that there is no [governing] coalition in Armenia. That's a misunderstanding." "We tried to form a government of national accord," he told reporters during a weekend trip to the northern Tavush province. "Whoever feels that they are outside that government ... we are not holding anyone captive."

The ARF was allied with Kocharyan during his 1998-2008 rule and with his successor Serzh Sargsyan. It has so far given no indications that it would like to give up its two ministerial posts in Pashinyan's government.

On August 11, one of Dashnaksutyun's top leaders, Hrant Markaryan, condemned as "mental terror" angry reactions to his party's support for Kocharyan emanating from Pashinyan's supporters. "We want this movement for new Armenia to succeed and we don't want them to make mistakes," Markaryan told reporters. "And because we don't want them to make mistakes we express our views." He also warned: "We will not let anyone engage in mental terror because terror is terror, whether you shoot people or obstruct their thoughts."

### Armenia Sees Almost Seven-Fold Increase in Tablet Production

YEREVAN (PanArmenian.net) - The production of tablets has grown by 6.6 times in the first 6 months of 2018 year-on-year, the National Statistical Service reports. In particular, 364 tablets were devised in January-June 2018 against the 55 produced in the same period in 2017. The manufacture of computers, meanwhile, has increased by 22.7 percent this year.

### Government Will Not Leave Farmers Alone

YEREVAN (Armenpress) - First deputy prime minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan visited Bambakashat, Mrgashat, Alashkert and other communities of Armavir province which have been greatly affected by the recent hail and storm. "We are confident that the government should not leave the farmers alone in mitigating the consequences of this disaster. Tomorrow the assessment works will launch after which the government will discuss the amount of possible assistance to be provided to farms. At the same time systematic solutions are necessary, and we will consistently work to have insurance systems for farms, effective anti-hail stations, anti-hail networks already next year," the first deputy PM said on Facebook.

### Dram Maintains Stability

YEREVAN (Armenpress) - In the context of the depreciation of currencies of neighbor states in the region, Armenia's national dram maintains its stability, economist Tatul Manaseryan declared. He said national currencies are unstable in the region given the unpredictable foreign policy of US President Donald Trump.

"In this regard Armenia's national dram maintains not only relative, but also absolute stability in the past years, which, of course, is a result of balanced monetary loan policy, which in its turn creates a stable background for the business environment. In other words, the national currency makes predictable also economic developments for entrepreneurs and investors, of course, and makes Armenia's economy much more preferable," he said.

He noted how many banks closed in neighboring states, which didn't take place in Armenia even during the depreciation of the dram in 2009-2014. Manaseryan says the new US sanctions on Russia are not desirable for Armenia. He states that the economies of Armenia and Russia are inter-related and the export and import comprise quite a great volume which increases every year, especially in the context of membership of the Eurasian Economic Union.

## PicsArt Hires COO to Lead Growth of Editing Platform

YEREVAN (PanArmenian.net) - PicsArt, the leading creative platform created by a group of creative Armenians for social media editing, announced on July 25 that former Viki Inc. CEO Tammy H. Nam has joined the company as its first Chief Operating Officer. Nam was instrumental in driving Viki's targeted international growth and subsequent acquisition by Japanese e-commerce giant Rakuten in late 2013.

PicsArt, which ranks among brands like Instagram and Snapchat as a leading platform in the social media space, has over 300 employees and offices in the US, Armenia and China; the company also recently announced that it is profitable only a few months after launching its popular subscription service.

"PicsArt serves an important need for easy image editing that millions of users rely on each month. Fueled by double-digit user growth and strong revenue momentum, PicsArt is well positioned to become the next impactful brand in social media," said Omar Hamoui, partner at Sequoia Capital and PicsArt board member. "We are confident that Tammy will take PicsArt to the next level and capitalize on the company's foundational strengths."

PicsArt's all-in-one social editor is popular among Millennials and Gen Z

fans who use the app to personalize and remix photos and other media with thousands of special effects, limitless stickers and one of the largest databases of community-generated, free-to-edit content in the world. Brands and



Tammy H. Nam

artists have already taken notice. The company has worked with big names such as Maroon5, AMC's The Walking Dead and Thirty Seconds to Mars on fan-art community challenges that generate tens of millions of organic fan-generated impressions and shares on social media.

"PicsArt has grown organically so far, but our next big opportunity is in

directing this growth through the right market development, community engagement and revenue channels," said Hovhannes Avoyan, CEO and founder of PicsArt. "In addition to her proven operational experience in both consumer advertising and subscription-based businesses, Tammy adds deep bench strength in market, brand and community development - areas that will be critical for us moving forward."

Nam, who was an executive and marketing leader at other large, innovative consumer tech companies such as Scribd and Slide, will report to Avoyan and oversee all areas of the business outside product and engineering.

PicsArt is the world's largest creative platform for social media editing with more than 100 million monthly active users and influencers. The PicsArt community creates, remixes and shares nearly 1 billion images every month; the company has amassed one of the largest open-source collections of content in the world, including free-to-edit photos, stickers and more. PicsArt is available in 30 languages for free and as a subscription on iOS, Android and Windows devices. Headquartered in San Francisco with offices in Yerevan, Armenia; Los Angeles; and Beijing, PicsArt is backed by Sequoia Capital, DCM Ventures, Insight Venture Partners, and Siguler Guff and Company.

## Armenian Security Service Arrests Ex-Prime Minister's Brother

YEREVAN (RFE/RL and Reuters) - The brother of Armenia's former prime minister Hovik Abrahamyan was arrested on suspicion of illegal arms procurement and possession, Armenia's security service said on August 8.

Henrik Abrahamyan was a member of parliament several times in the past and belongs to a wealthy and influential family, which owns several businesses in the Caucasus country of 3.2 million people.

The arrest is one in a series in recent months under Armenia's new prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, a former opposition leader who was elected by parliament in May after weeks of mass protests against corruption and cronyism in the government.

The National Security Service said in a statement that it found weapons on the property of a former mechanical plant believed to have belonged to Hovik Abrahamyan, who served as prime minister from 2014 to 2016. Among the weapons found were three

hand-held machine guns, 74 guns, two sniper rifles, and bullets and ammunition for the weapons, the service said.

Also arrested on suspicion of illegal arms procurement and possession was a man connected with the mechanical plant, Ambik Gevorgian, it said.

The latest arrests come a month after an Armenian court ordered the detention of former President Robert Kocharyan, who served from 1998 to 2008, on charges of usurping power and an attempt to overthrow the constitutional order during events following the 2008 elections, when his ally Serzh Sargsyan became president. Kocharyan has dismissed the charges as politically motivated.

A month earlier the Armenian parliament stripped General Manvel Grigorian from the former ruling party of immunity. The parliament supported a prosecutor's motion to open criminal proceedings against him after the National Security Service confiscated weapons and ammunition from his home.



Guns that Armenia's security service says it found in a factory belonging to former Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan

## Former President Kocharyan Released From Jail, Prosecutor General's Office Appeals

YEREVAN (Armenpress, Public Radio of Armenia) - Armenia's former President Robert Kocharyan was released from custody on court order on August 13. The Court of Appeals ruled to release him from jail on the basis of his constitutional immunity. Kocharyan was jailed on July 27 on charges of violating constitutional order for sending police and soldiers to break up a post-election demonstration in Yerevan in March 2008 that saw 10 killed.

The ruling of the Court of Appeals was denounced by the Special Investigative Service, which described it as illegal, saying that the Court of Appeals "overstepped the bounds of its authority." After receiving the ruling, the Prosecutor General's Office will submit an appeal in accordance with it, Vahagn Muradyan, an official of the Prosecutor General's Office, told citizens protesting outside the office on August 14. The protestors had prevented Kocharyan from appearing at a press conference.

"We have already issued a statement that we have not received the decision of the Court of Appeals yet. We will receive that decision in one or two days, will discuss it and will submit an appeal in accordance with the issues mentioned in the decision," Muradyan said. He added that the Prosecutor General's Office has expressed its position in the Court of Appeals, and after receiving the decision they will submit an appeal in accordance with it.

Asked whether the Prosecutor General's Office plans to submit an appeal to the Court of Cassation, Muradyan said yes. He refused to comment on the abovementioned statement of the Special Investigation Service.





## ARMENIA

# 60th Anniversary Of Shoot-Down Of USAF Aircraft Over Armenia

By Larry Tart

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

SASNASHEN, Armenia – Few Armenian Americans are aware that 17 United States Air Force airmen perished in a crash in Armenia on September 2, 1958, yet this major international incident was the most publicized confrontation between Soviet and U.S. military aircrews during the Cold War. The tragedy occurred when four Soviet air force MiG-17 pilots attacked and shot down an unarmed US reconnaissance aircraft after its crew inadvertently flew into Soviet Armenian airspace.

Soviet air defense headquarters informed the Communist Party Central Committee the same afternoon that the state border had been violated near Leninakan [present-day Gyumri]: “A ‘scrambled’ fighter pilot, Senior Lieutenant Lopatkov, intercepted the violator at 15:10 and shot it down at 15:12. The burning aircraft fell on our territory in the vicinity of Mastara, 20 kilometers southeast of Leninakan.

“According to gun camera film, the aircraft had USAF markings and tail number 60528. It is an American military transport aircraft of the type C-130 ‘Hercules’ with four turboprop engines. The violator aircraft was hit and went down in a region 55 kilometers northwest of Yerevan.”

## No Survivors

Ground and air observations indicated that the crew did not parachute from the aircraft. No one survived, and a medical examiner in the field said the charred remains were those of six human corpses. Flying simulated air searches over Turkey for their missing plane, the USAF lulled the Soviets into believing the Americans did not know where or why their C-130 had crashed.

“According to radio intercept, the Americans are conducting a search for a downed aircraft type C-130, tail number 60528 that had taken off from Adana airfield.”



MiG-17 pilot's gun camera photo of C-130 # 60528 during shoot-down of the unarmed aircraft over Armenia, September 2, 1958

## Post-shoot-down Diplomacy

Following 96 hours of diplomatic silence, on September 6, 1958 the American Embassy in Moscow delivered a note to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs seeking information on an unarmed USAF C-130 with a crew of 17 that went missing on a roundtrip from Adana, Turkey, to Trabzon and Van – for the Soviets, this was the first indication that 17 crew members, not 6, had been aboard the C-130.

On Friday, September 12, the foreign ministry informed the American Embassy that the remnants of a burned airplane had been found 55 KM northwest of Yerevan and that judging by discovered remains, “it may be assumed that six members of the crew perished.”

The same day, an American spokesman requested a further search for 11 missing-in-action crew members (MIAs). He also sought permission for a US embassy official to visit the crash site and asked that arrangements be made to transfer the 6 corpses to American authorities.

In a press release later Friday night, the US State Department



Dedication of C-130 60528 Aerial Reconnaissance Memorial, Fort Meade, Maryland, September 2, 1997

stated that the Soviets had notified the United States that an American Air Force C-130 transport plane had crashed in Soviet Armenia, killing 6 of a 17-man crew.

Without accusing the Soviets of shooting down the C-130, the press release announced that Soviet fighter planes intercepted the plane “in a Turkish-Soviet border area near Kars, a point some 35 miles inside Turkey” – the first public statement that Soviet fighters had intercepted the American plane. Offering no explanation for the crash and making no mention of the 11 MIAs, the Soviets merely said the aircraft had “fallen” in their territory.

Unaware that a clandestine site had intercepted communications from the MiG pilots during their attacks on the American plane, the Soviet government believed incorrectly that the U.S. government had no knowledge of Soviet complicity in the tragedy.

Mentioning interception of the C-130 near Kars, Turkey, incensed the Soviets, while lack of information from the Foreign Ministry on the 11 MIAs contributed to further erosion of Soviet-American relations. The Committee for State Security (KGB) transferred the 6 corpses to the US Air Force on September 24, 1958, but the fate of the 11 MIAs remained a mystery.

In November, the State Department discreetly sent to the Kremlin a transcript in Russian of a recording of the MiG pilots' conversations as they attacked the C-130 – Soviet leadership declared the recording a fakery, but the Eisenhower Administration held out hope that Deputy Premier Anastas I. Mikoyan's



Larry Tart holding C-130 60528 debris – second piece of debris is shoring up mesh fence, Sasnashen Village, Armenia, July 12, 1997



Headstone, C-130 60528 Crew, Arlington Cemetery, VA (intermingled remains excavated from crash site in 1993 interred on 40th anniversary of shoot-down – September 2, 1998)

planned fence-mending trip to Washington in 1959 might unlock news on the fate of the 11 MIAs.

In January 1959, Mr. Mikoyan outright lied to Vice President Nixon and US senators who wined and dined him in Washington – stating time and again that Soviet pilots did not shoot down the American plane. Waiting two weeks after Mikoyan returned before abandoning hope of a reply, on February 5 the US State Department issued a press release with copies of a recording and a transcript documenting how Soviet pilots shot down the C-130. Release of the recording had an immediate impact around the world – front-page coverage in major US and Western newspapers. The Washington Post captured much of world opinion in a February 6 headline “Intercepted Conversation Throws Doubts on Value of Any Statements by Reds.”

With four of the six sets of remains identified, interment of the two unidentified corpses in Arlington Cemetery on February 6 captured national headlines. Members of the thirteen families who had received no word of their loved ones wept at the memorial services. All of the families would wait another 38 years for answers.

## Implosion of Soviet Union and Renewed Interest in the MIAs

With the implosion of the Soviet Union on December 25, 1991, Russia (the Russian Federation) became the successor

see USAF, page 4





## ARMENIA

# 60th Anniversary of Shoot-Down of USAF Aircraft over Armenia

USAF, from page ?

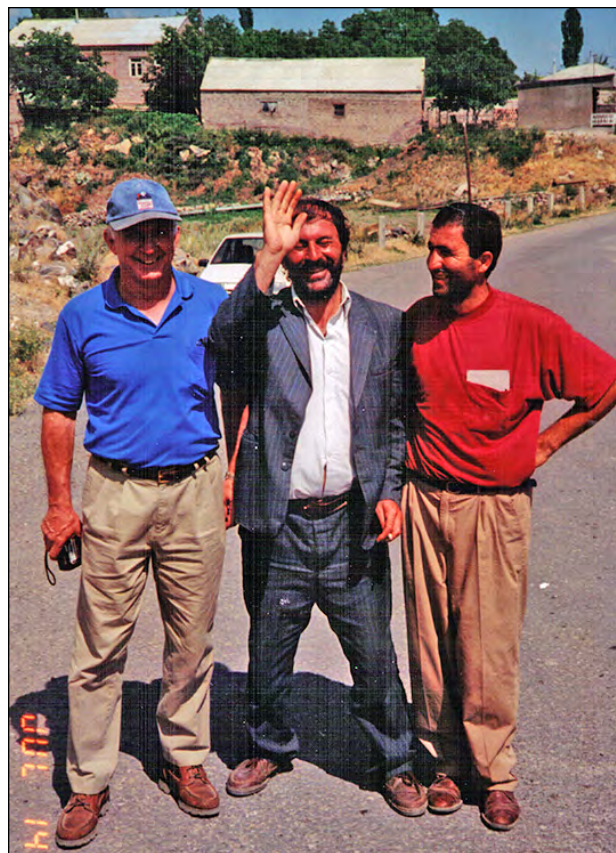
state to the Soviet Union, and Armenia regained independence as the Republic of Armenia – the Cold War was over. Tensions between Russia and the USA eased for a decade, and under the United States – Russian Joint Commission on POW/MIAs created in 1992, renewed efforts ensued to determine the fate of Cold War POWs and MIAs, including MIAs associated with the crash by Sasnashen Village in 1958.

## Renewed Investigations into C-130 Incident

The Joint Commission on POW/MIAs resulted in a restart of investigations into the C-130 60528 incident that had lain essentially dormant since 1959. Commencing in 1993, a joint commission team found a treasure trove of related materials in Soviet Air Defense archives, including gun-camera film and target score cards for each of the four pilots involved in the shoot-down of 60528, accumulated field reports addressing the incident, and minutes of Communist Party Central Committee meetings dealing with the event. Concurrently, Sasnashen village elders openly discussed the tragedy that had occurred 35 years earlier, and the joint commission team published a story in the local newspaper asking eyewitnesses to the shoot-down to come forward for an interview – six eyewitnesses responded, and all provided similar recollections of Soviet jets firing on the American plane. Their stories contradicted the official Soviet version of the attacks.

## Martin Kakosian – Artist/Sculptor

Eyewitness Martin Kakosian, a college student on a field trip in 1958 and a skilled sculptor by 1993, collaborated with the villagers to create a memorial – a *khachkar*– honoring an unknown American crew that had died unceremoniously at the edge of their village. In late August 1993, Sasnashen village commemorated the 35th anniversary of the shoot-down during the unveiling of the *khachkar*.



From left, team leader Paul Martin (Maj. Gen., USAF, Retired), village mayor Ghukas Hakobyan and teacher Artashes Khachatryan bidding farewell, Sasnashen, Armenia, July 14, 1997

## Belated Recognition in America

The break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 began to crumble the robust Cold War security wall such that American security is now akin to a sheer security curtain that allows open discussion of many issues that were previously concealed from the public in secure vaults. In 1993, the National Security Agency established the National Cryptologic Museum (NCM) with displays of materials that a decade earlier had been classified Top Secret/Codeword, but were now available for public viewing.

During a visit to the NCM in 1995, I [Larry Tart] was struck with a light-bulb moment, “With a softball-sized fragment of Francis Gary Powers’ U-2 spy plane that a Soviet missile shot down over the Soviet Union in 1960 on public display in the museum, why not create a display addressing the shoot-down of C-130 60528 over Armenia in 1958?” (A former Soviet army general had given the U-2 fragment to the museum curator during a visit to the NCM in 1994.)

