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Pashinyan, Putin Meet In Moscow

MOSCOW (Combined Sources) – Russian President Vladimir Putin received Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at the Kremlin on September 8.

The quickly arranged meeting between Pashinyan and Putin came after a reported rise in tensions in Armenian-Russian relations over an investigation by the new Pashinyan government into events surrounding deadly 2008 postelection demonstrations.

Prosecutors have filed criminal charges against former Armenian President Robert Kocharyan and current Collective Security Treaty Organization Chairman Yuri Khatchaturov, actions that the Kremlin has criticized.

Putin stressed the special nature of the Armenian-Russian relations.

"Today the relations between Armenia and Russia are steadily developing in all directions. This refers to the field of political relations, military cooperation, security issues, economic cooperation," Putin said.

He noted that "Russia confidently ranks first among the economic partners of the Republic of Armenia. "We are the largest investor in the Armenian economy, and we can affirm that in this respect our relations are rather diversified," he said.

"This refers to energy, particularly hydro-carbon energy, as well as gas supply," he said, reminding that Gazprom sells gas to Armenia at the lowest prices – \$150 per 1000 cubic meters.

"It is particularly gratifying that the trade turnover grew by almost 30 percent last year, and the growth has made 22.2 percent in the first half of the current year," he said.

Pashinyan said, in turn, he is glad for the third meeting between the two leaders over the past four months.

"I think such regularity stresses the special character of relations between our countries," he said.

"I want to stress that despite certain pessimism in the Armenian and Russian press see MEETING, page 2



Russian workers rushing relief material to Yerevan at Moscow's International Airport

The Untold Story

The Earthquake that Shook Armenia,
The Relief Effort that Changed the World



By Stephen Kurkjian

PARAMUS, N.J. – John A. Simourian was a legendary athlete at Watertown High School and Harvard College during the mid-1950s and his successes on the football and baseball fields made him one of the most celebrated Armenian-American sports figures in the 20th century.

Yet unbeknownst to everyone except a few close friends, Simourian initiated a relief effort that saved the lives of numerous victims of the devastating earthquake in Armenia in 1988 by reaching out to two players he had met while leading Harvard's football team 30 years before.

The relief effort, which depended on a secret agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union to succeed, was spurred by an entreaty to Simourian by his wife, Michele, that "we've got to do something" hours after learning of the disaster.

Three decades later, the devastating earthquake is a reminder of the horrific events that Armenia and its people has had to endure to survive through history. But a closer look of what followed it, particularly the collapse of Communism and see RELIEF, page 14

Annie Totah: Woman, Armenian, Warrior

By Taleen Babayan
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WASHINGTON – When Annie Simonian Totah fights for Armenian Genocide recognition on Capitol Hill, the dispiriting thought of her parents in an orphanage takes centerstage.

The daughter of Genocide survivors, Totah has made it one of her life's missions to obtain worldwide recognition for the first human rights exodus of the 20th century, which claimed the lives of close to 1.5 million Armenians during the crumbling of the Ottoman Empire in 1915.

It is with that determination and passion in mind that she has dedicated 40 years of her life for advocacy work and see TOTAH, page 10



Armenian Child Asylum-Seekers Allowed to Stay In Netherlands

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) – The Dutch government performed an abrupt U-turn and said on Saturday, September 8, that two Armenian children whose bid for asylum had been rejected could remain in the Netherlands.

The decision came after the children, 12-year-old Lili and her brother, 13-year-old Howick, went into hiding ahead of their expected deportations. The government faced mounting disapproval of its original refusal to let the siblings remain in the country where they have lived for a decade.

The Ministry of Justice and Security said in a written statement that while Dutch and Armenian authorities had worked hard to arrange a secure situation for the pair in Armenia, "recent developments" meant "the welfare and security of the children can no longer be sufficiently guaranteed."

The statement added: "The state secretary has therefore, taking everything into account, decided that the children can remain in the Netherlands." see ASYLUM, page 4

NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkish Minister Attends Service at Akhtamar Church

ISTANBUL (Panorama.am) – Turkey's Culture Minister Mehmet Nuri Ersoy attended a divine liturgy served on Sunday, September 9, at the historic Armenian Church Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Akhtamar island, in eastern Van province, Ermenihaber reported.

As the source reports, organized by the local Armenian Patriarchate, the religious ceremony was the first in four years after the annual event was scrapped due to security concerns.

"We continue to respect, support, and protect Armenians' religious freedoms and life cultures. This will continue to be the case. We have started the ceremonies because the security environment has been ensured again this year. Thus, we are very happy. Our wish is that services at the Akhtamar Church will continue without any interruption," the minister said, as quoted by local sources.

The church re-opened in 2007 as a "monumental museum." In 2010, the cathedral hosted its first service after a 95-year break. The last service was conducted in 2015, which saw a gathering of thousands of local and international tourists in Van.

Pashinyan Discusses March 1 Events

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan presented details on the March 1, 2008 incidents and the developments before that in his speech during the election campaign of his bloc. He emphasized that on February 23, 2008, President Robert Kocharyan announced the introduction of an emergency situation in the country starting from midnight.

"The emergency situation was not introduced on March 2, 2008. It was only the official component. It was introduced on February 23 and this has been proved and there are all the necessary facts. Robert Kocharyan withdrew the troops from the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and used it for the occupation of his own people," Pashinyan said.

"The army was ordered to open fire at the windows of the buildings and uniforms were taken from the army and given to the bodyguards of the oligarchs inside the building of the Government, and automatic rifles were also given to them. According to our operative data, there was an order in the morning of March 1 to beat the people. The document they showed later was created later. The servicemen received orders from the President's administration to go to the fact finding group and tell them lies. They also made the army their own mercenaries," Pashinyan said.

In connection with the investigation, the first president of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosian and the third, Serzh Sargsyan, will be interrogated.

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Shant Military Drills Kick off

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Shant 2018 (meaning Lightning 2018) nationwide military exercises have kicked off in Armenia.

The state will be brought to a simulated wartime situation during the duration of the exercises: from September 11 through the 14th.

The drills are aimed at testing the skills and abilities of all state bodies and agencies and elevating the level of partnership during a war scenario.

Baroness Cox Visits Artsakh

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — On September 10, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh Republic) Masis Mayilian received a delegation led by Baroness Caroline Cox, member of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Artsakh foreign ministry said in a press release.

Welcoming Cox's visit to Artsakh, the minister noted its importance from the point of view of observing the current situation in the republic and the achievements in different spheres. Mayilian praised her consistent efforts aimed at protecting the rights and legitimate interests of the citizens of Artsakh abroad, raising awareness of the international community on Artsakh, disseminating truthful information about the conflict between Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh, as well as solving humanitarian issues in the republic.

During the meeting, Mayilian touched upon the current stage of the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict settlement process, presented the achievements in the international recognition of Artsakh and decentralized cooperation with the subjects of different countries of the world, as well as answered the questions of the delegation members.

He awarded Cox with the memorial medal dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Artsakh Foreign Ministry.

Francophonie Secretary General Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Hosting the 17th La Francophonie summit is a great honor and responsibility for Armenia, Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan said at a joint press conference with the organization's Secretary General Michaëlle Jean in Yerevan on September 11.

Mnatsakanyan underscored that La Francophonie, as a tool of language diversity and spreading of French has an important role for Armenia. According to him, language is an important tool to advance common values, goals, cooperation. "La Francophonie is rich in its membership, it includes countries of the African continent, southern, south-eastern Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean region, North America and Europe, which work together, use cooperation to advance common values: these [values] are diversity, solidarity, humanism, human rights and democracy," he said.

He emphasized that the priorities of the summit are built around these very values. "We have a goal to have maximally practical results both at the summit and during our 2018-2020 chairmanship. I am sure that the summit will be a great and joyous event for Armenia. We are trying to display us, our culture and values as much as possible," he said.

He also mentioned that negotiations with partner countries around a document which will be signed after the summit are being finalized. He added resolutions on gender equality and youth will also be adopted. An economic forum will also be convened at the TUMO center.

The La Francophonie village will be open October 7-12 in central Yerevan, where Armenian culture, arts and crafts will be displayed in over 40 pavilions. A closing concert will feature stars from Francophone countries.