I submitted a suggestion for a C-130 60528 display to the NSA historian, and he responded promptly with a letter stating that NSA was not interested in “a display addressing the C-130 incident at this time.” Not easily dissuaded, I created a small briefing package that surreptitiously found its way into the in-basket of the Director, National Security Agency (DIRNSA), Lt. General



Research Team – From left, Horace Haire, Larry Tart, Michael Patterson, and Paul Martin by broken khachkar at crash site, Sasnashen, Armenia, July 12, 1997

Kenneth A. Minihan. At his next DIRNSA staff meeting (November 1996), General Minihan announced that he wanted to create a memorial honoring a C-130 crew that had been shot down over Armenia in 1958. The entire staff, including NSA Historian Dr. David Hatch, who had disapproved my suggestion, nodded in agreement with their boss, and the museum curator spoke up, saying, “Yes, Sir,” “We will create a nice display dedicated to that C-130 crew.” Gen. Minihan interrupted, “Perhaps my interest in a memorial has been misinterpreted; I want a full-size C-130 aircraft set up in one of our parking lots, and we’d like to dedicate the C-130 memorial on the next anniversary of the shoot-down (September 2, 1997) – the countdown began to memorialize the C-130 60628 tragedy.

## Locating Martin Kakosian

Researching associated events, I tracked down Martin Kakosian in February 1997 – he and wife Maksena had recently immigrated to Queens, NY, sponsored by daughter Irena (a gynecologist) and son Karen (a dentist), both of whom had moved to America years earlier. Martin Kakosian volunteered to serve as interpreter/tour guide for an Air Force-sponsored research team that was planning a visit to the crash site.

## Visit to Crash Site

In July 1997, Martin Kakosian served as tour guide-interpreter for a research team that I accompanied to the crash site – learning that I was paying my own travel expenses, Mr. Kakosian hosted me gratis in the Kakosian condo in Yerevan. During a visit to the crash site on July 12, 1997, we observed that the khachkar memorial had toppled off its base and broken. With tears in his



Broken *khachkar* at crash site, Nerkin Sasnashen Village, Armenia, July 1997



Villagers in farewell photograph with their American guests, Sasnashen Village, Armenia, July 14, 1997



Schoolteacher Artashes Khachatryan and his mother, Lower Sasnashen Village, Armenia, July 14, 1997

eyes, Martin Kakosian vowed to create a new memorial to the C-130 crew. With financial assistance from a non-profit USAF-affiliated association, Mr. Kakosian kept his promise by sculpting a modern monument dedicated to the 17 crew members in 1998.

A primary objective of the team visit was to locate and return to the United States debris from the crashed C-130.

## Dedication of C-130 60528 Aerial Reconnaissance Memorial

On September 2, 1997, while dedicating the newly created Aerial Reconnaissance Memorial – a restored C-130 in the paint scheme of the one shot down over Armenia – Lt. General Kenneth A. Minihan, Director, National Security Agency, apolo-

gized to family members for withholding sensitive national security information during the Cold War and announced that C-130 60528’s 17 crew members had been on a top secret reconnaissance mission.

## 60th Anniversary Memorial Service Honoring C-130 60528’s Last Crew, September 2, 2018

Many of the 100 Prop Wash Gang members, who attended the memorial dedication ceremony at Ft. Meade in 1997 lost their best friends / flying comrades in the tragic shoot-down. With time having taken its toll, on September 2, 2018, a smaller PWG group will host a 60th Anniversary Memorial Service honoring their 17 lost C-130 60528 brothers in Bellevue, Nebraska.





## INTERNATIONAL

# Russia and 4 Other Nations Settle Decades-Long Dispute over Caspian Sea

By Andrew E. Kramer

MOSCOW (*New York Times*) – The five countries with shorelines on the Caspian Sea agreed on August 12 to a formula for dividing up the world's largest inland body of water and its potentially vast oil and gas resources.

The leaders of Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan signed the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea, which the Kremlin said in a statement “reflected a balance of interests” of the seashore nations.

Landlocked and less salty than an ocean, the Caspian Sea was regarded by Iran and the Soviet Union – until the Soviet collapse – as a lake, with a border neatly dividing the two countries' territories.

But when new bordering nations emerged, they sought either their own zones of Caspian territory or a new approach to governing the sea that would classify it as international water with territorial zones and neutral areas.

The pact signed at a summit meeting in Kazakhstan on Sunday, August 12, takes both approaches in a compromise treating the surface as international water and dividing the seabed into territorial zones.

Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani, told reporters, however, that dividing the seabed's mineral wealth would require additional agreements.

Russia, the sea's main naval power, had opposed splitting the Caspian into national territories that would have confined its own navy to a northwestern corner. The country has launched missiles from its Caspian Sea fleet to strike targets in Syria, flies over the sea to reach Syria, and, analysts say, never had the intention of surrendering its military dominance.

The agreement says no country without Caspian shoreline can deploy military vessels in the sea.

In addition, Russia has for much of the post-Soviet period objected to east-west energy trade through subsea pipelines, hoping to keep in place the north-south trade routes of the Soviet Union's rail and pipeline system.

Oil companies in the 1990s first proposed trans-Caspian pipelines to bring landlocked Central Asia's energy to market, but that dropped off their agenda as the sea's legal status was bogged down in talks for decades.

Sunday's agreement potentially opens the sea for underwater oil and natural gas pipelines, which Russia had opposed, ostensibly on environmental grounds, though it has built such pipes in the Black and Baltic Seas.

Shota Utiashvili, a senior fellow at the Rondeli Foundation for Strategic and International Studies in Georgia.

Trade in and out of Central Asia had been diverted not to Russia but to Iran, with Chinese backing, he said. And some



The leaders of Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan in Aktau, Kazakhstan, on August 12 after signing an agreement on the status of the Caspian Sea (Pool photo: Alexey Nikolsky)

Only nations whose seabed territories are crossed by the pipelines would have to agree to lay the new pipelines, the convention says, though all five states could have a say on environmental protections. A proposed trans-Caspian oil pipeline could ease exports from the Kashagan oil field in Kazakhstan, which is managed by Exxon.

Starting in the Clinton administration, the United States has pushed for energy, transport and trade across the sea and through Azerbaijan and Georgia, a route known as the Southern Corridor. The diplomatic strategy greased American oil company deals in the Caspian Basin.

An effort in the administration of President George W. Bush to put military might behind the policy by expanding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to Georgia became a backdrop for a war between Georgia and Russia in 2008, in an indication of the seriousness of Russia's intent to control the region.

Russia may have agreed to finally resolve the sea's status now, after three decades of objections, not because of continued Western pressure but because of rising trade competition from China's “One Belt One Road” policy, according to

Central Asian energy exports have not gone to Russia, but instead east to China because of difficulties exporting west over the Caspian Sea, he added.

Turkmenistan, frustrated in its effort to build a trans-Caspian gas pipeline, has also started work on a pipeline east through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India, known as the TAPI pipeline. The Afghan government has said it could help resolve the war through economic development.

The pipeline passes through Taliban-controlled territory in southern Afghanistan, but it is supported by both the United States and the insurgents as positive for the country's future.

While the agreement on August 12 settled the status of the sea's surface and created a formula for dividing the subsea resources, the delineation of new borders could prove contentious.

Russia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have divided the seabed in the north, but Iran, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan have disputed claims to petroleum deposits in the southern portion of the sea. The Caspian basin is seen as an important source of oil for world markets outside the Middle East.

# Lieu Uses Turkey Crisis to Renew Call on Trump to Recognize Armenian Genocide

By Jacqueline Thomsen

WASHINGTON (*The Hill*) – Rep. Ted Lieu (D-Calif.) seized on President Trump's decision to double tariffs on Turkey to push for the president to recognize the mass killings of Armenians as a genocide.

Lieu, who is frequently critical of the president, tweeted Friday, August 10, that he agreed with Trump's increase of the tariffs and his declaration that U.S. relations with Turkey “are not good at this time!”

“Turkey has been trending towards authoritarianism & becoming more anti-American,” the Democrat wrote.

“Many of us have also pushed for recognition of the Armenian genocide. I urge @realDonaldTrump to do so,” Lieu continued. “The US should not continue to ignore historical facts.”

Whether the Armenians were the victims of a genocide has been a polarizing issue in Washington for years. Turkey's government strongly opposes labeling events from 1915, in which more than a million Armenians were

killed or exiled, as a genocide and has lobbied against the designation.

Trump declined to refer to the mass slaughter of Armenians at the hands of Ottoman Turks as a genocide for the second time this year. Former President Obama and his predecessors also declined to refer to it as genocide as they came under heavy pressure from both sides of the debate.

Trump issued a statement in April in recognition of Armenian Remembrance Day, which marks the anniversary of Meds Yeghern, during which 1.5 million Armenians were deported, massacred or marched to their deaths by Ottoman soldiers in 1915. He did not use the term genocide in the statement.

More than 100 lawmakers, including Lieu, signed a letter ahead of Armenian Remembrance Day this year urging Trump to call the acts of Meds Yeghern a genocide.



Rep. Ted Lieu

## International News

### Mher Margaryan Appointed Armenia's New UN Representative

YEREVAN (news.am) – Mher Margaryan has been appointed Armenia's permanent representative to the United Nations (residence in New York). President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian signed a decree to appoint Margaryan based on the proposal of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. The post has been vacant since the previous UN representative, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia on May 12 of this year.

### Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan Border Attempts 'Unacceptable For Armenia'

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Azerbaijan's repositioning attempts at the Nakhichevan section of the Armenian-Azerbaijani border are “unacceptable for Armenia and will be prevented by all means possible,” Anna Naghdalyan, an acting spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry, told reporters at a briefing on August 14.

The official says Armenia has issued statements about it both through public and other channels. She said the Armenian military fully controls the situation at Nakhichevan border, as assured by the Defense Ministry.

Naghdalyan also spoke about Karen Ghazaryan, an Armenian captive in Azerbaijan, who ended up there in still unknown circumstances, and assured that the issue of the Armenian villager is on the Foreign Ministry's agenda.

“Intensive work is underway in this regard. Recently, Armenia's prime minister has also touched upon the issue. We continue taking all possible measures to ensure a safe and quick return of our citizen to the homeland,” she said.

According to a spokesman of the Armenian Defense Ministry, Artsrun Hovhannisyan, Armenian armed forces on August 12 opened fire in response to Azerbaijani provocations at the Nakhichevan border with Armenia. “As a result, we do not rule out losses in the Azerbaijani military,” he said in a Facebook post.

### Chinese School Opening In Yerevan Soon

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – A new Chinese school will officially open in the Armenian capital in the coming days, Anna Naghdalyan, an acting spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry, told reporters at a briefing on August 14.

She revealed that the Armenian-Chinese Friendship School to open at Yerevan's Kanaker-Zeytun Administrative District has been constructed as part of the technical and economic agreement concluded between the two countries.

“Armenia highly appreciates the programs being implemented in our country on the sidelines of the gratuitous assistance provided by the Chinese government. Another program has been completed in these days. Around 200 ambulances are to be provided to Armenia. This program launched in May last year,” she added.

### Artaskh Border 200 Ceasefire Violations by Azerbaijan August 5-11

PanARMENIAN.Net - Some 200 ceasefire violations - more than 1800 shots in total - by Azerbaijani army were registered on the contact line with Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) in the period of August 5-11, the Karabakh Defense Army said in a statement.

The Karabakh frontline units have mainly refrained from retaliating to continue controlling the situation on the line of contact.





## INTERNATIONAL

# Children of Armenian Descent Experience Beacon of Hope in Beirut Summer Camp

By Doreen Abi Raad

BEIRUT (Catholic News Service) – In the sweltering, crowded Bourj Hammoud district of Beirut, a group of children from poor Christian families have discovered a summertime oasis of joy.

The 390 children, ages 3 to 13, are participants in the Howard Karagheusian Commemorative Corporation's day camp, funded in part by the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, a pontifical aid agency.

Held in a school, the seven-week day camp combines sports, games, art and activities such as cooking, music and dance with a mix of instruction in nutrition, hygiene, math, English and Bible study. The children also go on weekly outings to places their families normally are not able to afford.

The camp gives children an opportunity “to have new friends, to enjoy their childhood, to have these moments of fun and lovely memories within their miseries,” Serop Ohanian, the corporation's Lebanon field director, told Catholic News Service.

There are no playgrounds or green spaces in densely populated Bourj Hammoud, often referred to as Little Armenia. Settled by Armenians who had fled the early 20th-century genocide, the area has grown into a vibrant community. However, Lebanon's economic crisis has caused more families to slip into poverty. The district also has seen Syrian refugees resettling there.

Half of the camp participants are Lebanese Armenians and half are Syrian Armenian refugees from Aleppo, Syria. All are Christian. Armenian is the principal language spoken.

The children are nurtured and guided by 34 volunteers, most of whom are university students majoring in education, psychology and special education, specially trained by the corporation.

Volunteer Nver Bodozian, who works with 3-year-old children, is a refugee from Aleppo herself. She and her family came to Lebanon six years ago, early in Syria's civil war. Her great-grandparents – who fled the Armenian genocide – originally settled in Aleppo.

Bodozian and her family are hoping to obtain visas to be resettled in a Western country. Meanwhile, she is studying to become a teacher at Kinder Mesrobian College in Beirut.

“We show the children love and care,” Bodozian said. “Even though I feel they have so much stress and sadness in their lives, they are so happy here.”

Bodozian and another volunteer have just completed an art activity with the preschoolers. Brilliant finger-painted butterflies, still drying, are hung across the classroom.

Next on their program is short play, retelling “The Three Little Pigs” story.

Young Migel, in the role of the wolf, “taps” on an imaginary door, making threatening “woo” sounds. His class-

mates, portraying little pigs, gleefully scoot around the room in feigned fright.

Later, seated at colorful child-sized tables and chairs, the youngsters prepare to eat sandwiches before recess. Bodozian leads them in a short prayer: “Thank you, God, for this day. Thank you for our food. Please help the poor.”

“If they can have faith in God beginning at a young age, it's everything,” Bodozian said.

“Although not a faith-based organization, we do encourage the children and their families to trust in God and live by faith,” Ohanian explained.

“We want to spread a beacon of hope within the community, within these neighborhoods and tell the children to dream big dreams, to get out from their difficulties and give them the opportunity to be a productive member within this community,” he said.

Downstairs, recess is already underway for the 7- and 8-

mates. Majarian said he frequently tells the class, “we should respect the teachers” and reminds them to say “please” and “thank you.”

Garbis, still eating his sandwich, hugs Majarian.

“When you see the children growing and blossoming before you, it's a great satisfaction,” she said as the trio resumes playing.

The children come from “complicated” backgrounds, whether because of financial struggles in their family or from the hollowed-out existence as refugees, Majarian said.

“These children are not refugees voluntarily. It's really difficult to be pulled away from your house, surroundings and friends, to see how your parents and neighbors suffered. Digesting all those traumas is too much for children to handle,” she said.

The corporation is a program of the Karagheusian Foundation, which was established in New York City in



Children engage in a finger painting activity at a summer day camp run by the Howard Karagheusian Commemorative Corporation in the Bourj Hammoud section of Beirut. The camp is funded in part by the Catholic Near East Welfare Association. Of the 390 Christian children, half are Lebanese Armenian, and half are Syrian Armenian, who are refugees from Aleppo. (CNS photo/Krikor Aynilian, courtesy Howard Karagheusian Commemorative Corporation)

year-olds. Balls zigzag across the outdoor courtyard, following the rhythm of the children's joy. Some kids stroll together, chatting with arms joined. A group of girls practice dance moves.

Taking a break from shuffling a soccer ball, Kevin, 8, a refugee from Aleppo, said, “my best friends are here,” pointing to Sevag of Lebanon and Garbis, also of Aleppo.

Their teacher, Alice Majarian, 26, told CNS that she calls the trio the Three Musketeers.

Majarian recounted the camp's first day when Kevin told his campmates that they should play nicely together. Kevin is “really organized and friendly,” Majarian said.

Sevag likewise promotes good manners to his camp-

mates. Majarian said he frequently tells the class, “we should respect the teachers” and reminds them to say “please” and “thank you.”

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## Fresh Suit Filed for Massive Inheritance Of Turkish-Armenian Brothel Owner Manukyan

By Özge Egrikar

ISTANBUL (*Hürriyet Daily News*) – Sixteen plaintiffs have filed a suit in Istanbul for the massive inheritance of Turkish-Armenian brothel owner Matild Manukyan seventeen years after her death.

Manukyan, who was one of the top tax payers in Turkey, died in 2001 and left behind a huge fortune, including 486 properties, dozens

of cars, as well as millions in cash and stocks. Manukyan's inheritance was bequeathed to Kerpe Çilingir, who was officially registered as her son.

Sixteen relatives of Manukyan, who live in the eastern province of Mus and the western provinces Izmir and Kocaeli, filed a fresh case over the inheritance last week at the Istanbul Civil Court of Peace. The plaintiffs argued that Çilingir “usurped” the inheritance although he was not the late woman's son.

According to their attorney, who said he concluded a years-long research over the issue, Manukyan's fortune was mostly based on the inheritance she received from her great uncle Armenak Shah Mouradian and her grandmother Susan Shah Mouradian.

“Manukyan had no sons or daughters. My clients were her only relatives and legal heirs. But Kerpe Çilingir usurped the inheritance,” the petition said, asking the court to “correct the error in the registry” and enforce an injunction to “keep Çilingir from selling the remaining properties.”



Matild Manukyan



# Community News

## Dr. Ümit Kurt Appointed Kazan Visiting Professor At Fresno State for Fall

FRESNO, Calif. – Armenian Studies Program Coordinator Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian announced that Dr. Ümit Kurt has been appointed as the 15th Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at Fresno State for the fall 2018 semester. The Kazan Visiting Professorship was established through a generous endowment established by Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan.

Dr. Kurt has written extensively on confiscation of Armenian properties, wealth transfer, local elites, the Armenian Genocide, mass violence, inter-ethnic strife, local historiography, early modern Turkish nationalism, and the Aintab Armenians.

Dr. Kurt will be teaching a three-unit course in the Fall Semester, “The Armenian Genocide in Comparative Perspective.” This course is a comparative study of mass killings in the twentieth century, especially the Armenian Genocide. Many questions remain about why these egregious acts occurred. The course will analyze mass killings and the forces that explain them. Three cases of genocide will be analyzed and compared 1) the Armenian Genocide of 1915, 2) the Holocaust 3) the Rwandan genocide. The course concludes with how one can best detect and prevent future Genocides.

As part of his duties, Dr. Kurt will give three



Dr. Ümit Kurt

public lectures at Fresno State: 1) “A Rescuer, an Enigma, and a Génocidaire: Cemal Pasha” (September 21); 2) “Proactive Local Perpetrators: Mehmet Yasin (Sani Kutlu) and Ali Cenani”; and 3) “The Curious Case of Ahmed Necmeddin Bey: A Look into the Sociopolitical Climate in Aintab on the Eve of 1915.” All of the public lectures are free and open to the public.

Dr. Ümit Kurt received his Ph.D. from the Department of History at Clark University in 2016. He received his M.A. degree in European Studies from Sabanci University in 2008 and undergraduate degree in Political Science from Middle East Technical University in 2006. He taught in the Faculty of Arts and Science in Sabanci University, from 2012 to 2014. He is currently working as a Polonsky Fellow at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute.

Dr. Kurt is the author of *The Great, Hopeless Turkish Race: Fundamentals of Turkish Nationalism in the Turkish Homeland, 1911-1916* (Istanbul: Iletisim Publishing House, 2012) and is the editor of *Revolt and Destruction: Construction of the State from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic and Collective Violence* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfi Publishing House, 2015) and *History and Historians in Turkey: Concepts and Practices* (Ankara: Heretik, 2018). He is also the author, with Taner Akçam, of *The Spirit of the Laws: The Plunder of Wealth in the Armenian Genocide* (translated by Aram Arkun; New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015).

For more information about the public lectures, please contact the Armenian Studies Program at 278-2669, visit its website at [www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies](http://www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies) or its Facebook page at @ArmenianStudiesFresnoState.



Two Dancers

## Armenia Fest Oakland County's Premier Ethnic Festival Enthralls

ROYAL OAK, Michigan – A warm summer night and a rich collage of Armenian culture greeted guests as they arrived at the Royal Oak Farmers Market for the 11th Annual Armenia Fest on Saturday, July 21. Live Armenian folk and contemporary music from the Armenia Fest All-Star Band under the direction of Vaughn Masropian filled the air while the crowd buzzed with enthusiasm for this much anticipated annual festival.

The festival formally opened at 6 p.m. with introductions by David Terzibashian, Fest co-chair, Vaughn Masropian, master of ceremonies, and committee member Corinne Khederian, followed by the introduction of several special guests. American and Armenian national anthems were performed by Deacon Rubik Mailian and the pride in this wonderful event, designed to showcase the rich Armenian culture, was evident in the rousing applause that followed the anthems.

As always, a special highlight of the evening was a thrilling performance by the Hamazkayin Arax Dance Troupe comprised of local Armenian youth trained in the art of Armenian folk dance. Their enthusiasm, beautiful costuming and flawless dance routines brought the crowd to their feet.

Guests enjoyed authentic Armenian food prepared by see FESTIVAL, page 12



Mickey Mouse and two children

## AMAA Centennial Celebration

By Joyce Abdulian

LOS ANGELES—Celebrating a “Century of Faith, Love, and Service,” the Centennial Celebration of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), founded in 1918 by a small group of pastors, will usher in a new era of outreach on October 20 at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles. The goal of the world-wide Centennial Campaign has been to raise \$20,000,000. The AMAA will continue its level of commitment to its mission in education, orphan and childcare, Christian ministries, medical outreach, camps, and a range of social services impacting 24 countries world wide – following our Lord’s mandate; “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

Co-Chairs Lori Muncherian, Arsine Phillips, Helga Sarkis, and Tina Segel are pleased to announce Kenneth L. Khachigian as the evening’s Master of Ceremonies. They welcome all to join in this landmark celebration. “The AMAA salutes its Centennial Celebration Honorees for their gracious, gallant and bountiful contributions to the century-old legacy of this organization,” says Zaven Khanjian AMAA Executive Director/CEO.

### Sheen Family Trust

John H. Sheen was born in Aintab, Cilicia (present day Turkey) to evangelical parents. Fleeing Turkey in 1913, he came to the East Coast of the United States with his mother and



John and Victoria Sheen

brother. His goal was to work hard and quickly bring his father and brother to America. Sadly, both were killed during the Genocide of 1915. Working in a buttonhole factory, he became an expert in repairing the machinery—eventually opening his own small factory. Sheen married Victoria Basmajian and they had three children, Edward, Betty, and Jack. Moving to Los Angeles in 1924, John began working in a church furniture manufacturing factory. Two years later he opened his own furniture manufacturing company – becoming the second largest manufacturer in California. He then ventured into the real estate business. Mr. Sheen has supported many charitable organizations, entrusting the AMAA with the greatest portion of his estate.

Camp Sheen-Shoghig in Hankavan, Armenia has provided respite for disadvantaged children as they play in the summer sun, nourished both spiritually and physically through the legacy of the John H. Sheen Trust.

Under the direction of his father’s trust, Dr. Jack Sheen is continuing the remarkable extent of Sheen philanthropy world-wide – encompassing education, relief aid in Armenia and Lebanon, evangelism, and aid for churches and missions. Nazareth E. Darakjian MD, President, Board of Directors of AMAA notes, “The AMAA can rightfully boast of serving the Armenian nation for a full century and can take its place see AMAA, page 12





## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Mari Manoogian Wins Democratic Primary as Candidate for Michigan State Rep

BIRMINGHAM, Mich. – Mari Manoogian on August 7 won the Democratic nomination as candidate for Michigan state representative for District 40.

Mari Manoogian was born and raised in Birmingham, Michigan. She attended Birmingham Public Schools and graduated with honors from Seaholm High School.

Mari's great-grandparents escaped the Armenian Genocide and came to the United States in the early 1920s. Her father's and



Mari Manoogian

mother's families arrived in Michigan via Ellis Island, and ultimately settled in the Detroit area, due to the promise of jobs and a vibrant Armenian-American community. Her grandfather's family rented a farm in Monroe, MI, and sold produce in the local neighborhoods. Her grandfather enlisted in the Army during World War II. He benefited from the GI Bill, training to eventually become an award-winning hairdresser. He worked in Birmingham and Southfield for more than fifty years. Her grandmother raised her four children in the family's Allen Park home.

On her mother's side, Mari's grandfather's entrepreneurial spirit led him to own several small businesses across Detroit and Oakland County. Following her graduation from Southwestern High School in Detroit, Mari's grandmother worked in a bank until she married Mari's grandfather. She raised their four children in Detroit and Southfield-Lathrup.

Mari's mother and father met through Mari's uncle, who has been a close friend of her father since childhood. Today, Mari's mom is a small-

business owner and vocational rehabilitation counseling expert. Mari's dad took a job as a cable splicer at Detroit Edison after high school. During his career at Edison he also held various positions with the union. He was elected and served as President of Local 223, the union which represents Detroit Edison's workers, from 1988 to 1997. He worked in the utility industry for fifty years, and retired in 2016 as Chief of Staff of the Utility Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO. Mari's younger sister, Alis, is also a graduate of Seaholm High School. She's currently a senior at the School of Hospitality Business at Michigan State University.

From a young age, Mari's family instilled in her a strong work ethic. She began babysitting in the local community when she was twelve and spent summers and breaks during high school and college waiting tables at Hunter House Hamburgers. Mari earned a varsity letter

in figure skating, was an award-winning high school journalist, and played several seasons of basketball for St. John Armenian Church in the Orthodox Athletic League. She figure-skated competitively, and was a member of the Figure Skating Club of Birmingham for fifteen years.

Education and public service has always been a priority for Mari's family. Mari graduated from Elliott School of International Affairs at the George Washington University. During her studies, she interned for then-Congressman John D. Dingell, the Council on Foreign Relations, and for Ambassador Samantha Power at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. Mari volunteered in global education programs for DC public school students, teaching public speaking and research skills through Model United Nations, and was an active member of the GW College Democrats.

After graduation, Mari worked in the Office

of English Language Programs at the US Department of State. While working with foreign and civil service officers, Mari set her sights on a career in public service. She was accepted to complete graduate studies in Global Communication, and again chose the Elliott School of International Affairs at GW. She worked full-time in the Office of eDiplomacy at the department while enrolled in school full-time. Mari is running for the Democratic nomination to be the 40th District's state representative to serve the people of her home community. She understands the importance of quality K-12 education, will make affordable higher education a priority, and is keenly aware of the critical need for leadership in the State House representing her community. She is a member of the ACLU, NAACP, Sierra Club, and St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Dearborn.

## St. James Men's Club Dinner to Feature NAASR Center Report

WATERTOWN – On Monday, September 10, 2018 there will be a St. James Armenian Church Men's Club dinner meeting at St. James Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center's Keljik Hall in Watertown, MA. The speakers, Sarah Ignatius, Yervant Chekijian, and Marc A. Mamigonian, are representatives from the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) who will discuss NAASR's exciting plans for its new global center for Armenian Studies now under construction in Belmont, Mass.

Sarah Ignatius, NAASR Executive Director, has the primary responsibility for supervision and day-to-day management of the organization. Yervant Chekijian, NAASR Chairman of the Board, leads the Board of Directors in setting the direction for the organization, heads NAASR's Building on Our Legacy Campaign to construct an all-new, first-class global center for Armenian Studies, and ensures that NAASR's activities align with its vision for the future. Marc A. Mamigonian, Director of Academic Affairs, has worked at NAASR for over 20 years, has gained international prominence among scholars and authors in the field of Armenian Studies, and is their trusted research advisor, editor, and colleague.

The title of their collective presentations will be NAASR's New Global Center and Vision for the Future. The speakers will discuss NAASR's forthcoming new center, which will be a breathtaking building and a draw for everyone—Armenians and non-Armenians alike. As NAASR is a leader in advancing Armenian Studies, its new headquarters will reflect that mission and bring Armenian traditions alive, with a multitude of beautiful Armenian features incorporated into the design, and will welcome the entire community as their gathering place.

The speakers will also present a short video and discuss NAASR's dynamic role in advancing Armenian Studies, supporting cutting-edge scholars, connecting them to much-needed research and financial support, and connecting their scholarly findings to the public. Founded in 1955, NAASR is an independent non-profit membership organization, and one of the world's leading Armenian Studies centers and rare book libraries. NAASR advances education and scholarship through Armenian Studies, offers high-

quality public programming, and supports and connects scholars of Armenian Studies worldwide with each other and a broad general public to build a global community, expand horizons, and preserve and enrich Armenian culture, history, and identity for future generations. This St. James Men's Club dinner meeting will begin with a social hour and mezze at 6:15 PM and



Artist's rendition of NAASR's new global center

dinner at 7:00 PM with losh kebab and kheyma (\$16 a person). Ladies are invited. St. James is located at 465 Mt. Auburn Street in Watertown.

## OBITUARY

### Sculptor Nikoghosyan Passes Away at 99

MOSCOW (Siver Telegram, nikogosyan.info)– Well-known artist Nikolai (Nikoghayos) Nikoghosyan died at the age of 99 years in Moscow on August 10. He gained fame through

Nalbandyan) in the Ararat valley of Armenia. He studied at the Leningrad School of Arts, and then graduated from the Moscow State Surikov Institute. He became an academician



the creation of monumental sculptures on the facade of the skyscraper on Kudrinskaya square, statues decorating the Palace of Science and Culture in Warsaw and the monument to Mikayel Nalbandian in Armenia.

Nikoghosyan was born on December 2, 1918 in the village of Mets Shahriyar (today

of the Russian Academy of Arts. His works are kept in many famous museums of the Russian Federation and elsewhere. For his work, the artist received the Order of Honor and Friendship and the State Prize of the USSR. He was named People's Artist of Armenia in 1977.

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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Armenian and American Ambassadors Discuss Cultural Diplomacy

DIPLOMACY, from page 1

Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy of Tufts University in Massachusetts. He worked for the United Nations (UN) in Armenia, several African countries and Lebanon, and after joining Armenia's Foreign Service, became Armenia's consul general in Los Angeles in 2009, ambassador to Mexico in 2014, and since 2016, ambassador to the US.

Mills, born 1959 in Louisiana, received a B.A. from Georgetown University, a J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law, and an M.S. in National Security Strategy from the National Defense University. He worked as an attorney in Washington prior to entering the US Foreign Service. He has served as a diplomat in France, Russia, Ireland, Pakistan, Malta and at the UN. Before becoming ambassador to Armenia in 2015, he most recently was deputy chief of mission at the US embassy in Beirut, Lebanon from 2012 to 2014.

Ramen started off the conversation between the two ambassadors by asking what cultural diplomacy is and how it fits into their work as ambassadors.

Mills first declared that it is not handing out copies of books like *Moby Dick* or *Little Women* to people around the world, since people can in today's globalized environment easily have access to American culture directly. He said, "I think it kind of sells itself."

There are, however, two ways in which the US embassy uses American culture in its work, according to Mills. First, it can be used to promote goals or values. He gave the example of promoting understanding of the rights of the disabled. A grant from Ramen's Bureau allowed the translation of a book into Armenian called *Wonder*, which is about a young boy facing life with a facial deformity. The embassy distributed it to schools in Armenia, brought in school children to talk about the book, and developed a curriculum that school teachers could use to talk about this book in their schools. This was a use of culture to promote a reform or value in Armenia, which the Armenian government also supported.

Mills added later that "Armenia is more stable as our friend when you have an open society, where every member of that society can participate fully, whether they are fully handicapped or disabled or have other skills. That is why we want to see this value take root in Armenia and we want to amplify the voices that want to see that."

He gave a second example of American cultural diplomacy the concrete results of which have just been experienced during the Velvet Revolution. Mills said that one of the close advisors of the new prime minister of Armenia confided to him that as the recent demonstrations and marches were unfolding he kept at his desk and in his knapsack a copy of Martin Luther King's *Letters from Birmingham Jail*. Mills said that the adviser told him he had been exposed to this work at what is called an American Corner in Gyumri. This is a corner in libraries around the world sponsored by the US State Department where American writings and computers are accessible. The adviser had read this work about ten years ago and said that the message of change through nonviolence, and the cost of change, continued to motivate him and he had bought his own copy. Mills concluded, "So when I hear a story like that, I do know that cultural diplomacy does make a huge difference."

The second way Mills said the embassy used culture was to create "a safe space for discussions about issues that a country, a society, may not want to have." He gave the example of Armenia's history and relationship with Turkey or Azerbaijan, including the future of Nagorno-Karabakh, as topics on which Armenians might not feel comfortable talking about frankly and openly in public.

One effort the embassy made in this field, Mills revealed, was to use a grant to bring Turkish and Armenian dancers together to create a piece of artwork designed to talk about reconciliation. This created what he called "a safe space" for discussion both in Armenia and in Turkey.

Hovhannisian commented that the US ambassador is a key person in the cultural landscape of Yerevan, as the embassy adds a different layer to

cultural life in Armenia through its cultural diplomacy. He said that there is a tremendous asymmetry in perspective and perceptions when it comes to cultural diplomacy of a small country like Armenia.

He said, "I represent a country, a nation, that learned throughout the millennia of history to believe in the power of culture and to defy the culture of power." Armenia's art, media and languages were used to communicate with an otherwise hostile environment and to develop a culture that absorbs others and thus becomes a victor, he said.

In the United States, there have been pockets of Armenian presence for 400 years, Hovhannisian said, but on the aggregate level, Armenian culture is largely unknown despite its tremendous and ancient legacy. Consequently, he said, "our office and others are trying to use the wealth of culture to introduce Armenia." They rely heavily on the culture produced in the Armenian diaspora, since Armenia is a "glocal" nation, meaning local in day-to-day issues in the Middle East but global with a culture cultivated in over 100 countries throughout the world. "There is tremendous wealth," Hovhannisian said, "that we have to learn how to market and present."

Ramen then asked the ambassadors to turn to the role of the Armenian diaspora in culture and diplomacy. Hovhannisian said that during the years that the Soviet Union instilled its own culture on Soviet Armenia, the Armenians abroad developed more freely, and their culture in turn influenced the culture of the third Armenian republic. It also supports today the cultural initiatives of the Republic of Armenia. He gave the example of partnerships with major American institutions like the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Getty Museum, which would not have been possible without diasporan generosity and enthusiasm.

Mills pointed out two ways in which the Armenian diaspora was a partner for the US embassy. The US does not have a ministry of culture or other arm of the government charged with cultural outreach. Consequently, the embassy can highlight ideas for cultural events showing shared values between the US and Armenia and the diaspora through its foundations and donors often funds these events in a way the embassy cannot do.

Secondly, the diaspora, Mills said, gives feedback to the embassy, suggesting that there should be a focus on certain things or pointing out misunderstandings. Mills gave the example of the shortage of information technology specialists in Armenia because of the rapid growth in this sector. Diasporan Armenians asked whether the US could recraft the Fulbright program to give more Armenians IT training in the US, and indeed, through the support of a large Armenian family foundation, half a dozen new Fulbright scholarships in the IT area were created.

Mills said that cultural diplomacy changed over time. During the Cold War period, he said, "we needed to show the world that American culture could thrive, [that] it was inclusive, it was valuable." That was no longer necessary in a globalized world. Instead, he said, "We use culture, I think, in a more targeted way now to promote specific ideas and specific values that the United States believes makes the world safer, makes the world a stronger place."

Hovhannisian recalled that during the Soviet period, his father clandestinely listened to Voice of America on his radio early in the morning. The Armenian diaspora also served as a little opening

to the broader non-Soviet world in those days.