"This is a quite great honor and responsibility for Armenia. We are a new but rather confident and proud member of La Francophonie and with our activities and membership we are attempting to use this arena of multilateral cooperation to advance those common values which unite member states within the La Francophonie," he said.



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan speaks at a rally for Yerevan mayoral candidate Hayk Marutyan on September 10.

Pashinyan Urges Voters to Reaffirm Victory of 'Revolution'

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan called on voters in Yerevan to reaffirm the results of last spring's "velvet revolution" in an upcoming ballot in the capital — the first major election in Armenia since the change of government.

Twelve parties and alliances are contesting the ballot in which Yerevan's municipal assembly and eventually mayor will be elected.

A pro-Pashinyan alliance in the elections called My Step is led by popular actor and producer Hayk Marutyan.

Speaking at a rally launching the My Step campaign on Monday, September 10, Pashinyan said that more than just a mayoral position and Marutyan's candidacy were at stake.

"Those who vote for My Step and for Hayk Marutyan vote for early parliamentary elections," he said.

The holding of early parliamentary elections within a year is part of the program of the Pashinyan government approved last May.

Under the current Constitution, snap general elections can be held only if the prime minister resigns and lawmakers twice fail to elect his or her replacement.

In the past several weeks Pashinyan

publicly spoke of scenarios in which former President Serzh Sarkisian's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) that still dominates the National Assembly could break political agreements and try to install another prime minister if he steps down as prime minister. As an additional safeguard he, therefore, suggested a constitutional amendment that would allow the parliament to dissolve itself.

Addressing the pro-Marutyan rally, Pashinyan warned other political parties and groups, which he did not name, against planning a "counterrevolution."

"Some political forces that present themselves as advocates of the revolution are conducting negotiations with the HHK for the latter to help them with their vote-rigging resource," Pashinyan asserted. "Come to your senses, madmen!"

The head of the Armenian government said, therefore, the September 23 vote has an "exceptionally important political meaning." "As at these elections people, citizens of Armenia at polling stations should reaffirm the victory that they registered in Republic Square..., reaffirm people's power, the victory of the people's nonviolent velvet revolution in Armenia," Pashinyan underscored.

Marutyan, who was one of the active Pashinyan supporters during peaceful antigovernment protests in spring, was criticized by political rivals last week for his remarks in which he made a division of the political spectrum into "whites and blacks" ahead of the Yerevan elections.

"It's a very clear situation in Armenia today. There are white forces and black forces. I want to officially state that we are white forces, and all those who do not want us to succeed are black forces," Marutyan said on September 2.

The remarks were swiftly construed by representatives of the former government as discrimination against part of society that does not share the ideas of the political team that came to power in Armenia in the wake of last spring's 'velvet revolution'.

Marutyan later publicly regretted having used the expression. Pashinyan then weighed in on the issue, acknowledging that Marutyan's remarks were "not quite correct."

The HHK is not participating in the Yerevan elections. Its senior member Taron Markarian resigned in July after serving as Yerevan mayor for seven years. The Council of Elders could not elect a new mayor, triggering early elections.

Pashinyan, Putin Meet In Moscow

MEETING, from page 1

and social media, our relations are developing very dynamically, very naturally and I think that the main task is to unfold the whole potential of our relations," he stated.

"It doesn't mean that there are no questions in our relations, because that would mean there are no relations at all. I can confirm that there are no unsolvable questions in our relations," he added.

"I'm confident that these questions will be solved and we will rely on mutual respect for our allied relations, the interests of our countries, respect for the sovereignty of our countries and principle of non-interference in each other's affairs," Pashinyan said.

"We really have brilliant relations, but I don't think we should stop here. We have particularly big potential both in political and economic relations, as well as in military-technical cooperation," the Armenian Prime Minister stated.

He noted that the parties are determined to reinforce relations not only in bilateral format, but also within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

In other areas of common interest, Russia has agreed to continue to sup-

ply weapons to Armenia, Pashinyan, told the Kommersant newspaper in an interview.

"We agreed that supplies of Russian weapons will be continued routinely," Pashinyan said when asked about any agreements reached in his meetings with Putin.

Pashinyan added that the weapons will be financed through loans and that "we will discuss other options."

Armenia in November 2017 took on a \$100 million Russian loan to finance deliveries of weapons from Moscow, Russian state-run TASS news agency reported. It added that the loan provides funds for Yerevan's use from 2018-22.

Russia and Armenia have long had close ties, but questions about the relations have increased since Pashinyan in May ousted from power Serzh Sargsyan, seen as close to Moscow.

The Armenian prime minister has insisted that there is no "political component" in the criminal case against Kocharyan. He has also denied any political motives behind the prosecutions of other former officials.

In his remarks before the meeting, Putin said relations between Moscow and Yerevan are developing "steadily in all directions."

"This concerns the sphere of political

relations, the military sphere, and issues of security and economic cooperation," he said.

Pashinyan noted that he was having his third meeting with Putin within the space of just four months.

"I think that such frequency emphasizes the special nature of relations between our countries, let me say also the special nature of our personal relations," he said.

Still, Pashinyan acknowledged the existence of "some questions" that need to be discussed by the two countries.

"God save us from a situation where we would have no questions in our relations, because that would mean we have no relations at all," he said.

Pashinyan said in the Kommersant interview that Putin had accepted his invitation to visit Yerevan "if not before the end of the current year, then early next year."

Meanwhile, Pashinyan is expected to travel to Paris for talks with French President Emmanuel Macron on September 14.

Macron is due to visit Yerevan for a Francophonie summit in the Armenian capital on October 11-12.

(RFE/RL and Public Radio of Armenia contributed to this report.)



ARMENIA

Georgian Prime Minister Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) – Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan praised the current level of relations between Armenia and Georgia as he hosted his Georgian counterpart Mamuka Bakhtadze in Yerevan on Monday, September 10.

Bakhtadze, who was elected head of the Georgian government in June, arrived in the Armenian capital for his first official visit.

After longer-than-planned talks with Bakhtadze Pashinyan spoke about “ambitious tasks” in the relations between the two countries.

“Today we had a very important conversation. During the negotiations we formulated quite ambitious tasks for the development of our further relations. Of course, the relations between Armenia and Georgia are brilliant, they are very good, and we face the task of bringing the economic component of our relations in conformity to the substantial, emotional level of relations that exists between our two peoples,” Pashinyan said at a joint press conference with his Georgian counterpart.

He added that the Georgian prime minister presented “a very ambitious program.”

“And we fully support it,” Pashinyan continued. “A concrete objective was formulated: to take our trade turnover to the level of \$1 billion in the next few years. This is a concrete subject, for which we can have a clear roadmap and take concerted steps towards the implementation of this task.”

For his part, Bakhtadze expressed hope that relations between Yerevan and Tbilisi will deepen in different directions.

“During today’s meeting my counterpart and I discussed the main directions of cooperation



Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan tour the Yerevan Brandy Company's Ararat Museum.

said, as quoted by the Armenian prime minister's official website.

Bakhtadze said that he also spoke with Pashinyan about Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration process and “the significant progress that Georgia has made in this direction.”

“At the same time we welcome the activation of relations between Armenia and the European Union,” Bakhtadze said. “We agreed to maintain the dynamics of high-level meetings and at the same time to support the holding of narrow-sector meetings.”

After an official dinner Pashinyan and Bakhtadze toured the Yerevan Brandy Company's Ararat Museum, where they got acquainted with the history and production of Armenian brandy. The prime ministers were also presented in the Peace Barrel, which is dated to the 1994 ceasefire. brandy alcohol it is called “peace” because it will open when the Karabakh conflict is settled.

The two left their signatures in the factory memorandum and took part in the ceremony of nomination boards that were ousted in honor of the visit of the Armenian and Georgian Prime Ministers.



Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

and emphasized our aspiration to intensify political relations. We discussed issues related to the spheres of transportation, energy, tourism, culture, education and innovations, and we made sure that we still have some untapped potential in many areas,” Bakhtadze

Head of SIS Says Audio Recording Aims To Derail Investigation of March 1 Case

YEREVAN (Arka) – On September 11, the head of Armenia's Special Investigative Service (SIS) Sasun Khachatryan said the goal of a secretly recorded audio recording containing his telephone conversation with the chief of the National Security Service Artur Vanetsyan, in which they discuss several high-profile criminal cases, launched against former top officials that went viral on internet the same day is the desire to make them silent.