Both Mills and Hovhannisian praised the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP), which was created in the early 2000s by the US government to support endangered cultures. Mills said that the reason why Americans were supporting rebuilding cultural heritage in other countries is that "this is our shared heritage. This is mankind's heritage that we are preserving...we all benefit when we preserve these great pieces of our common culture."

The US embassy, working with the Armenian ministry of culture and local Armenian communities, has funded several projects, the biggest of which at present is the renovation of frescoes in a medieval Armenian church in Meghri, a town on the border with Iran. The Christian iconography has been influenced by Persian art. Mills said, "It is an incredible kind of metaphor for how Armenia has been on the crossroads between all these cultures."

The embassy, working with the AFCP, was able to get a grant to restore the frescoes, which were falling into ruin. This also encourages cultural tourism and spurs other efforts to restore the old town of Meghri, which hopefully will be a part of the development of the rural regional economy of Armenia. Hovhannisian exclaimed in response, "Bless your heart! That is the talk of America that we love. And I also thank the American taxpayers for making this facility available to ambassadors."

At the end of the dialogue, the two ambassadors fielded questions from the audience on a wide variety of topics. One interesting point that came up, according to Mills, was that Armenia even before the recent revolution had a fairly open media environment. He said that to his chagrin, Freedom House even rated the Armenian social media environment freer than that of the US in 2016. It was this social media that played a big part in the movement of Nikol Pashinyan and the Velvet Revolution.

Mills did have one concern about the realm of cultural media. He said, "There is a Russian dominance in the Armenian media space in terms of news, in terms of news channels, and even in terms of some of the creative programming, some of the fictional programming. The Russian media companies have every right to enter the Armenian market. My concern frankly as the American ambassador, is just, I would like to see a little more alternative Western news programming, creative programming, not because we want to challenge what Russian programmers are giving Armenians, but to give Armenians a different view, just a different perspective, of what is happening in the world, so that they can make their own assessments, about what they are hearing from Russian media, versus what they may be hearing, if they have access to it, from the Western media, whether that is BBC, or CNN or Fox, or whatever."

To remedy this situation, Mills said the embassy is working with several cable providers to get more access for Western news programming in Armenia. He confessed that, "That is hobbled quite frankly by still the low level of English language skills, especially outside of Yerevan. That is one reason why we put a lot of money into English-language programming. Not because we think every Armenian needs to learn English, but English is the international world language now...It gives you access to different views of the world that you can then use to make your own decisions."

The panel discussion was supported by the Hirair and Anna Hovnanian Foundation, Birthright Armenia, and the Armenia Volunteer Corps.



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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Eastern Diocesan Council Chair Kalustian Presents Further Information on Cathedral Property Proposals

CATHEDRAL, from page 1

and when asked about the delay in communications, said, "It is acknowledged that it is late. We take responsibility for that." However, he said that it was not correct that there was no communication in this period, declaring "There was a lot of communication to 200 people at the Assembly who heard it firsthand. Unfortunately, concerning much of the communication outside, we were starting on that communication process through meetings, and things exploded, so we had to backtrack." He said the Council had given priority to informing the Assembly, "ultimately the highest body in the Diocese," but intended to go back to inform the community at large.

Furthermore, he said that while they were getting ready for this several times, market conditions changed, so that the nature of the deal being discussed also changed, "so what I might have told you a month ago is not what I would tell you today in terms of the deal or what opportunities are in front of us."

Kalustian noted that despite all this, the Council's position and its reasons have not changed, and went on to delineate the three primary motivating principles which are also listed in the Council's formal "Statement": protecting and preserving St. Vartan Cathedral and its plaza, upgrading the Diocesan Center, and ensuring both immediate and long-term financial benefits.

## Finances

He explained why the Council felt it was necessary to pursue developing the Diocesan Manhattan property. He said that unlike the first immigrant generation of Armenians to the United States, the second and third generations do not have to same commitment to financially supporting the church. In addition, existing donors have a much wider range of choices for their philanthropy than in the past, including many projects in the Republic of Armenia (some of which are also pursued by the Fund for Armenian Relief of the Diocese itself).

Meanwhile, the Diocesan facility has not been properly maintained or invested in, Kalustian said. The situation has been worsening over the past 50 years and coming to a head now. He said that, "This council has taken the position that we cannot afford to keep patching up the facility. We want to do it in a more professional and a more effective way that is going to secure the future."

There are a number of other fields for which the Diocese needs more money. The Council wants to give Diocesan employees proper raises, health care expenses are going up, and the Council cannot provide good retirement programs for the staff and clergy. It needs a full staff for a development department.

More significantly for the future of the church, it cannot afford to introduce new programs, which would require more staff. Kalustian gave the examples of Diocesan youth administrators working throughout the parishes, college ministry, and online ministry using social media. He said adding new programs would allow the Diocese to do a better job of assuring that the church is the vibrant center of the Christian Armenian life of our community.

The Council in his period in office managed to end borrowing against restricted funds and stopped borrowing on a significant line of credit for cash flow purposes, he said. It engaged in fundraising but has only been able to raise five million dollars over the past four or five years.

Without developing the cathedral property, Kalustian said, "If we collect money for renovations we are going have to work very, very hard to do the equivalent. I don't think we are going to get there, but let's say we do, for the 11 or 13 million that is going to come in to modernize our facility. Let's say we get it." After a hard struggle, there still would be no money for the programs, staff and benefits the Council wants to have.

In other words, he said, "Right now our financing allows us to maintain the status quo, which is not good enough for the changed environment in which we are." Instead, Kalustian said, by selling or leasing part of the New York complex, the Council can both accomplish the latter and do the necessary renovations.

## Negotiations

Kalustian outlined the way the Diocesan Council became involved in negotiating on this issue. The Diocese has toyed with the idea of property development before, even as early as almost 50 years ago. More recent proposals included one by a prominent New York developer asking to take over the entire plaza and administration building to create a large tower which was rejected, Kalustian said, as too intrusive. However, the idea never really died.

Kalustian has been on the Council since 2001 and served as its treasurer from 2005 to 2011. After Kalustian became chairman of the Council in 2013, the council recognized that development of its midtown Manhattan property was

potentially a great source of revenue. The next year, the Council went to the Diocesan Assembly saying it wished to continue to evaluate this idea. Kalustian said that in response, "there was broad-based support." The Council in its report wrote that it would pursue a more modest approach than in the past, imposing limitations on obstructions to sightlines. The development idea remained as part of the Council's report at each of the following Diocesan Assemblies until the present one.

Kalustian said that he and then Primate Archbishop Khajag Barsamian reached out to Ara Hovnanian. The latter, though well-established in real estate, was not involved in New York City development. Kalustian said that this choice was intentional in order to avoid potential conflicts of interest. Both Hovnanian and Kalustian worked as volunteers without financial compensation.

Kalustian also pointed out that it would not be feasible to have a coalition of rich Diocesan donors finance the development project "because it would take too much time, too much effort, too much red tape to put something in place. Frankly it would be expecting too much of our generous benefactors to do something like that. They would need to expect a return on that kind of money and to give them that return would cause suspicion among those people who have an emotional objection to doing anything. We don't think it is worth putting them through that kind of torment, frankly."

Kalustian and his cohorts decided to avoid preparing a full-blown Request for Proposal (RFP) to firms, because it would require engineering drawings, designs and a full formal bid process, all of which would be expensive. Instead, Kalustian said, they decided to do what they call a modified RFP. This entails going to prominent developers that the Diocese had talked to in the past, as well as some new ones, and ask whether they have any interest in their project.

Some firms immediately said they were not interested because the project's scale was too small. Furthermore, the limitations imposed by the Diocese in order to preserve the prominent lines of sight of the cathedral and the integrity of the plaza imposed further costs and decreased the potential profits for the developers. One firm, which is the one the Diocese ended up choosing, brought its own engineers and architects and came up with a proposal to build only on the footprint of the present administrative building that seemed suitable.

Meanwhile, an outside independent appraisal was made of the property in May 2017. Kalustian said that in hindsight the valuation was a little inflated because it relied on comparable properties which were more condominium oriented than rental property, and on more prominent addresses like Fifth Avenue. If the Diocese goes forward with the development it would have an updated appraisal because interest rates are going up, which will increase the costs of the debt that the developer will incur.

Several presentations about the proposal were made with the Council and then several with the Diocesan Board of Trustees. Kalustian said, "There was a unanimous agreement to move forward with the developer with a LOI [letter of intent]." In November, 2017, the Diocese signed the LOI, which is exclusive but nonbinding.

The LOI tries to get the terms of the deal set as much as possible, until the final contract negotiation. For the period of the LOI contract, Kalustian explained, the Diocese cannot go out and shop around with other developers. There are also time limits for the firm to get the required development permits from the relevant authorities. If the two parties cannot come to an agreement, they will mutually agree that they are released from all obligations, without penalty.

Kalustian said that one advantage of the modified RFP approach was that once the Diocesan decided to go with this firm, the Diocesan team "selected our structural engineers. We selected any architectural support that we needed, any HVAC technical support, legal support, tax support—all those professionals we selected, but they paid for it, with hundreds of thousands of dollars. That was part of our negotiation."

Kalustian said that a decision between leasing or selling air rights has not yet been made. The sale terms have been defined by the developer and are open to negotiation. This was what was presented at the Assembly. If air rights are sold over the Diocesan administration property, and a building is built over this land, the land itself technically goes with the building to the developer. A large upfront lump sum payment would be made, and residual revenues would continue to be received over the life of the building.

The financial structure for a lease of the air rights, not a sale, would be different. It would allow the land to remain with the Diocese and an annual payment would be made for 99 years. Kalustian said, "We are not pursuing either/or. We are pursuing both. This is another piece of misinformation." The developer has not formalized its proposal of the

terms of the lease, unlike its sale proposal. Kalustian concluded, "Would our preference be to lease and not to sell? Yes, that would be our preference. But we have to look at both to make sure we get what is best." The rise in market interest rates affect the developer's offer.

Kalustian noted that during the past few months, some misunderstandings or incorrect information spread in the Armenian community, and corrected one such point. It was claimed that a new midtown zoning law allows the transfer of air rights to non-contiguous properties, but the cathedral property is six or eight blocks outside of the midtown zoning area to which this regulation applied.

## What next?

Concerning the petition for a special Diocesan Assembly, Kalustian said that there was no response until the signatures were examined and the Council ascertained whether they were of valid dues-paying delegates. He declared, "We intend to abide by that request. The request was to have the assembly before any decision was made. We don't have a contract. We are still negotiating the terms. By negotiating that does not mean we are finalizing the contract. We are still negotiating the terms of the two options. When those are done we are going to go back. We intend to do that anyway."

If the terms are ready and a decision can be made by the end of the year, a special assembly would be held, but, Kalustian said, if this happens by next spring, it will be discussed at the next regular assembly in May, which would save the time and expense of a special meeting.

The immediate response to the petition, Kalustian said, would be given in the forthcoming "Statement," which indeed states that "any final proposal or contract" would be brought "back to the Assembly prior to adoption or execution."

Meanwhile, he said, "We intended to have community meetings in New England, New York/New Jersey and the Mid-West to let them know what we are doing and hear what they have to say. As things are still in flux they will probably be in the fall, but we are having smaller meetings to discuss things more in detail. We have had several of those already and several are planned." In addition, individual conversations have been held with some prominent benefactors in the greater New York area.

While the proposals will be discussed at a forthcoming Diocesan Assembly, Kalustian declared that what will happen next "is the decision of the Council collectively with the Board of Trustees." However, he emphasized that a development project would not be adopted if there is a great split in the community and alienation, and said: "We know this is a very important issue on a purely financial and economic basis for the future of the Diocese, but we also know that it is a very important issue emotionally, and the emotions in New York and New Jersey are very different than New England because of the proximity, but it is still a very important issue. We are not going to do this based on a vote."

Kalustian continued: "This needs to be something that the community can get behind and get excited about, and as they are educated and understand the benefits, and we put the falsehoods and mistruths to rest, and people get excited, that is going to be the basis for moving forward. If we are really concerned about the future and want to make it a vibrant Christian Armenian center for the life of all of our children and grandchildren, we have to do something."

If the construction project in either of its two variants is adopted, the developer estimated it would take 18 to 24 months to complete. The Council is planning, Kalustian said, for 24 to 34 months to be on the cautious side. In both of the options being considered, the developer would spend between a minimum of 11 million dollars up to 13 million to completely renovate and update the Diocesan facilities underneath the plaza. This would disrupt Kavookjian and the other halls as well as the kitchen. They would all be modernized, the HVAC system upgraded, heating changed from steam to gas, the electrical work and plumbing would be modernized.

The work that will take place would allow three options for the staff in the Diocesan headquarters, Kalustian said: stay in the new building, move under the Cathedral after that area is renovated, where he said there is more than enough aboveground space, or move to another location, either in Manhattan or somewhere else. Each one has financial implications as well as emotional considerations.

Kalustian commented that the space in the administration building right now is "incredibly inefficient. It is much more square footage than we need but we need it because of it is inefficiently laid out and designed." He added that "one of the things that we are looking at would be more of a hoteling concept, where there are people that are there every day, and there are people that are there a few days a week or a few days a month, and accommodate that flexibility."





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# A STATEMENT FROM THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL REGARDING THE DIOCESAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROPOSAL

(ISSUED BY THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL OF THE DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA (EASTERN) ON AUGUST 11)

This statement is addressed to fellow leaders of the Eastern Diocese, parishioners, and the Armenian-American public, regarding the recent proposal for the development of the Diocesan Complex in New York.

Since the Diocesan Assembly in May 2018, when the proposal was first presented to the public, misinformation has unfortunately driven the discussion. This public statement, which we agree is overdue, is meant to address that, and to provide insight into the current status of activity.

As members of the Diocesan Council, we have spent much of the past two months responding to individual comments and reacting to harsh attacks based on this misinformation. We thank those who have taken the time to speak with us and have allowed us to answer your questions, address your concerns, and set the record straight. We also thank the many Diocesan Delegates who have tried to responsibly and accurately communicate the facts to fellow parishioners.

Our hope is that this statement will start a healthy, constructive dialogue with community members from across our Diocese. We will do this both in writing (including through the linked Fact File documents) and in person, through a series of open meetings currently being organized, where we will gladly answer your questions and address any concerns raised.

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The Council's objective in considering this project and proposal is to fulfill the mission of the Armenian Church by envisioning, funding, and enabling innovative programs that attract and engage our faithful in the life of the church. To begin, we want to clearly state the three fundamental principles driving the current Diocesan Development Plan Proposal:

## 1. Protecting and Preserving St. Vartan Cathedral and its Plaza

The proposed plan impacts only the footprint of the current Administration Building. Importantly, it maintains the integrity of the Cathedral, the Dome, and the Plaza, and also preserves the sightlines of the Cathedral and Dome.

It should be noted that we insisted on the above requirements with developers. While they are critical to our collective interests, incorporating them limits the scope of developers' potential designs, and impacts the ultimate return we could gain from such a project. As some know, an earlier proposal for the development of the Diocesan Complex (from six years ago), which would have encompassed both the Administration Building and the Plaza, was summarily and understandably rejected.

The current proposal addresses the need to preserve the extraordinarily powerful presence Armenians have in New York City, while ensuring that the Cathedral and Plaza will be structurally sound for the long term (see below).

## 2. Upgrading the Diocesan Center

The current Diocesan Complex (including the Cathedral and Plaza) needs significant renovation and refurbishment. This proposal achieves that end.

Whether the "air rights" are sold or leased, the developer would provide at least \$11 million in structural, mechanical, and cosmetic improvements to the Cathedral and its adjacent facilities. (A detailed list of the planned construction and enhancements is provided in the Fact File linked below.)

In addition, this proposal would allow the Diocesan staff to work in more efficient, inviting, and functionally-improved



One proposed rendering of a plan for development of the St. Vartan Cathedral Plaza of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, New York (from "Facts on the Diocesan Development Plan Proposal: Architectural Renderings and Elevations," Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern))

office space. Just as importantly, it would create a more welcoming Diocesan Center overall, including better classroom, meeting, and reception spaces. Details are still being worked out; but we are committed to upgrading the Complex, which has both short and long-term benefits.

## 3. Ensuring Immediate and Long-term Financial Benefits

The Diocesan Council has made significant strides in recent years to stabilize and strengthen the finances of the Diocese. We no longer borrow against restricted funds, and we have dramatically reduced line-of-credit borrowing for cash flow purposes. But the financial challenges continue—and will only increase—given rising costs and ongoing operational and maintenance needs.

More importantly, clergy, parish council members, and youth leaders from across our Diocese regularly suggest innovative programs and projects, which we are unable to implement in large part due to financial limitations. Again, this proposal addresses that concern.

While the proposal presented at the Diocesan Assembly involved selling the "air rights," we are still exploring an alternative proposal that would lease those air rights instead. An air rights sale would mean significant cash up front, allowing for an endowment of at least \$50 million. When added to the current unrestricted portion of our endowment, this would more than cover the Diocese's annu-

al budget.

An air rights lease would mean less money up front, but should provide the equivalent of an annual return on such an endowment as mentioned above. The specific terms are still being negotiated.

Regardless of the option pursued, however, this proposal would allow the Diocese to better fulfill its mission and place it on a strong, durable financial footing, enabling better support and programming for the parishes for years to come.

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The above principles and more are discussed in greater depth in the linked Fact File documents. We encourage you to download and review them.

The first file is a Question-and-Answer document detailing WHY we need it, WHAT is being proposed, HOW the proposal is structured financially, and WHEN the project would take place.

The second file shows architectural renderings of the completed project as it would look from various perspectives around Second Avenue and 34th Street in Manhattan.

We ask that you please take the time to separate these facts from misinformation. No decision has been made. No contract has been executed. No one or two individuals are making important decisions regarding the future of our Diocesan Complex. And no one is "giving anything away": appraisals have been completed, and analyses have been done and are being updated.