“The goal of this audio recording is to make us work less actively, but we are determined to bring the case to the end,” Khachatryan said during a special press conference on Tuesday.

He noted that the investigation uncovered sensational details of the March 1, 2008 events, and that is the reason why the people responsible for that crime want to derail the investigation.

Kocharyan's arrest was afraid to make a decision and telephoned him to ask for directions. In the audio the NSS chief also repeatedly warned the SIS head not to arrest former deputy defense minister Yuri Khachaturov, who currently serves as secretary-general of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization. Vanetsyan explained that Khachaturov's arrest could entail “political problems.”

Former president Robert Kocharyan, arrested on July 27 by a local court, but released from pre-trial custody on August 13, after Armenia's Court of Appeals ruled that he could not be prosecuted for the post-election violence, is also accused of violating Armenia constitutional order in March 2008, when in a post-election stand-off eight civilians and two police officers were killed.

The ruling of the Court of Appeals was



National Security Service Director Artur Vanetsyan and Special Investigation Service head Sasun Khachatryan comment on the wiretapping scandal in a press conference in Yerevan.

“The army not only participated in the events of March 1. The servicemen opened fire on residential buildings in Leo Street,” Khachatryan said.

In the audio Vanetsyan and Khachatryan discuss particular circumstances of the case against Kocharyan, who is charged with overthrowing Armenia's constitutional order during the 2008 violence in which 10 people were killed.

In particular, Vanetsyan says that the judge who was supposed to decide on

backed by Article 140 of the Armenian Constitution, which says that during the term of his or her powers and thereafter, the President of the Republic may not be prosecuted and subjected to liability for actions deriving from his or her status.

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.” It later appealed the decision at the Court of Cassation.



Armenia – Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at a joint press conference in Yerevan, September 10.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Russian President to Visit Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

MOSCOW (Arka) — Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan later this year, Russian daily Izvestia reported quoting a presidential aide on foreign affairs Yuri Ushakov.

According to Ushakov, the trips are scheduled for September and October. In late September, Putin will pay a visit to Azerbaijan. Then, on September 27-28 he will attend a meeting of CIS leaders in the Tajik capital Dushanbe. Putin's visit to Uzbekistan is planned for October.

Besides, before the end of the year Russia will host a trilateral summit with the participation of the presidents of Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan.

The first meeting of the presidents of Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan was held in 2016. Later summits were held in Baku and Tehran. President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan had two meetings this year with Vladimir Putin- in June and in September.

Tajikestan, Armenia, to Recognize Educaitonal Diplomas

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A new bill envisages mutual recognition of educational diplomas between Armenia and Tajikistan.

Education and Science Minister Arayik Harutyunyan briefed lawmakers on September 11 on the bill to ratify the agreement on mutual-recognition of diplomas, educational qualifications and academic degrees between the Armenian government and the Tajikistani government.

“Graduation certificates and diplomas of all levels are acknowledged under this,” he said.

He said that the signing of individual agreements of this kind with Central Asian countries is very important, because it enables to solve one of the government's priorities: the internationalization of higher education in the education field.

Currently there are six students from Tajikistan studying in the higher education system of Armenia.

The minister said that they are working to have similar agreements with other countries also.

India Ambassador Portfolio Expanded to Sri Lanka and Nepal

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian signed decrees on concurrently appointing Armenia's Ambassador to India Armen Martirosyan as ambassador to Sri Lanka and Nepal.

The president signed the decrees based on the prime minister's proposal.

Istanbul Armenians Mark Heroic battle of Musa Dagh

ISTANBUL (news.am) — Istanbul Armenians celebrated the heroic battle of Musa Dagh on September 5.

At the yard of St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church in primarily Armenian-populated Kinaliada Island, Armenians cooked traditional Harissa — one of the symbols of this heroic battle — and danced and sang until late at night, Agos Armenian weekly reported.

The heroic battle of the Armenian people of Musa Dagh — a mountain in today's Hatay Province of Turkey — took place in 1915, when the residents of several Armenian villages around Musa Dagh refused to obey the Ottoman Empire's decision to deport them. As a result, these Armenians defended themselves against the Ottoman troops for 53 days, and without any outside help. Ultimately, however, French warships came to the rescue of the Musa Dagh Armenians, and they were taken to Egypt.

German-Armenians Applaud Merkel

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

BERLIN — German Chancellor Angela Merkel's recent trip to the South Caucasus received careful attention in Germany, not only in political circles and the major press, but also in the small but active Armenian community here. On September 5, Dr. Raffi Kantian, chairman of the Board of the Deutsch-Armenische Gesellschaft (German-Armenian Society), issued a press release on behalf of his organization.

Titled, “German Chancellor Merkel in Armenian: An important step and the right one for German-Armenian relations,” it read as follows:

Chancellor Merkel visited Armenia on August 24 and 25. We in the German-Armenian Society welcome her decision to visit the genocide memorial immediately on arrival, a decision that bears a special symbolic stamp. Although she avoided the word “genocide,” she made clear that that is what she meant:

“I planned this commemoration in the spirit expressed also by the Resolution of the German Bundestag (Parliament) in June 2016. I believe that with it, an important step was taken for the development of the culture of remembrance and also that a political classification was assigned, though explicitly not a legal one.”

The Bundestag Resolution from June

2, 2016, “Remembering and Commemorating the Genocide against Armenians and other Christian Minorities in 1915 and 1916,” contains the important ascertainment:

“Today the task for education in Germany, in schools, universities and political formations is to take up study of the expulsion and extermination of the Armenians, including it in curricula and textbooks, as part of the study of the history of 20th century ethnic conflicts, to transmit this to future generations. In this respect the Federal States are to play an important role.”

We of the German-Armenian Society are confident that despite the reservation, it is here not a question of a juridical classification; from the Chancellor's following remarks, it is clear that this will provide an important impetus for implementation of the Resolution in the Federal States, implementation which has proceeded very slowly to date:

“As friends and partners of Armenia, we Germans are well aware what atrocities were committed against the Armenians in 1915 and the following years. This suffering of countless Armenians should not and will not be forgotten. Germany will do its part.”

We of the German-Armenian Society are convinced that the democratic and

economic development of Armenia is of central significance. Therefore we say: among the most important successes in Armenian foreign policy is the signing of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Cooperation Agreement with the European Union, known as CEPA. Germany has played an important role in this. This also reflects the positive cooperation in development policy between the two countries. Thus it was only consistent for the Chancellor to assert:

“Germany will do everything possible to ensure that the possibilities contained in this CEPA Agreement, as it is known, will be really utilized and implemented and that as a result a deepened cooperation with all the members of the European Union can succeed.”

This, and the readiness that the Chancellor declared in Yerevan to assume responsibility for a solution to the Berg Karabach conflict, demonstrate that the German-Armenian relations are on the right track. The fact that the only spiritual leader the Chancellor visited during her South Caucasus trip was Karekin II., Catholicos of all Armenians, underscores our assessment.

In conclusion we as the German-Armenian Society state: Chancellor Merkel's visit to Armenia was an important milestone in the relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Armenia.

— Board of the German-Armenian Society

US Threatens to Arrest ICC Judges Who Probe War Crimes

THE HAGUE (AFP) — The United States threatened on Monday, September 10, to arrest and sanction judges and other officials of the International Criminal Court if it moves to charge any American who served in Afghanistan with war crimes.

White House National Security Advisor John Bolton called the Hague-based rights body “unaccountable” and “outright dangerous” to the United States, Israel and other allies, and said any probe of US service members would be “an utterly unfounded, unjustifiable investigation.”

“If the court comes after us, Israel or other US allies, we will not sit quietly,” Bolton said.

He said the US was prepared to slap financial sanctions and criminal charges on officials of the court if they proceed against any Americans.

“We will ban its judges and prosecutors from entering the United States. We will sanction their funds in the US financial system, and we will prosecute them in the US criminal system,” he said.

“We will do the same for any company or state that assists an ICC investigation of Americans,” he said.

Bolton made the comments in a speech in Washington to the Federalist Society, a powerful association of legal conservatives.