A request has been received to convene a Special Assembly to discuss the Diocesan Development Project. It has always been the Council's intent to bring any final proposal or contract back to the Assembly prior to adoption or execution. The Council and Board of Trustees welcome the opportunity to convene this Assembly prior to the execution of any sale, lease or conveyance agreements or commitments.

Interestingly, in the time since the Diocesan Development Proposal was presented, St. Bartholomew's Cathedral on Park Avenue and 52nd Street—an even more valuable part of Manhattan—has announced a deal comparable to the one we are considering.

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Since its construction 50 years ago, St. Vartan Cathedral and its entire complex have been the subject of several different development proposals. We believe this is the most reasonable and responsible one—which will ensure the long-term financial, structural, and symbolic stability of our precious Cathedral and Diocesan Center.

Current market conditions in New York real estate (including changes in interest rates, borrowing requirements, and the rental market) afford us a chance to step back, review, and broaden community involvement and input in the plan and to help evaluate the tremendous, unique opportunity the development plan presents.

Most importantly, the reason we need to address the Diocese's financial situation is to more effectively and innovatively fulfill the mission of the church. We want the Diocesan Center to be the vibrant hub of Armenian Christian activity. We want to fund and enable innovative programming that will attract and engage our faithful in the life of the church.

We on the Council believe that the Diocesan Development Plan is a viable and positive proposal for the future of our Diocese. Ultimately, it aims to support ministries that would bring our people closer to Christ through the precious traditions of the Armenian faith experience.

We look forward to our continuing conversation on this important topic.





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# AMAA Centennial Celebration

AMAA, from page 8

next to other organizations that helped save the survivors of the genocide by rebuilding their homes, schools and churches. We are carrying a torch that has been passed to us from our predecessors and we need to carry that torch and run with it to raise the AMAA to a higher level of mission and service for the wellbeing of our people and the glory of God."

## Stephen Philibosian and Conte Foundations

Stephen Philibosian was born in Hadjin, Cilicia to evangelical parents. Moving with his family to historic Tarsus at age ten, he became quite accomplished as a tailor's apprentice. In 1909, at age 19, Stephen arrived in America with his prosperous uncle who had briefly



Sirpuhe and John Conte

returned to Tarsus from The United States. Soon after, he found himself employed in his uncle's Philadelphia oriental rug emporium.

Philibosian's fearless perseverance and rapid mastery of the business brought him prosperity. His creative sense of business and ever persistent efforts propelled him years later to be known as the "Dean of Oriental Rug Retailers." He made the decision to use his

wealth for the welfare of his countrymen—fulfilling a promise he had made to his mother. His passion to use his wealth for the welfare of his countrymen, was inspired by the sixth AMAA Executive Secretary, Rev. Puzant Kalfayan, who profoundly captivated Stephen with narratives about the grievous situation in Lebanon — thus beginning the 75-year trajectory of Philibosian philanthropy.

Sirpuhe Philibosian Conte also was born in Hadjin. She came to America as a child, later becoming a successful business woman herself. Stephen and Sirpuhe married and had two daughters, Joyce and Louise. In 1955 Mr. Philibosian co-founded Haigazian College (now University) in Beirut, Lebanon — a beacon of education in the Middle East. Sirpuhe later married John Conte. They founded the Sirpuhe and John Conte Foundation and donated funds for the Conte Hall in Haigazian University's restored landmark, the "Heritage Building." Levon Filian, AMAA West Coast Executive Director shares — the AMAA "has not become weary in doing good" Gal. 6:9, and has reaped God's abundant blessings on its ministry for a full century."

Joyce Philibosian Stein is a Trustee of the Stephen Philibosian Foundation. With husband Joe Stein at her side, Joyce, her sister Louise Danielian, daughters Tina Segel and Stephanie Landes, and grandson Stephen Danielian, all continue the founder's significant work of philanthropy. She is the national Co-Chair of the AMAA Orphan and Child Care Fund. For 25 years, the Los Angeles Child and Orphan Care Children's Fashion Show has been a much-anticipated community event, raising millions of dollars that have significantly impacted the lives of marginalized orphans and children in Armenia and Artsakh. Joyce's devotion to one of the AMAA's jewels, Haigazian University, has been constant throughout the well-known challenges. Some of Joyce's multiple areas of outreach have included the Armenian Assembly, Salvation Army, Lark Musical Society, Virginia Waring International Piano Competition, chair of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia 'Daisy Day' fund-raising Campaign with Honorary Chair, President Dwight Eisenhower and the Philadelphia Orchestra. As a 50-year volunteer/supporter of the Philadelphia Orchestra, Joyce has chaired various major fund-raisers.

Joyce was the president of the Haigazian Women's Auxiliary of Los Angeles for 20 years, where her many friendships in the art world, led to extremely successful community fund-raising events.

## Gerald and Patricia Turpanjian, TF Educational Foundation

The eldest of two genocide survivors from Dikranagerd, Turkey, Gerald Turpanjian was born in Aleppo, Syria. He grew up in Beirut, Lebanon and immigrated to the United States to continue his education. He married Patricia Savoian and they had four children: Lori, Gary, Deanna and Paul. Founded in 2005 by Gerald and Patricia, the Turpanjian Family Educational Foundation (TFEF), is dedicated to furthering the progress of education in Armenia and the Diaspora.

Gerald Turpanjian founded Pacific Sales Kitchen and Bath Centers. Prior to selling to Best Buy in 2006, Pacific Sales was the largest retailer of luxury kitchen and bath appliances and fixtures in the United States. He is currently the chairman and CEO of New Spark Holdings, Inc. and the president of the TFEF.

The Turpanjians support many philanthropic organizations including AMAA, American University of Armenia (AUA), Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), University of Southern California, projects in Artsakh, the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, and Torrance Memorial Medical Center.

As a supporter of AMAA, TFEF has helped fund many projects; Haigazian University, Merdinian School, Camp Hankavan, AMAA child and orphan care, Karabakh and Syrian relief and Armenian Evangelical Central High School of Beirut, Gerald's alma mater.

AUA has received the Foundation's support for multiple projects including funding the School of Public Health, the Institute of Policy Analysis and the digitization of Western and Diaspora literature for the AUA Digital Library. In conjunction with those endeavors, Mr. Turpanjian is a member of AUA's Board of Trustees and has awarded over 2,400 university scholarships to students in Armenia. Through the Turpanjian Rural Development Program, along with AUA he has



Gerald and Patricia Turpanjian

helped Armenian entrepreneurs create over 300 small businesses around the country.

TFEF supports various AGBU projects and initiatives including the children's center in Malatya, Armenia and AGBU Senior Dining Centers in Armenia.

A graduate of USC, Mr. Turpanjian established the first chair in Contemporary Armenian Studies and the Chair in Civil Society and Social Change.

As a partner with the government of Artsakh, TFEF has built an elementary school, two high schools and has aided in the construction of a water system in which over 3,000 residents in the village of Hadrut now receive clean water daily.

The Foundation's support of the Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin, and the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America includes the renovation of the ancient scriptorium in Harichavank, the establishment of the Turpanjian Theological Seminary and support of St. Leon Cathedral in Burbank, California.

Locally, Torrance Memorial Medical Center has been gifted with support from TFEF including the Turpanjian Family Chapel and their support of the Occupational Rehabilitation Center.

The impact over the years of these esteemed honorees cannot be adequately expressed in words. Hearts, minds, and souls have been immeasurably affected by their loving generosity.

For more information about the Centennial Banquet please call Levon Filian at (626)-487-5878 or the AMAA Office at (201) 265-2607.

## Armenia Fest: Oakland County's Premier Ethnic Festival Enthralls

FESTIVAL, from page 7

Gary Reizian's Uptown Deli, interesting vendor booths and dancing under the stars — a magical trip to Armenia via the Royal Oak Farmer's Market.

Kudos once again to the Armenia Fest 2018 Committee whom to date have presented ten successful Armenia Fests for metro Detroiters. Operating under the auspices of the Knights of Vartan, Nareg Sharvashan Lodge, committee

members are Edward Bedikian, co-chair, David Terzibashian, co-chair, Ray Boujoulian, Corinne Khederian, Vaughn Masropian, Hagop Alexanian, Paul Kulhanjian, Ken Khezarian, Shirley Sarkisian, Angela Hagopian Snow, Madeline Thomasian and Pam Coultis. Proceeds from the Fest are earmarked for Armenian humanitarian projects. Participants are doing some good while having some fun, Armenian style.



Crowd watching dancers at Fest



Fest guests, from left: Cassandra Brower, local businessman Edmond Hagopian, Fest Co-Chair David Terzibashian



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# Arts & Living

## The Armenian Frida Kahlo: On Mariam Aslamazyan's 110th Anniversary

By Lilit Sargsyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN – When the creative image of an artist is deeply intertwined with her personal image, they merge into a single whole. Mariam Aslamazyan is presented in such wholeness. Her character, her life principles, contrary to all stereotypes, served her sole creed – art and development of her creativity. Nothing could stop this Soviet woman with Armenian patriarchal roots on her difficult and contradictory path, or even slow down her movement. From the stories and memories of the artist, it becomes clear that she grew up in a rather progressive and highly esteemed family and from early childhood she received those basic impulses and attitudes which raised her not just as a talented but as an independent, emancipated woman artist.

If we try to characterize her image briefly – both artistic and personal – it combines will and temperament, vital energy, exotics, and incredibly forceful beauty with power. Power and strength are masculine concepts, polished in Aslamazyan's hands so aesthetically, as only a woman can do. The artist confessed: "I wanted so badly to be a man, but only one with a strong, hard character." According to the eminent sculptor and artist Nikolai Nikogosyan, recently deceased at the age of 99 – to whom this confession of the artist was entrusted – "she possessed such a character." Aslamazyan's art stands firmly on the combination of strength and beauty, and these qualities characterize her image.

Aslamazyan's painting is one of the brightest pages in the history of Armenian and Soviet



Mariam Aslamazyan

painting of the second half of the 20th century. Her name is inextricably linked with the development of post-war and later - post-Stalin fine art. Like many Armenian artists of the Soviet era, fatefully connected to Russia, Aslamazyan also represents two cultures – Armenian national and Russian and Soviet. She was born in 1907 in the village of Bash-Shirak in the Kars region and spent her childhood there. From 1878 to 1917, this Armenian land, rich in cultural traditions, was a province of the Russian Empire, and in 1918, as a result of the politics of the First World War, it was handed to the Ottoman Empire.

The future artist received her secondary and primary art education in the Armenian city of Alexandropol (now Gyumri), at that time also see ASLAMAZYAN, page 15



Oksana Mirzoyan

## Armenian-American Filmmaker Oksana Mirzoyan Shares Stories and Her Songs

DETROIT (Detroitisit.com) – Oksana is taken by surprise.

Oloman Cafe. This is her first time in this Hamtramck café and she is astounded by its presence—"I grew up in this neighborhood. I never expected it to be so . . . hip!" With equal gusto, she is quick to remark on the quality of her cheese and ham croissant, "It is a difficult feat to perfect something so simple."

By CV Henriette

My brief coffee date with the Armenian-American artist turns into nearly two hours

of lively discussion touching on everything from obscure poetry to suburban high school connections to the struggles of a filmmaker who chooses to stay in the Midwest. She speaks of a childhood marred by conflict—fleeing from the Baku pogroms, her family immigrates to the US as refugees. It's the stuff of movies.

No doubt this is an origin story that has deeply shaped the trajectory of a spirit as introspective and engaging as her films—with a career that has taken her around the world.

Her resume comes with a list of accolades that mock her young age. Her films have screened internationally at film festivals including Clermand-Ferrand (France), Camerimage (Poland) and DokuFest (Kosovo). Her short film, "140 Drams" took top prize as Best International Short Film at Izmir Film Festival (Turkey), an Honorable Mention at the Pomegranate Film Festival (Canada) and was recognized by the ICG Emerging Cinematographer Awards (USA). "140 Drams" was selected by Atom Egoyan for his curated section "Diaspora: Atom Egoyan & Armenia" at Fribourg International Film Festival (Switzerland). Her first feature film, "Abyssm," received Locarno International Film Festival's (Switzerland) Open Doors Award. In 2016 she became a Kresge Fellow.

She has served as a Creative Director for OneArmenia, a nonprofit based out of NYC focused on supporting art, tech and entrepreneurial initiatives in Armenia. Currently she is documenting the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict in the South Caucasus and working on her first feature film.

She splits her time between Detroit and Armenia. And even found time for us.

CV Henriette: What's the last album you purchased?

Oksana Mirzoyan: "Ye" by Kanye West.

CVh: What's the last album you've listened to in its entirety?

OM: "Greatest Hits of Led Zeppelin."

CVh: How do you listen to music at home?

OM: Very loud, while dancing.

CVh: Name one song that's changed you.

OM: Pirozhok by Verka Serduchka.

CVh: Sun sign?

OM: Virgo Sun/Libra Rising.

CVh: Inner avatar?

OM: Persephone.

CVh: What's the characteristic you like most in people? Curiosity and Vulnerability

OM: Dislike the most? Hypocrisy.

## Paper Artist Brings Historical Jerusalem Figures to Life

By Maya Margit

JERUSALEM (Media Line) – King David, a crusader queen, and Suleiman the Magnificent—these are just some of the ancient figures that have been brought to life by Karen Sargsyan. The famed Dutch-Armenian artist spent months creating a series of colorful aluminum sculptures of a slew of historical and biblical characters who helped shape Jerusalem's history.

They are on display at "Rock, Paper, Scissors," a new exhibition at the Tower of David Museum, which is located in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Born in Yerevan, Armenia in 1973, Sargsyan and his family moved to the Netherlands 20 years ago. Though he is now one of the leading paper artists in the world, the sculptor started off in a completely different—and surprising—profession: boxing.

"I see a lot of links between art and sports, because sports are a kind of art form," Sargsyan said in an interview with the Media Line. "I use a lot of the dynamic movements of the human body seen in sports."

Sargsyan's creative process is spontaneous and relies on very little planning, though the artist does use a wooden frame as a general outline for his works. For the most part, however, he relies on intuition to produce his multi-layered sculptures. For the exhibition at the Tower of David, he used over 100 kilograms of aluminum sheets and 2,500 knives, all of which he transported from Amsterdam to his makeshift studio in Israel.

"I feel great in Israel because it's very similar to Armenia with regards to the weather



Tower of David exhibition

and people's mentality," he said.

Among other notable figures on display are Eliezer Ben Yehuda, an early 20th century lexicographer who revived the Hebrew language; and Melisende, queen of Jerusalem in the 12th century.

Though the history surrounding these figures is intricate and, for that matter, quite serious, the sculptures depict them in a humorous manner.

"The movement that Sargsyan can create from scissors and very simple materials is fantastic because as you can see the sculptures look like they are dancing," Eilat Lieber, Director and Chief Curator of the Tower of David Museum, explained to the Media Line. "We invite people to enjoy the beauty of the citadel, to walk inside the archaeological garden, see the remains and meet with different figures of the history of Jerusalem."

Ultimately, Sargsyan hopes to transmit his art form to the next generation and for this reason the summer exhibition also includes workshops for children, who can learn how to put a cutting-edge twist on ancient history.



## Centuries-old Armenian Church Throws Light On Assam Connection

By Gaurav Das

GUWAHATI, India (*The Telegraph*, India) - The rediscovery of what is believed to be an 'Armenian church' in Dhubri has reignited curiosity among heritage connoisseurs and local administration to find its roots and the extent of Armenian influence in lower Assam. With its obscure past and unique architecture, the church has been a topic of mystery among elderly locals of Dhubri town, and how with its stature as a well-connected port Dhubri had drawn people of different origins from distant places, including Armenians.

The church's architecture is unique: a mix of Armenian style amalgamated with Assam-type house architecture. Compared to other British era structures it stands apart. It has 3 arch-shaped glass windows along with a central triangular shaped dome.

The Armenians arrived in India before the British. They had a considerable presence in Kerala and Bengal. In Calcutta, the Armenians contributed to the city's commerce as a thriving business community and helped build some of the most prominent landmarks.

Heritage Conservation Society of Assam (HeCSA), a registered society working towards the conservation and preservation of Assam's pre-colonial structures, recently shared a photo of the Armenian Church, sparking interest among heritage connoisseurs.

"The structure throws light on an intriguing chapter in Assam's history. Till now, it was only known that Armenians had a significant presence in Bengal during pre-colonial time. Assam's heritage is something we should study and help establish with fact-finding missions. It is important to know what influence they had in Dhubri district. The cold trail of their supposed presence should be reignited by research," said Jayanta Sharma, secretary of HeCSA.

The key to the mystery surrounding the church and the presence of Armenians in Dhubri lies with the surviving older generation which has witnessed some of the remnants of what the



The church in Dhubri district (photo: Gaurav Das)

Armenians left behind.

Among them is octogenarian S. K. Bose, a writer and connoisseur of the region's socio-economic and cultural aspects. Bose was born in Dhubri and had witnessed some of the elaborate Armenian structures, including a graveyard. "There was a graveyard about 50 meters from the church. I vividly remember around 12 to 15 Armenian graves. Among them were two of children. This signifies that the Armenians had a significant presence. They were traders who could have arrived in Dhubri during the 18th century or early 19th century. But the graveyard is no longer there. Modern construction prevailed over it. Only old records could show the exact date," said Bose, who is into numismatics.

"The church has stained glass called sun-catcher, with a central triangular shaped dome at the top. This aspect cannot be found in other British structures. There is a greater need for preservation. But the local administration has shown interest. Last week there was a meeting in Dhubri on how to conserve this Armenian Church. But the onus was placed on establishing its legacy and finding evidence," said a source.

The British transformed the Armenian Church into a club which post-Independence came to be known as the Ladies' Club.

# Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Datian

## Fig, Apple, and Pear Salad with Toasted Walnuts

### INGREDIENTS

8-10 cups torn mixed greens or spinach mix including at least 1 of the bitter greens such as watercress, arugula, kale or endive  
5-6 large fresh Mission figs (or any variety, washed, quartered or 1 cup chopped dried figs)  
2 large red or green apples, diced or thinly sliced  
2 large firm pears, cored, chopped or thinly sliced  
1/2 cup golden raisins  
1/2 cup chopped pitted dates, dried cranberries or red pomegranate seeds  
2/3 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley  
2-3 finely sliced scallions (or 2 tablespoons finely chopped shallots)  
3/4 cup walnuts or pecans, toasted and coarsely chopped  
3/4 cup crumbled Blue Cheese, Feta, Gorgonzola or shaved Manchego cheese

### DRESSING

1/2 cup olive or walnut oil  
1/4 cup red wine or balsamic vinegar or juice of 1 large lemon (to taste)  
2 tablespoons maple syrup  
2 tablespoons honey  
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard  
1/8 teaspoon sea or Kosher salt  
Dash of black pepper

### PREPARATION

Combine dressing ingredients in bowl or jar, check seasonings, and set aside or chill overnight.

In a large bowl toss the salad ingredients with some dressing. Garnish with toasted nuts and cheese and serve with extra dressing on the side. Serve with toasted flat bread, garlic or pita bread.

Serves 4-6.

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



### HELP AN ARMENIAN MOTHER SAVE HER HOME

ZHANA GAGIKYAN OF YEREVAN HAS GIVEN HER HOUSE AS COLLATERAL TO PAY HIS SON, 37 YEARS OLD VLADIMIR GAGIKYAN'S QUADRUPLE HEART BY-PASS OPERATION

**SHE NEEDS TO PAY BACK \$15,000 TO ARTSAKH BANK**

**PLEASE HELP**



VLADIMIR GAGIKYAN

Beneficiary Bank: Artsakhbank CJSC  
Swift Code: ARTSAM22  
Bank Address: 3 Kievyan Street, Yerevan 0028, Armenia  
Beneficiary: Zhana Gagikyan  
Account Number: 22317006353902  
Address: Leningradyan 20, Yerevan, Armenia





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# The Armenian Frida Kahlo: On Mariam Aslamazyan's 110th Anniversary

ASLAMAZYAN, from page 13

part of the Russian Empire. This is a special city, famous for its sharp strong ambiance, rich cultural traditions and a school of fine arts. Gyumri is the second most important city in Armenia, the administrative center of the Shirak region and the last outpost of the country on the border with Turkey (after the loss of Kars), that survived by the force of incredible national mobilization in the fatal for Armenia year 1918. It was also the largest cultural center of Armenia, where refugees from Kars found shelter. Many of them later became prominent figures of Armenian culture and art, Mariam Aslamazyan among them.

No wonder that one of Armenia's best art museums, the Aslamazyan Sisters' Gallery is in Gyumri, located in an old black stone mansion built in the combination of the traditions of Kars and Gyumri and Russian imperial architecture. By the way, the names of Yeranuhi and Mariam Aslamazyan are usually mentioned together, as they were not only sisters, but also colleagues and seemed to be the alter egos of one other.

After Gyumri, Mariam Aslamazyan went to Yerevan, where serious professional training awaited her. In the years of the artist's becoming, the Sovietization of Armenia simultaneously took place (during the beginning of the 1920s), and the foundations of an Armenian national school of art - formerly being developed outside the country - became strengthened on the native land. The first such school of fine arts was the "Geghard" Industrial and Art School in Yerevan (now the Panos Terlemezyan Art College), where the artist studied in 1926 to 1928 the patrimony of Armenian painting of the 20th century - with impressionist and plain-air painter Sedrak Arakelyan (student of Konstantin Korovin and Valentin Serov) and realist artist Stepan Aghajanyan. Though it might not have been the best time for the country or for art when Mariam Aslamazyan received her higher academic education, at least it was with the best teachers.

At first she studied in Moscow in Vkhutein (Higher Art and Technical Studios) in 1928-1930 with the leading figures of the Russian avant-garde - N. Udaltsova, A. Drevin, as well as V. Favorsky, A. Goncharov, S. Gerasimov, M. Rodionov, and K. Istomin. After transferring to the Faculty of Drawing of Vkhutein of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), Mariam Aslamazyan moved to the northern capital of Russia, with which the

fruitful years of her active artistic, pedagogical and social activities are connected. Here, at the Leningrad Institute of Proletarian Fine Arts (now - St. Petersburg Academy of Arts), the artist studied under K. Petrov-Vodkin (1930-1932), and from 1932 to 1934, she was a graduate student with Professor A. Savinov.

Thus, through her Armenian and Russian

the easel format, the predominance of pure decorative color and contrasting juxtaposition. It should be recognized that the artist, formed in the era of the total domination of Socialist Realism and the persecution of the "formalists," was not just brave and self-sufficient, but infinitely faithful to her creative credo and the tenets of pure art, to carry them through her entire cre-

covered yet. The artist's aesthetic vision and worldview is being manifested in the still lifes with the greatest completeness and freedom: still life as a "small" genre gives her great opportunities for free form creation. Mariam Aslamazyan is rightfully considered the leading master of her time in the field of decorative and planar still life. Her depictions are not just a set of objects, located on the plane of the picture artistically and far from mimetic reproduction of nature. There are juicy fruits and bright flowers, gifts of the sunny Armenian land, copper ethnographic utensils, carpets with magic ornaments - symbols of national life or exotic Far Eastern masks (how can we not remember Saryan!). This is a special microcosm, built strictly tectonically by the artist in a harmonious wholeness. Here, each element is not just a "fruit," a "vegetable," a "plant," a "drapery," a "dish," a "mask," etc., but valuable parts of the universe with their own form and color. And the artist completely freely operates these forms as with abstract units, collecting them into an indivisible construction.

Perhaps, the crown of Mariam Aslamazyan's still life genre and the quintessence of what has been said can be considered her "Peppers. Flame" - a sensual, "scorching" picture, striking with simplicity and at the same time, with the utmost veracity. Collected in a planar carpet and ornamental composition, Aslamazyan's peppers cease to be "vegetables," but rather turn into certain hieroglyphs.

The artist's orientalist, in some ways, even "masculine" look is being seen in her beautiful female models in a vivid ornamental entourage. Looking at them, of course, we remember Gauguin's Tahitian women. The artist admitted that she loves to draw women, which perhaps explains her courage and fineness. But I especially want to mention the images of the famous artist Lavinia Bazhbeuk-Melikyan, her self-portraits and joint portraits with her sister Yeranuhi Aslamazyan. Through these portraits she seems to comprehend herself and her colleagues as free creators - strong-willed, talented and infinitely beautiful, and their unchanged silver necklaces,



Painting by Mariam Aslamazyan

teachers, Mariam Aslamazyan absorbed the best modernistic and academic traditions of both Russian and European painting, fusing them with the traditions of Armenian art, and, in a certain sense, of Oriental artistic thinking (mostly, this is the magnificent Armenian medieval miniature with its inexhaustible possibilities of decorative expressiveness of color).

As is known, in the Western European painting of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (Post-Impressionism and Fauvism - Gauguin, Van Gogh, Matisse) to which Mariam Aslamazyan gravitated so strongly, a synthesis with Oriental artistic traditions and an emphasis on the pristine exotics was evinced. Bright, colorful decorativeness, flatness, and ornamentality are not simply expressed in the transmission of ethnographic attributes, but also in the ornamentally ordered pictorial plane as a consequence of a special thinking, monumentality in

active path. These tenets, as already was mentioned, Aslamazyan took from her teachers, and also were absorbed in the Moscow halls of the New Western Art of the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts. She drew on the rich traditions of painting of her native Armenia, and especially on the works of its patriarch Martiros Saryan.

Sometimes she conveys her native Armenian and also Russian motifs with an emphasis on ethnographic exotics. Her painted ceramics - a special field in the artist's creations - can be attributed to the same range of works to which she first turned in 1958 and definitively became



Painting by Mariam Aslamazyan

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fond of. Decorative ceramics attained an unprecedented popularity in Armenia and other Soviet republics in the 1960s, in connection with the fashion for "ethno-modern." As A. Sarabyanov correctly noted, "the living sense of modernity in conjunction with the national tradition is typical for Mariam Aslamazyan's ceramics."

Mariam Aslamazyan is a multi-genre artist. Virtually all major genres of painting - portrait, landscape, still life, thematic picture - have a certain place in her rich artistic legacy. Landscape is certainly the main genre in Armenian painting. Practically all studies on Mariam Aslamazyan's work note the special role of Armenian nature as the main inspirer of the artist in her rich landscape painting.

The importance of still life in Mariam Aslamazyan's painting legacy is not ignored by the researchers. And yet we must admit that this subject is inexhaustible and has not been fully

national costumes and ethnographic attributes accentuate the identity of the model even more. It is not accidental that she was often called the Armenian Frida Kahlo.

To paraphrase the well-known definition of Russian female avant-garde artists, we would add to the image of Mariam Aslamazyan the "Amazon of the Sixties" - one of the brightest stars in their magnificent galaxy. It was the boom of the sixties that gave an all-time first of national consciousness against which "national modernism" was formed, and the role of women in these processes was great. But Mariam Aslamazyan, even taking into account her social activity as an emancipated Soviet woman, was able to remain faithful to the aesthetic understanding of reality.

Translated from Russian by Artsvi Bakhchinyan





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## CALENDAR

## FLORIDA

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

## MASSACHUSETTS

**AUGUST 23 — Under an August Moon, Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston,** Thursday, 7:30 - 9:00 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.hypointearmenianchurch.org](http://www.hypointearmenianchurch.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.

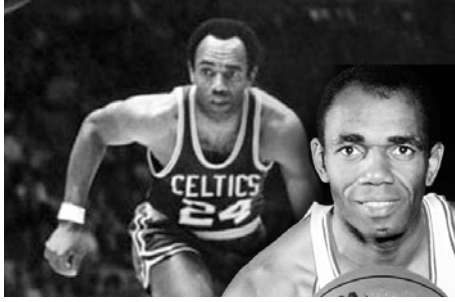
**SEPTEMBER 9 — Trinity Family Festival,** 12-5 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Sunday. Delicious Armenian food — shish, losh, and chicken kebab — paklava, khadaif, and more with take-out available. Armenian music for your listening and dancing pleasure featuring the Greg Krikorian Ensemble with Greg Krikorian, oud and vocals; George Righellis and Kevin Magarian, guitar and vocals; Mark Der Mugrditchian, clarinet; Charles Dermenjian, dumbeg; and Steve 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/](http://www.htaac.org/calendar/event/575/), contact the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632, or email office@htaac.org.

**SEPTEMBER 10 — St. James Men's Club Dinner Meeting** Monday: social hour, and mezza at 6:15 PM and dinner at 7:00 PM, St James Armenian Church Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center, Keljik Hall, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA. The speakers will discuss the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research's exciting plans for its new global center for Armenian Studies now under construction in Belmont, MA. They are Sarah Ignatius, NAASR Executive Director, Yervant Chekijian, NAASR Chairman of the Board, and Marc A. Mamigonian, Director of Academic Affairs. Mezza and Losh Kebab & Kheyma Dinner \$16/person. For additional information call the St James Church office at 617-923-8860 or call Hapet Berberian at 781-367-6598

**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](mailto:tmuhtaac@gmail.com). For further information, log onto [www.htaac.org/calendar/event/584/](http://www.htaac.org/calendar/event/584/).

**SEPTEMBER 13 — 7th Annual Surf, Turf & Cigar Evening** hosted by Knights of Vartan Ararat Lodge. Doors open at 6pm at Armenian Cultural & Education Center (ACEC), 47 Nichols Ave, Watertown, MA, Tickets are \$165.00

**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



**On Monday, September 10, Boston Celtics legend Sam Jones will join the Holy Trinity Men's Union for dinner, talk, and book signing. There will be a social hour at 6 p.m., and losh kebab and kheyma dinner at 7 p.m. RSVP required at the Holy Trinity Church office, 617-354-0632 or email [tmuhtaac@gmail.com](mailto:tmuhtaac@gmail.com).**

**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](http://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. Screening of "Women of 1915," exclusive footage of Armenia's Velvet Revolution, reveal of Maronian's "Titanic Love." Reception to follow. Proceeds to benefit Women's Support Center (Yerevan) and Hanganak Elderly Project (Stepanakert). Co-sponsored by AIWA and AWWA. 5:00 PM. Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library — 33 Marrett Road, Lexington, MA Tickets: \$75 (Students with ID \$25). For tickets: Email: [lightscamerastories@gmail.com](mailto:lightscamerastories@gmail.com) or Online: [aiwainternational.org/lightscamerastories](http://aiwainternational.org/lightscamerastories)

**SEPTEMBER 29 — The 7th Annual Benefit Dance to benefit Syrian Armenian Relief and Fund for Armenian Relief.** Saturday, Armenian Church of Our Saviour, Cultural Center, 34 Boynton St., Worcester. Dance to the music and vocals of the Mugrditchian Ensemble with local favorites Mark Der Mugrditchian, Kevin Magarian, Arthur Chingris, with special guest artists Greg Krikorian and George Righellis. Sponsored by the Armenian Churches of Worcester County: Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, Armenian Church of Our Saviour, Armenian Church of the Martyrs, Soorp Asdvadzadzin Armenian Apostolic Church. Doors Open at 7.30 p.m. For tickets, reservations or information contact Jay Kapur (508) 740-4464, Eva Kopoyan (508) 757-6195, Magdy Faltaous (508) 278-3805 or Donna Barsamian (508) 769-3279. Donation \$35 in advance, \$45 at the door. Deluxe Mezze, coffee and dessert, with cash bar.

**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@stthagop.com](mailto:info@stthagop.com) or visit [www.stjameswatertown.org](http://www.stjameswatertown.org).

**OCTOBER 20 — Hye Kef 5:** Onnik Dinkjian Performs at DoubleTree by Hilton in Andover, MA, with Ara Dinkjian and local ensemble, for Armenian Friends of America, 7 pm to midnight. All proceeds benefit the Armenian churches of the Merrimack Valley. For tickets: John Arzigian — 603-560-3826; Lucy Sirmaian — 978-683-9121; Peter Gulezian — 978-375-1616; Sharke Der Apkarian — 978-808-0598; Kathy Geyer 978-475-8309.

**OCTOBER/NOVEMBER — Armenian Museum of America is planning a bus trip to view the upcoming Armenia! exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC;** Join us for a special tour of the show, which includes two very unique and beautiful illuminated manuscripts from our own collection! Stay tuned for dates and details. Museum Contact: Stephanie Garafolo, [sgarafolo@armenianmuseum.org](mailto:sgarafolo@armenianmuseum.org). (617) 926-2562, ext. 4 (website [www.armenianmuseum.org](http://www.armenianmuseum.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.

**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](mailto: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 23 — St. Leon Armenian Church Women's Guild hosts a 90th anniversary celebration** on Sunday. With a commemorative luncheon following the Divine Liturgy, at 1 p.m., in Abajian Hall. Honoring 22 Women's Guild Members with between four and six decades of service. Reservations by September 15. Contact Margaret Ajemian, 201-914-0354 or [lynnberberian@gmail.com](mailto:lynnberberian@gmail.com). Send checks to Lynn Berberian at 823 Peachtree Lane, Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417. Cost is \$30 per person, \$15 for children 12 and under. St. Leon Armenian Church, 12-61 Saddle River Road, Fair Lawn.

**SEPTEMBER 29 — TCA Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group 20th Anniversary Banquet Celebrating 20 Years of Theater** at 7 pm. at the Palisadium, 700 Palisadium Dr. Cliffside Park, NJ. Featuring Special Entertainment by Krikor Satamian. Master of Ceremonies Gerald Papsian. Presentations by past and present MMTG Directors. Special Musical Performance by Hovhannes Babakhanyan. Donation: \$150 pp. For more information and tickets please call, Marie Zokian (201) 745-8850, Talar Sarafian 201-240-8541.

**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](http://www.bergenPAC.org)

## NEW YORK

**September 22, 2018 - January 13, 2019 — ARMENIA! at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Armenia!** is the "first major exhibition to explore the importance of Armenians and their remarkable achievements in a global context..." <https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2018/armenia>

## 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](http://www.aimhye.com) for tickets and more information.



## Armenia Hostage to Iran-America Standoff

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Armenia had hardly regained domestic peace as a result of the Velvet Revolution, when urgent foreign policy issues began amassing on its borders. Constant threat of war with Azerbaijan is already a permanent problem against which Armenia has taken the appropriate measures, and it has survived such threats over the last quarter century.

As the new government puts its house in order, much more pressing issues will take up its attention. Strained relations with Moscow have already resulted in an undeclared blockade of Armenia's agricultural products. Much of Armenia's agricultural trade has been with Russia and indirect pressures on that trade have always come from Georgia, which is lined up with Armenia's enemies in choking the landlocked country. Armenia's precarious trade with Russia transits through Georgian territory, and more often than not the Georgian government closes down the main route at Upper Lars to block or slow down the movements of people and goods. This time around that passage is blocked by the Russian side, keeping trucks stranded for days on end. Most of the time these trucks return to Armenia empty, after unloading the rotten agricultural products at the Russian border. This is, of course a subtle message from Moscow after the stern warning by its foreign minister Sergey Lavrov.

But a more imminent and urgent problem has been arising on the Iranian border, where Iran has proven to be a reliable trading partner for Armenia. Although the threat is not directed to Armenia per se, its impact may turn to be more devastating; that threat is presented in the form of economic sanctions that the Trump administration intends to impose on Iran. Of course, the last thing on Mr. Trump's mind could be how his sanctions may affect Armenia.

Thus, Armenia becomes an unwilling participant in an international game and a hostage to the US-Iran stand-off.