Bolton pointed to an ICC prosecutor's request in November 2017 to open an investigation into alleged war crimes committed by the US military and intelligence officials in Afghanistan, especially over the abuse of detainees.

Neither Afghanistan nor any other government party to the ICC's Rome Statute has requested an investigation, Bolton said.

He said the ICC could formally open the investigation “any day now.”

He also cited a recent move by Palestinian leaders to have Israeli officials prosecuted at the ICC for human rights violations.

“The United States will use any means necessary to protect our citizens and those of our allies from unjust prosecution by this illegitimate court,” Bolton said.

“We will not cooperate with the ICC. We will provide no assistance to the ICC. We certainly will not join the ICC. We will let the ICC die on its own.”

The condemnation of the ICC added to the White House's rejection of many supra-

national institutions and treaties the president does not believe benefit the United States.

Bolton also condemned the record of the court since it formally started up in 2002, and argued that most major nations had not joined.

He said it had attained just eight convictions despite spending more than \$1.5 billion, and said that had not stemmed atrocities around the world.

“In fact, despite ongoing ICC investigations, atrocities continue to occur in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Libya, Syria, and many other nations,” he added.

But Bolton said the main objection of the administration of President Donald Trump is to the idea that the ICC could have higher authority than the US Constitution and US sovereignty.

“In secular terms we don't recognize any higher authority than the US constitution,” he said.

“This president will not allow American citizens to be prosecuted by foreign bureaucrats, and he will not allow other nations to dictate our means of self-defense.”

Armenian Child Asylum-Seekers Allowed to Stay In Netherlands

ASYLUM, from oage 1

It was not immediately clear whether their mother, who was deported to Armenia last year, would be allowed to return to join her children.

Earlier Saturday, Justice Ministry spokesman Maarten Molenbeek said the children ran away from a foster home overnight and police appealed for the public's help in locating them. Police reported in the afternoon they had been found and were being questioned, but would be returned to foster care.

Police added that the appeal for help finding Howick and Lily “was not widely embraced” by the public while the threat of deportation hung over the children.

An Amsterdam court on Friday rejected a final bid to block their deportations, which had been scheduled for

Saturday at the latest.

The Netherlands was once known as a welcoming nation for migrants but has become tougher in recent years as the number of arrivals soared.

The government argues that it has to strictly apply its immigration regulations to retain public support for granting asylum to people fleeing war and persecution in countries like Syria.

However, authorities had been fiercely criticized by rights groups and supporters of Lili and Howick.

The independent national children's ombudsman, Margrite Kalverboer, accused the government of Prime Minister Mark Rutte of “breaching fundamental rights of children” with its decision to deport them.

The children came to the Netherlands

with their mother in 2008 and go to school here, but a string of courts rejected their asylum applications, ruling that Armenia was safe.

The children reportedly have never visited the country and don't speak Armenian. Lawyers representing them argued in court that the mother was not able psychologically to care for her children.

State Secretary for Justice and Security Mark Harbers defended the government's stance Friday, but acknowledged it was a tough decision to deport them.

“Everybody feels emotional about this; that also applies to somebody in the Cabinet like me,” Harbers said. “But at the same time you have to keep looking at all the facts that play a role.”



INTERNATIONAL

Armenia Expounds on Planned Syria Mission

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenia will engage in a humanitarian mission in Syria by sending mostly doctors and engineers, according to a senior Defense Ministry official in Yerevan.

Following his talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on September 8 Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced a joint Armenian-Russian humanitarian program for Syria, but did not disclose any details.

In an interview with RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am) on Tuesday, September 11, Deputy Defense Minister Gabriel Balayan said that the Armenian mission will be operating in the war-torn Middle Eastern country within the framework of a 2015 UN Security Council resolution and an intergovernmental agreement with the Syrian government.

"The non-military group will be exclusively subordinated to the relevant department of the Republic of Armenia. We do not rule out cooperation with Russia in some ways, but the group will operate exclusively under the flag of the Republic of Armenia," he said.

As for the mission, Balayan said that Armenian medics and engineers will help civilians in Aleppo, including ethnic Armenians living in this Syrian city.

"At the request of the Syrian government we will be sending specialists who will try to be of help to civilians," the Armenian deputy defense minister said, adding that Armenian sappers will help demine and destroy self-made



Russian soldiers distribute humanitarian aid sent by Armenia in Aleppo, February 14, 2017.

mines that have been stockpiled in Aleppo.

Aleppo was home to the majority of an estimated 80,000 ethnic Armenians who lived in Syria before the outbreak of the conflict in 2011. Tens of thousands of Syrian Armenians fled their homes since the start of hostilities in the Arab republic. Many of the displaced Armenians took refuge in Armenia.

Speaking in Yerevan on Tuesday, Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan also confirmed that Armenian specialists in Syria will be involved "exclusively in the humanitarian context of security."

"The security of Armenians living in Syria is one of the major issues on our agenda," the top Armenian diplomat stressed.

In recent years the Armenian government sent several

planeloads of humanitarian assistance to civilians in Syria. The relief was delivered to the war-torn country by Russian transport planes.

Receiving Syria's ambassador in Yerevan Muhammad Haj Ibrahim last week Armenian Parliament Speaker Ara Babloyan said Yerevan was willing to take part in the reconstruction of Syria. He did not elaborate.

Russia, which has helped Syrian government forces to restore control over much of the country's territory, has been seeking greater Western involvement in the reconstruction of Syria. The United States and its allies, however, are tying reconstruction assistance to a process that includes UN-supervised elections and a political transition in Syria. Washington blames Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for the country's devastation.

Aggrieved Kurdish Fighters Quietly Join Syrian Regime Side in Battle for Idlib

By Martin Chulov and Mohammed Rasool

IDLIB (*Guardian*) – Throughout seven years of war, the Kurds of Syria's north have been a wildcard. Their loyalties have remained uncertain and their push for autonomy buffeted by a raging conflict that has consumed almost all before it.

As a showdown nears in the north-west of the country, home to a prominent Kurdish enclave until earlier this year - and now central to the outcome of the war - the Kurds are quietly renewing their claim. Dozens of Kurdish militants who had fought with US forces in the fight against Islamic State have now allied with Syrian regime forces in Idlib province for what is likely to be the war's final, bloody battle.

The presence of the Kurds in the fight for Idlib adds a new dimension to a clash that has drawn in every player in the long, savage war. The alliance has been kept under wraps both by Syrian officials, who have been wary of Kurdish ambitions throughout the war, and by Kurdish forces themselves, who remain nominally allied to Washington in the fight against Isis.

A last-ditch diplomatic attempt to avert a fight for Idlib province, where up to 3 million people are crammed into over-stretched towns and cities, is being held in Tehran on Friday. Russia and Iran, both backers of the Syrian regime, and Turkey, a backer of many groups who stood against the Syrian leader, will attempt to thrash out a deal that prevents what aid agencies say will be a bloodbath if, as expected, a full-scale assault is launched.

On the ground, there is little hope that diplomacy will deliver an outcome. Speaking of global leaders, Amin Azzam, an anti-Assad fighter from the town of Jisr al-Shughour in Idlib, said: "They have failed us for five years. Why would they save us now?"

To the south of the city, a small number of Kurds have gathered with Syrian forces and Iranian-backed militias to await orders. The men are believed to be members of the Syrian Democratic Forces, part of an alliance of Arabs and Kurds raised by the US to take on Isis in

the north-east.

With that fight now largely over, the SDF remain bitter at being ousted earlier this year from the town of Afrin in Idlib by Turkish-led Arab forces who had been raised to fight Assad. That defeat left the Kurds without a stronghold in an area in which they had been historically strong and strategically relevant. It also shifted the loyalties of many.

Kurdish leaders say avenging the loss of Afrin remains a priority. Aldar Khalili, a leader of a Syrian Kurdish political bloc, said Kurds would readily deal with Assad to win back the town.

"As of now there aren't any movements toward sending the forces in Rojava (north-eastern Syria) to the liberation operations in Idlib alongside the Syrian government and Russian forces," he said. "But we have shown our readiness to go into negotiations with the Syrian government to clear all parts of Syria from the Isis, jihadis and terrorist groups backed by Turkey."

Another Kurdish leader said small numbers of SDF members had made the long, difficult journey to join Syrian forces. "It's symbolic on one level and strategic on another. This means we need the regime. There is a partnership growing, but we need to get our pound of flesh from them."

Afrin was attacked by Turkey and its proxies after the US said it would help raise a permanent border force in the north-east, which Turkey feared would strengthen Kurdish ambitions towards eventual sovereignty. The move would have implications for Ankara's ongoing war with Kurdish militants inside its own borders.

Containing Kurdish ambitions, and even preventing a consolidation in Syria, has been central to Ankara's projection in Syria in the past two years of war. Chasing Kurdish forces from Afrin allowed Turkey to boast that there was no Kurdish enclave along its border west of the Euphrates river. Just as potently, it allowed the Kurds to claim they had been betrayed by a fickle ally.

When the city was under attack, the SDF's calls for US support were rebuffed. Allies in one corner of the country, they were abandoned in another, with Washington's already strained relationship with Ankara more important than its bond with Kurdish leaders.

The episode brought the alliance to breaking point. Four Kurdish officials have told the *Guardian* in recent months that anti-Isis operations have all but stopped. "Those we are carrying out sometimes don't involve the Americans at all," said one senior figure. "There is not the trust there was and they should not be surprised if we look after ourselves."

A senior regional intelligence source said US military leaders have told the SDF that they would not accept their members participating in the Idlib operation, alongside Syrian forces and their Iranian allies.

"If they go, they'll be without uniforms or flags. They'll try to look like Syrian troops," the source said.

Khalil said their expulsion from Afrin changed the equation for the Kurds. "The situation in Afrin can't go on like this and as the coalition of political parties who believe in future democratic Syria, we are ready to go into the negotiations with the Syrian government. We want to build a future democratic Syria that includes every community within the Syrian society equally and we are ready to participate not only in terms of the military but politically and economically."

In Afrin, local woman Arin, 31, said a low-level insurgency against Turkish forces and its allies continued ahead of the expected Russian-led air assault. "The situation in Afrin is bad and there are random arrests of Kurds with allegations that people are part of the YPG (a group aligned to the Turkish militant organisation the PKK). "We hear about attacks on the checkpoints of the armed groups controlling the city and there are assassinations every week carried out by the youth who defended the city before it was invaded."

Afrin remains a focal point of Kurdish resentment and an incentive for many to deepen their engagement with the regime.

"The armed men who are controlling the city

are mostly from the areas that were lost to the government like Ghouta, Daraa and other areas," said Arin. "It was them who changed the dynamic here, not us. We as Kurds were happy here until they fought us. If they fight us, they can expect vengeance. Blood brings blood."

Russia Removes Ex-Defense Minister of Armenia from List of Wanted Persons

YEREVAN (Arka) – Russian law-enforcement authorities on September 7 removed Armenia's ex-minister of defense Mikael Harutyunyan from the list of wanted persons, Interfax reported.

In early July Armenia's Special Investigative Service (SIS) issued an arrest warrant for General Mikael Harutyunyan, who is charged with illegally using the armed forces against the protesters in the wake of the contested 2008 presidential election.

"After studying the documents regarding Harutyunyan, accused of the March 1, 2008 events in Yerevan, a decision was made to cancel his search on the territory of the Russian Federation," Interfax quoted a source as saying.

The source explained that there is no danger for the disgraced General is Russia. But, according to the source, if Harutyunyan appears in another former Soviet republic, which is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), he may be arrested and extradited to Armenia.

The source also specified that the request for the arrest and extradition of the ex-defense minister reached Moscow some time ago. It was not sent by the Prosecutor General's Office of Armenia, but came through the interstate search. The arrest warrant indicates even the home address of the General in Moscow. Earlier another source of Interfax reported that Harutyunyan's extradition would be refused, because he has been a citizen of Russia since 2002.

Community News

Two Students from Jerusalem Enjoy Summer High School Conference At St. Nersess Seminary

By Florence Avakian

ARMONK, N.Y. — Sevag Boyadjian, 15, and Marina Gejekoushian, 17, two gifted students from Jerusalem's Sts. Tarkmanchatz School, were chosen to participate in this year's Summer High School Conference at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary. This program was initiated and organized by seminary Dean Rev. Mardiros Chevian, and funded by several donors.

This year, the main benefactors of the project were Russell and Susan Kashian (Muskege, WI), with support by George and Lorraine Marootian (Franklin Lakes, NJ), Vicken and Rosette Arslanian (Englewood, NJ), Joseph and Kristine Casali (Ramsey, NJ), Steven and Karen Nargizian (Franklin Lakes, NJ), Gregory and Meline Toufayan (Saddle River, NJ), Glen and Kristin Dabaghian (Ramsey, NJ), Keith and Karyn Bilezerian (Wrentham, MA), Jonathan and Therese Najarian (Hillsdale, NJ), and Paul Derderian (Rye, NY).

Both students are proud Armenians who "love our history, our people, and our friends who are mostly Armenian." They attribute these feelings to their families, and to Sts. Tarkmanchatz School which has taught them "our language, culture and history, as well as how to be a good Armenian." The school that includes kindergarten to the 12th grade, has been applauded for its highly rated academic standards.

The school has approximately 150 students, the vast majority of which are Armenian. The few non-Armenian students are enrolled because of the school's reputation in the community of having a safe environment and a high level of education.

Its principal for the past 11 years has been the much-loved Very Rev. Norayr Kazazian. "He is very caring, funny and knows how to take care of the school," says Gejekoushian, adding that he fixed the walls, had the new classrooms painted, and hired new highly experienced teachers, including Arabs and Jews, though most of the teachers are Armenian.

Sts. Tarkmanchatz "is our second home," Boyadjian chimes in, "and there is no bullying. Bullies are severely dealt with." The classes are small in student number, and though the teachers are strict, personal attention is given to each student. Sts. Tarkmanchatz "is special because it teaches those don't know much about Armenians to learn the treasures of our rich heritage," says Marina whose mother graduated from the school.

The students residing within the area of the Patriarchate also participate in their own clubs. "We always do things together in our two clubs. We have several activities and games. The clubs teach us how to be good scouts, good people," says Boyadjian who at 6' 2" tall, is a proficient basketball player.

Boyadjian loves mathematics. He hopes to attend college in Jerusalem, and become a tour guide "in three languages" in the city. The Armenian Quarter is a well-known part of the Old City. The famed Sts. James Armenian Cathedral with its legendary windows that glow with the oiled lamps and the changing hues of daylight, was built with no electricity. The traditional all-male choir is made up of seminarians, Boyadjian points out.

Gejekoushian said the sciences, in particular, biology and psychology are her favorites. Her goal is to attend Hebrew University, and become a doctor "so I can help people." She points out that there are many doctors in Jerusalem hospitals from the West Bank. Gejekoushian, who is a fifth-generation Jerusalemite, loves this city because "my family is here, as well as a majority of my friends. This is an historic city. Every stone has its own story."

see STUDENTS, page 8



Registering for the AGBU Hye Geen seminar

AGBU Hye Geen Tackles Topic of Sexual Harassment With Panel of Speakers

LOS ANGELES — On Saturday, August 18, the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Hye Geen hosted a conference titled: "Sexual Harassment: Understand, Prevent, Respond" at the AGBU Vatche and Tamar Manoukian Center. The conference aimed to bring forth the subject of sexual harassment — something that is often difficult to talk about. Three experts were invited to

By Arvin Demerjian

speaking on the topic in order to provide an outlook on the different facets of sexual harassment.

The first speaker was Alene Tchekmedyian, staff writer at the *Los Angeles Times*. Tchekmedyian earned her undergraduate degree from UCLA and later went on to receive her master's degree in journalism from Columbia. She opened the discussion by providing statistics that show the increase of sexual harassment and assault reports over the years. In 2015, there were more than 90,000 reported incidents in the United States, and that number keeps increasing. Many incidents don't get reported out of a fear of reporting, or the fear of being told to "tough it out."

Tchekmedyian discussed the #MeToo movement that began in October 2017. This social-media-based movement began in the entertainment industry, exposing sexual harassment and assault perpetrators to the public, but has now expanded and reached thousands of others. The goal of this movement is to create awareness of the magnitude of this societal issue, since roughly only 25% of these incidents get reported. As a result of the #MeToo movement, more than 40 of the accused have faced the consequences of their actions, some even losing their jobs and titles.