The recent change in the US policy has short term and long term goals. The short term goal pursued by neocons is to reduce Iran to the level of Iraq, Syria and Libya; in other words, not to have any regime that can challenge or undermine Israel's hegemony in the region. But the long-term goal is a tectonic shift with global implications. In today's unipolar world, Europe is highly dependent on America and that is to Washington's liking. But the consideration that the ambitious rise of China, extending its economic silk route to Europe and bypassing Russia, may potentially help lead to the emergence of a bi-polar or tri-polar world down the road has alarmed US policy planners. On that political chessboard, India is another contender for European trade.

The Caucasus region is on the path of these two rising Asian powers, which the US wishes to use one against the other to forestall or slow down the reconfiguration of the dreaded multipolar political world. Therefore, in preparation for a US policy extending over the next full century, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is intending to reshape the corridor from the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea, and Armenia is on the way.

Mr. Trump may not be involved in the intricacy and complexities of such policies, but he remains the front man who has triggered the current crisis.

The Iran deal, which had taken almost a decade to negotiate and ratify under UN Security Council Resolution 2231, called for Iran to refrain from researching and producing nuclear weapons in return for a commitment by the US to lift some sanctions. Five security council member nations and Germany are signatories of the deal. In fulfillment of his campaign promise to dismantle the deal - which is President Obama's legacy - Mr. Trump withdrew on May 8, 2018 from the agreement officially known as JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action). Mr. Trump has already set a deadline for the re-imposition of sanctions against Iran. All the other signatories have pledged to honor the deal which was working as expected per International Atomic Energy reports.

Now, Mr. Trump is demanding to renegotiate the deal and asking more commitments of Iran. According to Mr. Trump's national security advisor John Bolton who, by the way, is not the most refined diplomat, Iran has to cease producing long range missiles, withdraw from the Syrian battlefield, and abstain from state terrorism; this of course, in a region where Iran is not the only country sponsoring state terrorism. In a way, whatever the US was not able to achieve in the Syrian battlefield it wishes to get through this new deal.

The reaction to this unilateral action was unanimous. The EU

top diplomat, Natali Tocci, an aide to EU foreign policy Chief Federica Mogherini, informed the BBC that the European firms that stop doing business with Iran because of US-imposed sanctions could in turn be sanctioned by the European Union.

On the other hand, China's response was reported by Reuters: "China has consistently opposed unilateral sanctions and long armed jurisdiction," said China's foreign ministry, adding "China's commercial cooperation with Iran is open and transparent, reasonable, fair and lawful, not violating any United Nation's Security Council resolutions." By the way China is the major oil importer from Iran.

The Russian foreign ministry website published the following statement: "[We are] deeply disappointed by US steps to reimpose its national sanctions against Iran. We will do everything necessary in the interest of preserving and fully implementing the deal."

Thus, the international reaction to US action seems to be unanimous. However, Sam Meredith writing in an International Energy Agency essay says: "While several global powers including the European Union, China and India have spoken out against the scheduled sanctions, many are expected to bow to American pressure." They have conflicting interests and they adhere to different policies.

Where does Armenia stand in all these dramatic developments? The answer is in an article which appeared in Eurasia Future, signed by Andrew Korybko, who writes under the heading "Pompeo Might Have Pulled the Plug on Armenian-Iranian Trade" that "New Secretary of State and former CIA Chief Mike Pompeo issued what amounts to a declaration of Hybrid War against Iran while speaking at the neoconservative Heritage Foundation think tank about the Trump administration's so-called 'Plan B' for dealing with the country after the US earlier withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal...relatedly, however, this will inevitably have an impact on Armenia as well, which is a tiny, impoverished and landlocked South Caucasian failing state which just experienced a pro-western color revolution."

It is interesting that whatever is termed as a Velvet Revolution in Armenia is perceived in the West as a "color revolution" similar to those in Ukraine and Georgia, raising red flags in Moscow.

The article further defining Armenian's situation states that the sanctions also nullify whatever Armenia could have benefitted by concluding a "Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement" (CEPA) with EU.

The Hybrid War against Iran seems to be part of grander policy which will continue in the foreseeable future. "The US is already planning for a 100-year-long military-strategic partnership with India that significantly

includes a crucial naval component intended to make the South Asian state a 'counterbalance' to China," concludes the article. This particular reference is about Persian Gulf-Black Sea Corridor rivalry, within which Armenia is struggling to survive.

Armenia and Iran have been reliable partners but their trade had not yet attained full capacity, pending relaxation of sanctions. A new Free Trading Zone had opened recently in the Meghri region in Armenia's south to stir up business activity between the two countries.

Hopefully Armenia's new government will take note of the developing complex situation to be able to navigate safely to the future.

Mr. Trump's unpredictability has demonstrated certain patterns which renders him less unpredictable. Indeed, he was raging "fire and fury" against the North Korean regime before he met the country's head, Kim Jong-un whom he found to be "very reasonable." Similarly, he embraced President Putin of Russia in Helsinki, almost absolving him of all the accusations his administration was laying against the Kremlin. Now it is Iran's turn. Mr. Trump said on July 30 that he is ready to meet his Iranian counterpart, Hassan Rouhani, any time the Iranians want. He added "It's good for the country, good for them, good for us and good for the world. No preconditions. If they want to meet, I will meet."

Although Iran's Foreign Minister, Mr. Javad Zarif has described US policy as "erratic," his country has no choice given the comparative powers of the two sides. All the countries which have rejected the US action will certainly encourage Iran to re-negotiate and to try to make the best out of the opportunity.

Several US congressmen in the Armenian Caucus had been pushing for a Trump/Pashinian meeting. This may be a good opportunity for Yerevan to serve as a forum for that meeting, which may host also the presidents of the US and Iran. That may be a hopeful exit from the situation.

The alternative may be a dangerous chaos.



# Mirror Spectator



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EDITOR  
Alin K. Gregorian

ASSISTANT EDITOR  
Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR  
Marc Mgrditchian

SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST:  
Edmond Y. Azadian

#### CONTRIBUTORS:

Florence Avakian, Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian, Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, Philip Ketchian, Kevork Keushkerian, Harut Sassounian, Hagop Vartivarian, Naomi Zeytoonian

#### CORRESPONDENTS:

Armenia - Hagop Avedikian  
Boston - Nancy Kalajian  
New York/New Jersey - Taleen Babayan  
Berlin - Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Contributing Photographers:  
Jirair Hovsepian

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FAX: 617-924-2887

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E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

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## COMMENTARY

# A Tribute to Der Dajad on The Occasion of His 'Karasoonk'

By Fr. Karekin Kasparian

This talk was originally given in 1999 on the occasion of Der Dajad concluding his pastorate at St. James and getting ready to move to Armenia.

I HAVE KNOWN Der Dajad for 47 years and have watched him grow from the charming chairman of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) Jrs. in Worcester to a charmer Vice Chairman of the Diocesan Council, a troubleshooter in the parishes.

Arthur, Artie, Junior or Junie – his mother, the late Diramayr Rose Vartuhi Davidian called him, came to church every Sunday and fully participated in the Divine Liturgy almost like a priest and received Holy Communion every Sunday. His active participation – I should say guidance – in the youth activities drew the attention of the congregation and he became the darling of the parish and the object of its pride and joy. They say “it takes a village to raise a child.” Aside from the powerful influence of his devout mother and delightful father, the entire congregation of the Church of Our Savior extended its love and care to this fast-growing young man who was, as an avid reader, learning everything about our church, culture and history.

As a teenager, he had two role models, a layman, Ralph Yagjian, and a clergyman, Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan – two of the best. Ralph was a dynamic youth leader, constantly learning and teaching about the church and Christianity, and inspiring and challenging people with basic and arresting questions about essentials in life and love for essentials. He was the instigator and the leading proponent in the parish to bring a seminarian from abroad to study and speak English in order to rap with the youth and minister to their needs, with the hope that he would become the first English speaking pastor of that first Armenian church in the country.

Arthur, inspired by Ralph, supported his efforts as the leader and the voice of the youth, to bring this young seminarian. By a unanimous decision of the parish, the Primate was approached to arrange for an assistant to the priest, Fr. Hagop Mekhjian. I became that fortunate seminarian who was brought to Worcester to study. The more Arthur learned about seminary life, the more enthused he became to attend as soon as possible.

Archbishop Tiran had given a sermon and a talk at a visit in Worcester and left Arthur spellbound with his Oxford English and brilliant oration. Almost bewitched by the charismatic personality of the learned leader of the Diocese, Arthur, the youth

leader of the ACYOA, told the archbishop that he wanted to study for the priesthood and be a great speaker like him and a caring pastor of a parish. Tiran Srpazan arranged for Arthur to register as a student at the Seminary in Antelias. The following year during summer vacation, Arthur visited my parents in Aleppo, Syria, and stayed with them for a few weeks – as I, at the same time, stayed with his loving and welcoming parents in Worcester.

I remember when Deacon Arthur was assigned to spend his Karasoonk – 40 days of prayer and preparation after his ordination. I was designated to teach him *sharagans*. I must tell you, as you all know, he is a fast learner. Before I even had a chance to repeat the model tune two times for him to catch and repeat after me, he was already singing it. Except one thing, [it was] an entirely different tune from what I was teaching him. There are eight modes in which to sing Armenian *sharagans*. I would teach him mode three, he would produce a tune in mode number nine – non-existent in Armenian liturgical music. I was supposed to teach him eight modes but he wanted to teach me a ninth mode. He got me at once confused and exasperated. I used to say, “Yavroom, who is the teacher – me or you?” I must confess I admired his inquisitive mind, which kept querying, questioning and criticizing, sometimes even making shocking statements. He was a rebel and as an iconoclast, challenged the old orders, yet was willing to learn the truth.

I don't know if he was given a general exam in *sharagans* by his ordinand, Archbishop Mampre Calfayan, but he thinks he passed it. To this day I don't know if he sings all eight modes according to the exact and accurate notes, but I know one thing – that his teaching, preaching and pastoring is right on the dot. Liturgical music may not have been his forte then, but today he is one of the few faithful priests who conducts our liturgical services in the fullest to the tee. While our liturgical music course was not accelerated enough for him, he excelled in liturgical theology, dogmatic theology and especially in pastoral theology.

Der Dajad became a true pastor; as they say, a “people's pastor.” One day, years ago, Fr. Dajad was asked, “Why did you choose to be a priest?” His answer was, “Because I couldn't do anything else.” Obviously he did not mean that he wasn't capable of doing anything else – like a lawyer, a counselor, social worker, an editor, a professor, a salesman, or even an entertainer! Truly he could be any of these and be successful at it, except his life wouldn't be as full and rich as it is as a pastor – a priest. And that's what he meant by his answer.

You've all known or seen what a priest does as the pastor of a church. Let me share with you a semi-sarcastic, humorous statement about what a priest does: “The priest teaches, though he must solicit his own classes. He heals, though without pills or knife. He is sometimes a lawyer, often a social worker, something of an editor, a bit

of a philosopher and entertainer, a salesman; a decorative piece for public functions and he is supposed to be a scholar. He visits the sick, marries people, buries the dead, labors to console those who sorrow and to admonish those who sin, and tries to stay sweet when chided for not doing his duty. He plans programs, appoints committees when he can get them; spends considerable time in keeping people out of each other's hair; between times he prepares a sermon and preaches it on Sunday to those who don't happen to have any other engagements. On Monday he smiles when some jovial chap roars, “what a job – only one day a week!”

In Fr. Dajad's ministerial life, he has been active in several communal, civic and religious organizations, projects and institutions. As a priest, he has had the privilege of imparting God's

grace and blessings upon 2,500 children through baptism and about 900 couples through the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. He has been at the bedside of hundreds of people during their physical illnesses and emotional pains and has shared in the joy of countless people in their times of celebration by laughing, joking and even dancing with them. He has comforted the homeless, the hopeless, the heartless, the jobless, the aimless, through his convincing and comforting care. He has entertained and inspired children and youth into understanding and accepting the faith and gift of the church, and in recent years, he has offered solace and hope to confused and apprehensive immigrants from Armenia and Baku. With all this and more, Der Dajad has touched the lives of countless people within the three parishes he has served, plus Armenia and Karabakh.

I'd like to highlight three among many other good qualities that bring greatness to Der Dajad's ministry. First, is his abiding faith in the Lord which gives him Divine fellowship with the Almighty and makes him trusting, courageous, patient and wise. Second, is his vast knowledge of history, culture, politics, in addition to theological education; all of which give him the facility to be able to rap with individuals of diverse background and interests. As they say in Armenian, “*medzin hed medz eh, bzdigin hed bzdig*.” Third, he has a sharp sense of humor which makes him such a delightful person, who can also laugh at himself and be humble enough to apologize when necessary.

A few years ago, we were in Armenia together and I heard Der Dajad say that next year he intends to go to Armenia to do missionary work, to preach, and also to minister to wayward kids who are forced to become beggars on the streets. Now, this is a noble plan and holy venture. If we ask – is he a missionary, no he is not a missionary, but he has a sharp sense of mission, both for the church and for himself. He is not a prophet, but he has a prophetic vision about the church and society. He is not a saint, but has saintly ideas and expressions. He is not an apostle, but he has a keen awareness of the apostolic mission of the church and his place in it.

Speaking of apostolic qualities, Der Dajad embodies the traits of the three favorite apostles that Jesus took with him up to the mountain of ascension. He is bold like Peter, faithful like James and sensitive like John. We can add the virtue of one more apostle, the one who preached Christianity in Armenia, St. Bartholomew. Jesus said he was one in whom there was no guile. Der Dajad holds no grudges and is bold enough to speak gently with an adversary, being faithful to his priestly calling and vision.

Very few priests in our Diocese have served in the same parish for 30 consecutive years. This longevity may, on the one hand, be a manifestation of his tenacity. On the other hand, it is an expression of the esteem of the congregation. It has been said, “great congregations make great ministers!” It is also true that great ministers make great congregations. Der Dajad and St. James found their match in each other. He has laid the groundwork for the next pastor. Fr. Arakel and Yeretzhin Natasha are fortunate to be called to continue the work of Fr. Dajad and Yeretzhin Rosemarie. Ah Rosemarie, one cannot say enough about the self-effacing, humble and patient partnership of Yeretzhin Rosemarie. It is not easy to be the wife of a dynamic and overextended priest, the mother of three children, and to work outside the home. If I had a hat, I would take it off for Yeretzhin Rosemarie.

A final word about Dajad, the name Dajad. According to Ajarian's Dictionary of Proper Nouns, Dajad means “gift.” Der Dajad has been a gift to his parents, Dirahayr Ardashes and Diramayr Vartuhi, of blessed memory; to his brothers Raymond and Albert; to his wife Rosemarie and to his children, Ari, Susan and Raymond. He has been a gift to St. James parish, a gift to our Diocese. Now he is ready to offer his God-given gifts to Echmiadzin and Armenia.

My talk today was titled “My Friend Der Dajad.” Let me change it slightly. He is “my brother, Der Dajad.” May God continue to bless you and your wonderful family and the St. James parish.



## Trump's Turkey Spat Could Rouse Army of Well-Paid, Connected Lobbyists

WASHINGTON (Roll Call) – Whatever the result of President Donald Trump's tariff fight with Turkey, it is almost certainly going to rouse a well-financed and deeply entrenched influence peddling operation in Washington.

The Republic of Turkey spends hundreds of thousands of dollars a year on well-connected DC lobbyists to promote its interests in Washington. It makes major gifts to American think tanks that do not have to be reported under the Foreign Agent Registration Act. And it donates money to political candidates through PACs like Turkish Coalition USA.

By Stephanie Akin

It is unclear what, specifically, the Turkish government has received in return for its lavish spending. Its relationship with the United States has been rocky for at least 15 years, starting when George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq sent reverberations into neighboring Turkey. Trump's surprise announcement that he would impose new tariffs on the country, ostensibly to pressure the release of an imprisoned American pastor, have threatened to send the already weak Turkish economy into a tailspin.

But Turkey's lobbying has periodically raised flags among American ethics watchdogs and entangled Turkish interests in a variety of American scandals.

Former Trump National Security Adviser Michael Flynn got in trouble last year for his failure to disclose more than \$500,000 he received from the Turkish government while working for the Trump campaign. Almost a decade before that, former House Speaker Dennis Hastert was dinged for signing up for a \$35,000 monthly post-Congress lobbying gig for the Republic

of Turkey, thus cashing in on what was already a lucrative post-office gig for many of his former colleagues.

That was shortly after Hastert, as speaker, killed a resolution that condemned the Armenian genocide, a measure the Turkish government vehemently opposed, and before he was convicted for paying \$1.7 million to a man who had accused him of sexual abuse – money he is believed to have raised in part through lobbying work. The Armenian genocide, meanwhile, continues to be a hot-button issue in Congress.

More recently, the Turkish government has retained influential American law firms to lobby state and federal lawmakers in opposition to charter schools run by a Turkish opposition leader.

Turkey's current roster of at least a dozen lobbyists include former congress members and powerful consulting firms.

Retired Rep. Jim McCrery's firm, Capitol Counsel, for example, has a \$432,000 annual contract to, “to educate and reeducate elected and appointed policymakers and opinion leaders about the Republic of Turkey, its strong friendship and continued support of United States diplomatic, foreign policy and military efforts, and the important strategic bilateral relationship between the United States and Turkey,” according to documents filed with the Department of Justice.

And the Washington lobbying firm of Brian Ballard – whose DC lobbying firm is considered among the most powerful in Trump's Washington – gets paid \$62,500 per month for “strategic consulting and advocacy services,” on Turkey's behalf.





## COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Countering Erdogan's Propaganda In the *New York Times*

For many years, the Turkish government has hired numerous American companies in Washington, D.C., to lobby and carry out public relations on its behalf.

Hiring such companies is very expensive and most of the time, it is a waste of money, as they produce more paperwork than actual results. But once in a while, they can draft and help publish opinion articles (op-eds) in American newspapers on behalf of Turkish officials and arrange their visits and meetings in the United States.