While Tchekmedyian shed light on the social aspects and statistics of sexual harassment, Los Angeles County Deputy District Attorney, Rouman Ebrahim informed attendees about the legal consequences of sexual harassment and assault cases. During his career, Ebrahim has spent eight years working explicitly on sex crimes. Focusing on educating the attendees, he began by explaining the penal code and statute of limitations regarding sexual incident reports. Before turning his attention to cases within California, Ebrahim discussed that cases across the United States are treated differently due to differing laws regarding sexual harassment and assault. In California, most cases have to be prosecuted within three years, but in some cases, the statute of limitations have and can be extended to ten years or more. Even if a prosecution does not occur, he reminded attendees that it is still important to file a report, as it will create a record against the offender, and help in future cases. Ebrahim finished strong by emphasizing the importance of taking matters into our own hands within the parameters of the law, and not waiting for the criminal justice system to resolve the issue of sexual harassment. He stressed that having courage to stand up as a whole against sexual harassment and crimes is necessary. It all starts with not being afraid to report incidents.

Following Ebrahim's educational and empowering speech, Shaheh Shabanian, a peer educator at California State University Northridge and a co-founder of Men C.A.R.E., a campus-based activism group that hosts workshops

see PANEL, page 7

Susan Osman, Television And Radio Anchor/Host, Author and Screenwriter, To Speak at Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — "Are you ready for these credentials," asks Fr. Vasken A. Kouzouian, pastor of Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge. "We are so incredibly fortunate to have Susan Osman, a television and radio anchor/host including almost 20 years with the BBC, author and screenwriter, accept our invitation to speak following Church Services on Sunday, September 30.

Osman's talk, titled "I Heard God Laughing," Hafiz," will address how God often has different plans for us. This event will take place in Johnson Hall of the Church complex at 145 Brattle St., Cambridge, at 12:15 p.m.

Osman is a well-known television anchor/host and recognizable voice in Britain and worldwide. She has worked for all the major British networks. She is known for her charm, compassion, punchy interviewing style, drawing people out, and her warm sense of humor. On screen and in front of a microphone, she is as much at home with the lighter side of life as she is with hard-hitting documentaries and interviews.

After almost 20 years with the BBC, Susan transferred temporarily to China, where she was invited to devise a new live daily radio Breakfast Show for China Radio International (CRI), based in Beijing. The radio show, "The Beijing Hour with Susan Osman," was transmitted live in China, Australia and America, translated into 62 languages with an estimated audience of over 30 million listeners worldwide. While in Beijing, she also anchored television shows for China's only privately-owned television station, Blue Ocean Network (BON) for the American market.

Chinalogue, Beyond the Headlines and BON News. Susan has just completed a book about her experiences in China, *Flirting with the Dragon*.

Appointed visiting professor of communication and leadership by the Communication University of China (CUC) in 2013, she lectures and runs workshops for China's political leaders and professional broadcasters. Due to the popularity of "The Beijing Hour" and Susan's high profile in China, she chairs, moderates and hosts debates, lectures and workshops on request. Susan also teaches radio and voice production at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School on the International Master(s) Degree Course in Britain.

Ten years ago, Susan set up a film production company, Nick O'Time Films, with her business and screen writing partner, Rowena Goldman. Together, they have several film projects in pre-production including, *Petra*, based on a true story. She is a voting member of BAFTA (UK), JAWS (US), NYWIFT (US), and The Writer(s) Guild of Great Britain and, unusual for a news anchor, Susan was voted Personality of the Year by the Variety Club of Great Britain.

"She's a dynamic personality and we are truly honored that she will join us on September 30. We will surely all learn from her as she shares her experiences," concludes Kouzouian. For further information, contact the Church at office@htaac.org. For more information on Susan Osman, visit www.Susan-Osman.com.



Susan Osman



COMMUNITY NEWS

CYSCA Receives Grant from Congress to Host Young Activists from Armenia

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA) has again been awarded a grant from the United States Library of Congress to take part in the Open World (OW) program. For many years, CYSCA has hosted young professionals from Armenia to help promote various facets of democracy and diplomacy. Five individuals, along with a facilitator, will first arrive in Washington, DC for an orientation program hosted by OW, and then will fly to Boston on November 30 for an eight-day program organized by CYSCA. The OW program is managed by its Leadership Center to enhance understanding and cooperation between the United States and countries of Eurasia. The program, initiated by OW through the US Embassy in Armenia, and implemented by CYSCA, aims to give Armenian participants first-hand exposure to America's democratic government and free-market system to Eurasian leaders as an instrument for Americans engaged in citizens' diplomacy.

CYSCA has organized this year's program to consist of visits to civil society organizations



CYSCA's Alisa Stepanian, third from left, and Jack Medzorian, second from right, with CYSCA guests from Armenia.

that hold governments accountable/transparent, and hosting meetings with individuals in different levels of government. Meetings will include interactive lectures, hands-on work-

shops, and discussions on promotion of activism and leadership. The goals and objectives of the project are to: forge cooperative links with local organizations/individuals who are activists or leaders; encourage American individuals who are activists or leaders to visit Armenia to promote activism and transition to leadership; and develop a network of activists and leaders for further collaboration between the two countries.

The recent Velvet Revolution in Yerevan was led by youth who, outside of formal systems, organized and enacted an effective civil disobedience and public pressure campaign to hold leaders accountable and steer Armenia to a more democratic track. They were inspired by western democratic values. This Open World program is aimed at building on activists' initiatives by demonstrating to them how the US has worked to promote activism and transitions to leadership among government, civil society organizations and laypeople.

CYSCA is a sister city association that has partnered Cambridge with the city of Yerevan since 1987. Over the past 30 years, CYSCA has hosted more than 22 professional development programs, 10 reciprocal school partnerships/student and teacher exchanges, environmental programs, school aid projects, business/entrepreneurship training, and numerous historical/cultural projects, theater management, museum management, aviation management, university administration, secondary school educators, and countless humanitarian assistance projects for Armenia. For more information about the OW program and/or to join in the hosting of the participants, contact Alisa Stepanian at asteoanian@aol.com, Jack Medzorian at jmedzorian@aol.com, or visit CYSCA's website at www.cambridgeyerevan.org.

AGBU Hye Geen Tackles Topic of Sexual Harassment with Panel of Speakers

PANEL, from page 6

and presentations revolving around rape culture, sexual consent, and gender-based violence, took the stage. Men C.A.R.E stands for Men Creating Attitudes for a Rape-free Environment. Shabanian defined the rape culture as being a sociological concept. Society promotes behaviors that are damaging, violent, and disruptive, which leads to toxic masculinity, and in turn creates an environment for sexual harassment to be viewed as normal. In many cases, that sociological concept is why victims of sexual assault aren't believed. Men C.A.R.E works against these social characteristics to encourage and support healthy masculinity. It promotes safe behaviors and pushes for bystander intervention. Shabanian echoed Ebrahim's message and reminded attendees of the conference the importance of being an active voice in today's society. Openly discussing toxic habits with the youth is important in order to prevent them from developing.

Following the three speakers, attendees were given the opportunity to ask their pressing questions. Questions addressed topics such as the range of severity of sexual harassment and the common reasons victims choose not to report incidents. During this time, Ebrahim made clear that even when a victim does not feel ready to



Organizers and speakers at the AGBU Hye Geen talk

report an incident, it is still important for them to talk to someone about it, such as a professional who will keep the incident confidential until the victim feels comfortable to report it.

Concluding the conference was a social hour where attendees were served lunch and given

the chance to discuss the topic amongst each other. During lunch, a raffle was held and all proceeds from the raffle were put towards Hye Geen's Women's Centers in Armenia in order to fund classes, programs, and much more for young women and mothers.

Armen Baibourtian Appointed Consul-General Of Armenia in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES — On September 6, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia appointed Dr. Armen Baibourtian as its consul-general in Los Angeles. He served in this post in the mid-1990s.

From 2014, Baibourtian taught at the Department of Political Science of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, and most recently taught online while living in Glendale, Calif. He served as director of administration of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America in New York from January 2016 to July 2017.

Previously, he was the senior adviser to the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the UNDP Resident Representative in Armenia from 2008 to 2013. He twice served as the Armenian deputy foreign minister between 1997 and 2000 and from 2004 until 2008 with portfolios in International Organizations, America, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Africa and Legal Issues. He resigned from the Foreign Ministry in the wake of the crackdown on supporters of former Armenian president Levon Ter-Petrosian after the March 1, 2008 events.

Baibourtian was the co-chairman of the Security Dialogue with the US between 1998 and 1999. In the capacity of chief negotiator with the European Union, he led negotiations with the European Commission on the European Neighborhood Policy in 2005 – 2006. Dr. Baibourtian was Armenia's first Consul General in Los Angeles from 1995 until 1997 and later as its first ambassador to India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Indonesia from 2000 until 2004. He also worked as Deputy Permanent Representative of Armenia to the UN in New York where he focused on international security and conflict resolution issues.



Armen Baibourtian

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COMMUNITY NEWS

HyePointe Church Holds Annual Picnic

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BRADFORD, Mass. — The Armenian Apostolic Church at Hye Pointe held its annual picnic on Sunday, August 26 on its own grounds. More than 700 guests attended and enjoyed the food, Armenian music by the Jason Naroian Ensemble of Haverhill, and fellowship.

Pastor Fr. Vart Gyozyan afterwards declared to the community, “We thank all of you for your support and give many thanks to all our volunteers who worked hard to make the picnic a successful one.”

Armenians from the Haverhill area, the Merrimack Valley area of Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire were present, along with others from the greater Boston area. The proceeds from the picnic go towards the operating expenses of the Hye Pointe church.



The Jason Naroian Ensemble of Haverhill, Mass.



Dancing at the picnic



Volunteers preparing the picnic barbecue

Two Students from Jerusalem Enjoy Summer High School Conference At St. Nersess Seminary

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Both students are talented musicians, playing drums. Boyajian, whose father is a bus driver in Jerusalem, also plays the guitar, and Gejekoushian, the viola. Her father is a musician and plays multiple instruments and performs in a Christian band. Her family's business is in ceramics and pottery.

“Being Armenian is special. Armenia was the first country to accept Christianity,” Boyajian states with obvious pride of the well-known fact. “Even if they put a gun to my head, my deep pride in my heritage would never be lessened,” Gejekoushian adds enthusiastically. “Our culture, language and history are rich and beautiful, and very unique.”

Both students have been to Armenia. Boyajian has visited twice. “I saw all the churches in Armenia. Many looked the same, but Tatev and Echmiadzin were so peaceful. You felt like you were in heaven. Armenia is my country,” he comments thoughtfully.

Gejekoushian who visited Armenia two years ago, brought holy water from Sts. James Cathedral for the visit of Pope, saying to him, “I’m from Jerusalem.” Her favorite church in Armenia is Oshagan. “When I left Armenia, I felt like I was leaving my home. I want to return very soon.”

While at St. Nersess, both young students visited St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral and the Diocesan Primate, the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan. But it was the 10 days at St. Nersess that was indelible in their minds. They especially loved singing the Armenian songs which they knew well with the other students. Gejekoushian, whose sister, Sarin, was a recent recipient of the Sts. Tarkmanchatz trip to St. Nersess said that Sarin when she attended the extraordinary program “fell in love” with all her compatriots.

“Everyone was like one big family,” both students said with emphasis. Friendships were made for a lifetime. For both students who learned many new things, both spiritually and for every-day life, it was a unique and deeply rewarding experience that will last a lifetime.



From left, Marina Gejekoushian, Primate Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan, Rev. Mardiros Chevian, and Sevag Boyadjian

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Nor Keghi Celebrates Renovation of Kindergarten Auditorium

BERKLEY, Calif. and YEREVAN — On July 6, the Paros Foundation's staff and Service Armenia 2018 participants joined the mayor, staff, parents and children of Nor Keghi in Kotayk province to celebrate the opening of the newly renovated kindergarten auditorium.

The Arakelyan Kindergarten facilitates the early education of more than 85 children. The renovation of the multipurpose room, stage, ready room, adjacent hallway and stairwell was made possible by the generosity of the Detroit-

garten solve another important issue with the help of the Nor Keghi Association and its fundraising efforts," said Peter Abajian, executive director of the Paros Foundation. "The village population is increasing, and the kindergarten principal has requested we help them expand by renovating additional rooms."

For the auditorium project, the Paros Foundation team installed new doors and windows, resurfaced the existing wood parquet floors, installed laminate flooring in the ready



Children at the kindergarten in Nor Keghi express their appreciation during a performance in the newly renovated multipurpose room.

based Nor Keghi Association which sponsored the project. The Paros Foundation had previously renovated two bathrooms at the kindergarten as part of its 100 for 100 Projects for Prosperity initiative in 2015 with the support of the Nigoghosian family.

"We were able to help Nor Keghi's kinder-

room and stage area, added new electrical and lighting throughout and repaired and painted the walls and ceiling. The team also worked with the mayor to bring proper heating to the facility. Following the renovation, 80 high quality stackable chairs were delivered to outfit the multipurpose room. A plaque will be installed in



Children at the kindergarten in Nor Keghi performing at the opening celebration!

the auditorium acknowledging sponsorship of the project by the descendants of Keghi through the Nor Keghi Association in association with the Paros Foundation.

"It is so heartwarming to see pictures of the renovated multipurpose room of the Arakelyan Kindergarten," said Nor Keghi Association president, Richard Norsigian. "When my son, Shant and I entered the room in person last September, we were devastated

— it looked like a tornado had hit it! It was unusable. We were deeply saddened to think our little Armenian kindergartners did not have an indoor facility for activities. The pictures of the now completely renovated multipurpose room brought tears of joy to my eyes. To our generous KEGHETZIS and friends who made the renovation possible, I say *vartzkernees gadar* and God willing, we have only just begun!"



Nor Keghi Mayor, kindergarten staff, parents, and friends gathered with The Paros Foundation's staff and SERVICE Armenia 2018 group to celebrate the successful completion of the remodel.

Gov. Rick Snyder Names Krista Haroutunian to 17th District Court

LANSING, Mich. — Gov. Rick Snyder in September appointed Krista Haroutunian of Redford to the 17th District Court in Redford Township.

"Krista has demonstrated a solid knowledge of the law and an ongoing commitment to the legal profession," Snyder said. "These qualities will make her an excellent district court judge."

Haroutunian has been in private practice as a shareholder with the firm Haroutunian Licata Haroutunian, PC since 1998 where she focuses on probate, estate planning, family law, and real estate matters. Since 2013, she has served as a Special Assistant Attorney General with the Michigan Department of Attorney General, handling contested guardianship and conservatorship petitions for the Audit Protective Services Division of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Haroutunian is a member of the State Bar of Michigan, serving on the Board of Commissioners since 2015. She is also a member of the Detroit Bar Association, the Oakland County Bar Association, the Wayne County Probate Bar Association, the Wayne County Family Bar Association, and the Armenian American Bar Association. She is on the board of the Armenian Relief Society and has been a member of the Michigan Women's Commission

since being appointed in 2011.

Haroutunian earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan in 1993 and a law degree from the Detroit College of Law at Michigan State University in 1998.

Haroutunian fills the vacancy created by the resignation of Judge Charlotte Wirth. She must seek election in November 2020 for a full term.



Krista Haroutunian

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Annie Totah: Woman, Armenian, Warrior

TOTAH, from page 1

philanthropic missions. In recognition of this milestone, Totah will be honored by the Armenian Assembly of America on Tuesday, September 25, at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in Washington, DC.

Among a wall of family portraits in Totah's sprawling home in Potomac, Md., are photos of familiar faces, from a succession of royalty to presidents to world leaders. Her house has served as more than a residence for her four children and now her grandchildren — it has also been the site of countless fundraisers for political, humanitarian, medical, cultural and social causes, where many esteemed figures are invited, from Empress Farah Pahlavi of Iran to Hillary Clinton, on whose campaign for President Totah served, along with Congressional leaders and heads of major non-profit organizations.