The Turkish government is obligated to spend large amounts of money to hire such companies because it cannot rely on the Turkish-American community to lobby or do PR on its behalf, no matter how much funding is provided from Ankara. The same situation applies to the Azerbaijani government and the Azeri-American community. Neither the Turkish nor Azeri communities are very active in American politics and have not existed in the United States as long as the Armenian community. This is why Turkey and Azerbaijan rely on paid lobbyists to advance their interests in the United States.

Given the recent turmoil in the relationship between the United States and Turkey, one of the PR firms hired by the Turkish government was probably asked to draft an opinion column on behalf of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and use its contacts to have that article published in the *New*

*York Times*.

Naturally, the column had to reflect the views of Erdogan rather than those of the PR firm. It would have been interesting to compare the first draft of what the American PR firm first suggested to the final version as revised by Erdogan's staff.

Judging from the content of Erdogan's article, one can tell that the PR firm's proposed text, written delicately and professionally, was not accepted by Ankara. Instead, what the *New York Times* ended up publishing is a typical bombastic article reflecting Erdogan's dictatorial and pompous stand. Having rejected the PR firm's more diplomatic text, Erdogan has made his article useless in having any positive effect on the American public and government.

Erdogan's August 10, 2018 critical article was titled: "How Turkey Sees the Crisis With the US," and subtitled: "Unilateral actions against Turkey by the United States Will Undermine American Interests and Force Turkey to Look for Other Friends and Allies."

The reader would be turned off right away from the article's title by its confrontational tone and threatening language inappropriate for resolving any kind of a dispute. Here are a few examples of Erdogan's questionable opinions expressed in his controversial op-ed column.

"...The United States has repeatedly and consistently failed to understand and respect the Turkish people's concerns." How about the Turkish leader's need to understand and respect the concerns of the American people? The tail does not wag the dog! Erdogan does not comprehend that Turkey needs the United States more than the US needs Turkey. For far too long, because of weak leadership in Washington, the Turkish government has gotten away with its inappropriate behavior as a NATO member and US ally. The more American leaders accommodated Turkish misbehavior, the more antagonistic they have become. If decades ago, the United States had put Turkey in its place, it would have learned to behave as a junior US partner, and not as a bully.

Erdogan warned: "Unless the United States starts respecting Turkey's sovereignty and proves that it understands the dangers that our nation faces, our partnership could be in jeopardy.... Turkey has alternatives. Failure to reverse this trend of unilateralism and disrespect will require us to start looking for new friends and allies."

This is an empty threat. Turkey is free to turn to Russia or China and lose the support of the United States and Western Europe. It is high time for NATO to consider kicking Turkey out of the alliance. Good riddance!

Erdogan also accused the United States of arming Kurdish fighters in Syria and using these weapons against Turkey "in Syria, Iraq and Turkey" itself.

First of all, it is a lie that US weapons were used by Kurds in Turkey. Secondly, Turkish forces have no business invading Syria and Iraq, thus violating their territorial sovereignty.

Erdogan went on to counter President Trump's request to free the unfairly held American pastor, Andrew Brunson, by asking the United States to respect Turkey's "judicial process." What judicial process under Erdogan's dictatorship? Thousands of Turks have been in jail without any due process or an iota of guilt. If Erdogan had any brains, he would have ordered the release of Pastor Brunson a long time ago, thus avoiding an unnecessary conflict with the United States. Because Erdogan and his junior brother, President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, are so unhinged, they have generated negative publicity against Turkey and Azerbaijan that no PR company can fix, no matter how much money it is paid.

Interestingly, the *New York Times* published an editorial on the same day as Erdogan's article, condemning the Turkish leader's "unscrupulous behavior" for holding Pastor Brunson on "trumped-up charges," and asking: "is Turkey still an American ally?"

Ironically, the *New York Times* editorial destroyed any benefit Erdogan was expecting from the publication of his propaganda article, thus wasting the large amount of money Turkey spent on public relations.

# Age and Term Limits a Must for Armenian Church Leaders in the 21st Century

By Miran P. Sarkissian

In one of the latest issues of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* (July 21, 2018), its main editorial entitled "Echmiadzin Under Assault" discussed its current state coming under fire and criticism concluding that this may not be the best time to be questioning the church hierarchy in Armenia given all the political upheaval of recent months.

The editorial also mentioned the sad situation at the Patriarchate of Constantinople where the sitting patriarch (Archbishop Mutafyan) has been totally indisposed to carry out his duties due to Alzheimer's disease plaguing him and his duties are now being carried

out by the locum tenens (provisional executor Archbishop Atesyan) who is creating all sorts of negative problems in the Armenian community there.

Prompted by these events, I invite the reader to look at today's hierarchical fathers of the Armenian Apostolic Church around the world from the point of view of their age and time in their positions.

Catholicos Vasken I was in power for 39 years (1955-1994) and passed away at the very ripe age of 86 years. Catholicos Karekin II of Echmiadzin is now 67 years old and has been in power for the last 19 years. Catholicos Aram I of Antelias is 71 and in power for 24 years. Constantinople Patriarch Mutafyan is 62, elected in his position in 1998 and incapacitated since 2008, while Patriarch Nurhan Manougian

of Jerusalem is 70 years old and has been in his throne since 2013 after succeeding the well-known Patriarch Torkom Manoogian, who had reigned for 22 years.

Now, those readers who are Generation X members and over 60 or 65 years of age will agree that the body, in those ages, begins to give in to fatigue, various illnesses like prostate cancer, high cholesterol or high blood pressure. Hearing starts to weaken while sight becomes problematic, not to mention probable memory loss and problematic speech. Those of the X-ers who have no physical problems are very few and most are trying to keep their memories intact.

In the business world, corporations have mandatory retirement plans for their executives at 65 years of age and Social Security systems in the Western world have been established to support people retiring after 65 accordingly. In politics, yes, there may be exceptions of Senators and Supreme Court judges staying active till they die, but the US President or the President of France can only serve two terms of four or five years each for a total of eight to ten years in a row.

Long term position holders have a natural, and totally human tendency, to become more rigid in their beliefs, create their own small circles of confidantes, develop favorites, begin projects to create their legacies and never resign.

In the ecclesiastical world, popes and patriarchs have, since times immemorial, held on to their positions till their deaths. The only notable exception over the last 600 years was the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI of the Roman Catholic Church, born in 1927 and elected pope in 2005. He resigned in 2013 at the age of 86, citing the inability to manage at that age the Vatican's vast organization and needs.

There has never been such a resignation in the Orthodox churches of the world which have been headed by old men whose physical and mental health naturally deteriorate on a daily basis. Presumably, they wish to remain 'orthodox' (in Greek orthodox means direct dogma) faithful to the past. That attitude however, in today's fast changing world is to be considered

backward.

So, I ask the reader: Why should the Armenian Apostolic Church not impose a mandatory retirement to her head clergymen at the age of 70? Why should there be a catholicos serving longer than two five-year terms for a total of a decade? A top clergyman with all his accumulated knowledge and experience, at age 60 or earlier, could be elected and serve until he reaches age 70 and retire thus giving younger people the opportunity and a clear path to the top of the Church.

Let us look at a current real life example. Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, born in Arapgir, Turkey, is today 67 years old and was the Primate of the Armenian Diocese of the Armenian Church of America for the past 28 years (1990-2018). He resigned earlier this year. Now, given his knowledge, experience and needs of the Western world, why would he not be a perfect candidate to become the next Patriarch of Constantinople for the next one or two five-year terms and retire at the age of 72 or 77 years giving the next qualified candidate the chance to take over? But, of course, such an election also depends on the members of the ecclesiastical and laicity synod which decides on such positions and members of which are also usually septuagenarians or octogenarians with similar physical and intellectual problems.

The world is changing at such a rapid pace that the 70-plus-year-old heads of the Armenian church do not really understand the challenges of the 21st century or the needs of the young generations, the effect of technology on the Armenian communities and the demands of the increasingly growing population of well-educated and forward-thinking male and female Armenians around the world. So, what do they naturally do? They insist on traditions and the teachings of the Church since her inception some 2000 years ago which, of course, are hardly relevant to the 21st century.

That is not looking into the future.

Is there now maybe an opportunity to get with the times and move forward with bold initiatives before we lose the upcoming generations of Armenians around the world?

## LETTERS

## Call for New Diocesan Leadership

To The Editor

It was truly encouraging to read "Extraordinary Petition Requests Special Session of Eastern Diocesan Assembly on Cathedral Complex Proposal" (July 24, 2018 edition of the *Mirror-Spectator*). It appears this petition and the recent resignation of a devoted Diocesan Council member from New York prompted "A Statement from the Diocesan Council Regarding the Diocesan Development Plan Proposal" on August 11. I commend the 80 delegates, including 17 clergymen, who for the first time in the history of the Eastern Diocese, petitioned for a Special Assembly Session over this flawed proposal.

It is ironic that the Diocesan Council stated: "Because of the significance of the project, a lengthy and detailed presentation was given at the 116th Diocesan Assembly in May of 2018." Why then did the Diocesan Council not list this significant project as an agenda item or even provide the one hundred and sixty six delegates present with a single sheet of paper on the topic?

The Diocesan Council is now stating: "It has always been the (Diocesan) Council's intent to bring any final proposal or contract back to the Assembly prior to adoption or execution." This clearly contradicts the public statements of James Kalustian, Diocesan Council chairman and former Supreme Spiritual Council member, who informed the Assembly that they wanted to sign the contract with the developer "this summer."

Growing up at "Holy Cross Uptown" in New York, I'd see my father speaking with remarkable leaders like Yervant Alexanian, Haik Kavookjian and Dadour Dadourian. I find it incomprehensible that Alexanian, Kavookjian and Dadourian would believe fifty years later, as the Diocesan Council stated "The only realistic option to monetize the value of the Air Rights is to lease or sell them for development at the Diocesan Complex." This is clearly not the only realistic option. The only realistic option is first a change in leadership, before other options are considered.

Rebecca Bakalian Hachikian  
Los Angeles





# Musical Luminary Serj Tankian Gives His Take on Armenian Issues

TANKIAN, from page 1

Tankian's hope was that the people of Armenia would one day feel empowered and know that they had the ability to make a positive change and create an Armenia which they deserved. When he saw the youth finally become ignited in a peaceful movement, led by prominent journalist Nikol Pashinyan, to force out of power the ruling elite, Tankian showed his support and encouragement through posts and videos on social media. He backed Pashinyan for prime minister and was involved in many rallies promoting him.

"I believe the whole Armenian nation supports Nikol Pashinyan," Tankian said early this August. "I have always supported true egalitarian justice and economic opportunity, which was lacking in the former government. I wanted this revolution to happen also to stop the scourge of corruption in the Armenian government, so young people can get more opportunities to succeed. This revolution took only 40 days to accomplish, but was built on the efforts of 30 years of demands for change."

Tankian credits his vision for a free and democratic Armenia along with his view of the hypocrisy of the US government on the issue of the Armenian Genocide for spurring his transformation from an iconic music artist back into an Armenian activist. "I was an activist before I was a musician," Tankian said. "My activism for the Armenian cause transitioned into my music, with political ideas such as the US government ignoring the Armenian Genocide being included heavily in it. This led to my vision now for Armenia, which is a free and creative Armenia getting ready for the future."

Tankian's grandfather, Stepan Haytayan, was a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, the Ottoman government's systematic extermination of 1.5 million Armenians, who fled Turkey and settled in Lebanon. An affiliate of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and a member of multiple school and church boards, Tankian cites him as being one of his main influences when it came to Armenian issues. "My grandfather was an

Armenian patriot through and through," Tankian said. "I can recall him reading us stories of the Armenian fedayi and the history of the Armenian Republic, which really made him become an inspiring older figure for me."

Tankian supports Creative Armenia philanthropically as a board member with the goal of creating a more creative and innovative Armenia. Creative Armenia is a non-profit arts foundation founded in 2017 to rejuvenate the arts and build creative industries and programming while providing opportunities for artists across all creative fields. "Creative Armenia was started a couple years back by a few friends of mine, who invited me to be on their board," Tankian said. "They have done a couple of cool challenges which have included writer/director Terry George and myself to help promote creativity in the Armenian music and film industry. Examples of some of the challenges would be to tell a human rights story in 60 seconds with no dialogue or to finish a composition that I wrote the first seven notes for. It truly is a great idea because it is a non-profit organization that helps sponsor artists from all over Armenia."

Anthony Bourdain, the host of his widely successful television show, "Parts Unknown," tragically took his own life earlier this year during production of its 11th season. Before that, however, he took a trip to Armenia to film an episode for his show. Tankian was instrumental in getting Bourdain to go to Armenia.

"Many months ago, I was watching 'Parts Unknown' with my wife, which we are both huge fans of," Tankian said. "My wife suggested to me that I should contact him on a possible episode to Armenia, which I thought would be a great idea. I got his email from my friend at William Morris and sent him an email regarding filming an episode in Armenia and how I have his back if he went there. I thought I would never hear back from this guy again. He responded in 10 minutes saying 'you're on, I'll have my producers reach out to you over the summer,' which they did, and I helped them behind



Serj Tankian promoting his new coffee brand, Kavat Coffee

the scenes on where to go and who to meet. We then flew into Armenia in October of last year to shoot 'Parts Unknown: Armenia,' which came out on May 19. Of course when I heard about Tony's passing, that really threw me off and it has been tough to deal with."

Before Nikol Pashinyan, velvet revolutions, and Anthony Bourdain, Tankian was known primarily for his role in the band, System of a Down. The band was known for its "unique charm," as Tankian put it, which helped increase its popularity. "When the band started, we came to the L.A. music scene as a very unique band, with our style of music being different from the one being listened to on radios and from what was going on at the time musically," Tankian said. "However, people started to enjoy our style of play and that led to many sold-out concerts in Los Angeles and us being signed by a label. Even with that, it was still a challenge since we had to tour everywhere over the first few years, but that also got us a strong and loyal following which then translated into the music charts. So it was a methodical and long-term working effort, but even so, there still was an element of surprise because there are many bands that did the same thing we did, but did not reach critical success. In a way, sometimes it doesn't matter how hard you work or how much you envision things. Sometimes there's also a matter of chance involved in the success."

Tankian is an Armenian American with deep Armenian roots. When asked what made him passionate about Armenian issues, Tankian stressed the importance of knowing one's history. "Armenian is who we are. If we're not interested in who we are, we won't know who we are going to be," Tankian said. "I believe the question that should be asked is why are we not all connected to Armenia in regards to the Armenian diaspora. I think that we need a revolutionary change in the

mindset of the diaspora toward our role as a race, a community of people, and our perspective of Armenia. This has to be changed immediately, because the danger of not doing so and our ignorance to not being able to properly connect to people in Armenia can harm our newly won revolution in Armenia."

Serj Tankian has played many roles throughout his career. From lead singer of System of a Down, to movie producer, to Armenian revolutionary, the titles that he has earned are immense. Tankian was candid about what the next chapter of his life will hold. "I've got a lot of balls in the air. I am doing a lot of stuff in Armenia, from environmental, to political, to social, and a music festival that I am thinking about taking on," Tankian said. "On my own, I am working on a coffee line that we are about to introduce in a few months called Kavat Coffee, with a major Southern California coffee company. We are going to release Armenian coffee to the general public and show them the Armenian coffee culture. I also have two films that I am working on, one is a revolutionary film and the other is a music film that I have been putting together for years. I've got a tour coming up in October with System of a Down for about five to six dates, most of them in California, one in Phoenix and one in Nevada."

"I'm working with a few friends in New Zealand and the Australian Armenian National Committee to push a motion of recognition of the Armenian Genocide in New Zealand. I am on the board of a number of nonprofits that I am working with, such as TUMO and the My Step organization in Armenia founded a few months ago by Anna Hakobyan Pashinyan. I can't even think of all of the stuff to be honest. I just go email by email and phone call by phone call. However, I do love doing all of this and it all just stems from a true place of passion within me to keep doing what I love in the best way possible."

## 'Armenia Way' Co-Naming Ceremony - September 30

By Dr. Lynn T. Cetin

BAYSIDE, N.Y. - Being an Armenian and being proud are one and the same. We are all incredibly humbled by the sacrifices of our ancestors and proud of keeping our language, culture, and heritage alive in the diaspora. Our church and faith keep us strong and united and allow us to thrive in America. It is precisely these feelings that make the symbolic co-naming of 210th Street between Horace Harding Expressway and 58th Avenue as "Armenia Way" so special.

Many of our forefathers and mothers came to America with the hope of starting a new life without the fear of persecution. The parish which we now know as "Holy Martyrs" began as a dream of a few visionary Armenians who believed that Queens was the ideal place to build an Armenian church. With perseverance, prayers and a lot of fundraising, the Armenian community settled in Queens and planted roots. Now, as we are set to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the consecration of Holy Martyrs, we are overjoyed that the street corner of our beloved house of worship and community center will be symbolically co-named as "Armenia Way."

If you google "places named after Armenia" there

is a listing of a number of settlements worldwide with "Armenia" in its name. There are many places in Europe and South America, as well as India, Morocco, Malaysia and other destinations. There is an "Armenia Street" in Sherman, New York and a "North Armenia Avenue" in Tampa, Florida - but, there is no "Armenia Way." It would be interesting to find out the story behind the names of these other American namesake roads, but no story is quite like ours.

Just like our ancestors who, despite many challenges, fought hard to survive and flourish in a new country full of challenges, the process to get the approval for "Armenia Way" was also a challenging one. After three years of planning, persuading and praying, our perseverance has come to fruition. The success of this project is a gift to the entire Armenian community. The unveiling of the official street sign will take place on September 30 at 12:30 p.m. on the corner of 210th Street and Horace Harding Expressway. The date, almost 60 years to the day of the consecration of Holy Martyrs (September 28, 1958 was Consecration Day), makes the day even more special for our community. Please join us in a celebratory ceremony and fellowship with local politicians and lay leaders who have supported our dream to have an "Armenia Way."

The "Armenia(n) Way" is the only "way!"

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