While she has become well-known over four decades of service to Washington, D.C., her heart remains with Armenians and bolstering the homeland. When Armenia emerged as an independent nation, Totah took spirited action and organized groups of Diasporans to set sail with them toward the homeland under the banner of the Armenian Assembly of America; for many it was the first time they would step foot on Armenia's soil. While she had supported her homeland from afar, since her days as a tenacious youngster in Beirut, Lebanon, to her relentless advocacy work in Washington, she sought to connect Diasporans with a free and independent Armenia, recognizing the importance of building that integral relationship early on.

"My goal on these missions was to connect Armenian-Americans with their homeland and to help them see first-hand what is happening in the country and give them the chance to do their share to help," she said.

It is a commitment that continues to the present day, as Armenia evolves and focuses on arming the next generation with astute knowledge. Recently, Totah became a Pillar of the American University of Armenia, a leading Western-style academic institution in Armenia, through the Sami and Annie Simonian Totah Foundation.

"I am impressed with what AUA is doing in Armenia by preparing and educating future leaders and giving them quality academic opportunities with excellent first-class professors," said Totah. "Upon graduation, these young individuals will excel on their own turf by becoming well-informed, well-educated Armenians so they can help the country advance and grow."



Annie Simonian Totah and Congressman Adam Schiff (D-CA)

Her first foray into politics was through the Armenian Rights Council of America (ARCA), where she informed, educated and organized political fundraisers for members of Congress. Witnessing her activism, the Armenian Assembly of America, the largest Washington-based non-partisan organization that promotes awareness and understanding of Armenian issues, invited her to serve as a Board Member



First Lady Hillary Clinton and Annie Simonian Totah

and later as chair of its Board of Directors — the first and only woman to have that honor.

She is well-versed in the geopolitics of the Caucasus, stating in her signature candor that Turkey "needs the US more than the other way around." Case in point, Totah recounts when French President Jacques Chirac formally acknowledged the Armenian Genocide in 1998 and in retaliation Turkey recalled its ambassador and threatened to cut off diplomatic relations.

"After three months, Turkey's ambassador was back in France and trade between the two countries not only resumed but increased by 130 percent," said Totah.

While she acknowledges Armenia's limitations, she always stresses the positive side, particularly during meetings with government officials and sees Armenia becoming a great friend to the US in the Caucasus, similar to how Israel is in the Middle East.

"Armenia is not part of the problem," said Totah. "On the contrary, it is part of the solution." While it has shortcomings being landlocked with a lack of natural resources, Totah highlights the country's brainpower and its status as a Christian nation in that region that can become a "guiding light in the South Caucasus." She hopes that with the post-Velvet Revolution, under the leadership of the new Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, corruption will be curtailed, the economy will improve and new jobs will be created for its citizens, particularly

Roots in Beirut

As the saying goes in Armenian, the first teacher is the home, and it was through her family unit that Totah's character was shaped early on while growing up in Beirut, Lebanon.

The youngest of four siblings, who are all immensely active in the Armenian community and supportive of charitable causes, Totah attended AGBU's Tarouhy Hagopian Secondary School, where she was the top student in the academic institution for six years while being involved in a myriad of activities from Girl Scouts to dancing to serving as editor of the school newspaper. As a principal ballerina with

world in a better place than we found it," said Totah. This was a mantra that guided Totah and her siblings, Cecil, Rita and Simon, who give of their time, energy and resources not only to the Armenian community, but internationally on a global level.

Through her generosity, the Executive Wing of the Johns Hopkins Sibley Hospital in Maryland is named in honor of the Sami and Annie Totah Family Foundation and thanks to her wide-ranging network, she has raised millions of dollars for significant organizations, such as the Susan G. Komen Foundation, Best Buddies with Anthony Kennedy Shriver, Washington Performing Arts Society, The National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington Ballet, among many others.

Her contributions to the Diaspora, too, have been multi-pronged, led by efforts for worldwide recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

"One of my strongest dreams was to have the Armenian Genocide acknowledged by the United States during the lifetime of my parents," said Totah. "Unfortunately I failed because the State Department vehemently opposes to acknowledge that reality, instead always succumbing to pressure from Turkey."

Passing on the Torch

Her efforts and her legacy passes onto her children, who have always seen their mother in action, bringing good to this world through her resolute determination, smarts and charm. They too carry out a similar passion for the Armenian culture, especially in terms of the Armenian Genocide. Each of her children attended the University of Pennsylvania and made sure memorial commemorations took place on campus and news articles were printed in the student newspaper. Her four children speak Armenian and insist that their children speak Armenian with their "Medz Mama Annie."



Annie Simonian Totah and President Bill Clinton

the Beirut Ballet Ensemble, she had the chance to perform on stage with Rudolph Nureyev and Margot Fonteyn, dancing with the Royal Ballet of England at the Baalbeck Festival. She also danced as a soloist with the AGBU Antranig Dance Ensemble in Lebanon. Education remained a priority in her life and she received her master's degree from the American University of Beirut, where she met her husband, Sami.

The guiding influence in her life have been her strong-willed parents, particularly her mother, whose compassionate work had a deep impact on Totah. She aspired to live up to the principles and values her mother instilled in her.

"My mother was a dynamic lady," said Totah. "Even though she was an orphan, she was ambitious, hard-working and received her education in a British orphanage." She became a registered nurse at the American University Hospital (AUH) in Beirut and expressed compassion for her patients, traveling with families to Europe so they could get proper treatment that was not available at AUH.

"We were taught to always do our best in everything we undertake and to leave this

The same lessons and life principles Totah learned from her parents, she now teaches to her children and grandchildren, including the importance of loving and respecting oneself, family and community, to the notion of quality over quantity, to feeling responsibility for one's family, country and the world.

One recurring question Totah has fielded throughout her tenure in Washington is why she herself doesn't run for politics. As host of copious political fundraisers while possessing a strong network, she says she prefers to work behind the scenes.

"I have more power working behind the scenes," said Totah, a force in Armenian politics. "I feel more fulfilled in terms of bringing my share to help through fundraising, education, awareness and advocacy while helping the homeland."

From the very beginning of Armenia's independence, Totah was adamant about initiating funding for the Republic as well as for Artsakh, following its war with Azerbaijan in the early 1990s.

"I saw the sadness and devastation in Shushi
continued on next page



COMMUNITY NEWS

from previous page

throughout Artsakh,” said Totah during a mission trip in 1998. “Upon my return, I contacted my Senator and urged the Senate to initiate humanitarian aid so the citizens can have basic necessities.” Within a short time and for the first time, she successfully secured funding from the U.S. government in the amount of \$12 million - support that has continued to this date, resulting in \$38 million earmarked for Artsakh from the U.S. government.

In addition to appropriating funds, Annie has assisted Armenia on a political level – so much so that then-president Robert Kocharyan appointed her to serve as Ambassador of Armenia to Israel. While the role didn’t come to fruition due to diplomatic conflicts, Totah has become known as the “unofficial” Ambassador to Armenia on Capitol Hill. She is also credited with arranging former President Robert Kocharyan’s first official visit to the U.S. and the first State Dinner at the Ballroom of the State Department with then-Vice President Al Gore.

Throughout it all, she has championed the influence of advocacy awareness and for volunteers to become part of the process.

Work with Armenian Assembly

“I give to candidates and support them without asking for anything in return, except their



Vice President Joe Biden, Annie Simonian Totah and Dr. Jill Biden

help to Armenia and Armenian causes,” said Totah, who has been an important player with the Armenian Assembly of America in helping raise more than \$2 billion in foreign aid to

Armenia since its independence.

She speaks about the behind the scenes work that the Armenian Assembly of America conducts on a daily basis, despite many challenges from foreign governments who try to prevent them from reaching their goals. She is armed with knowledge she is always ready to share with the next generation of constituents, encouraging them to meet with their members of Congress on a regular basis and informing them of Armenia’s needs while also participating in their election campaigns.

With that in mind, she has organized, along with the Armenian Assembly of America, the annual National Advocacy Conference that is held in Washington, DC, in order for “everyone to learn more about advocacy and the right techniques and methods.” This year, on September 25, Totah will be honored by the Armenian Assembly of America for her 40 years of advocacy work.

Students and young professionals particularly are encouraged to attend the Advocacy Conference, where they will have the opportunity to role play individually and in groups to feel comfortable about meeting with their Congressmen during pre-scheduled appointments. The Armenian Assembly of America provides informative packets for participants on how to schedule appointments with

Congressmen, ways to broach important topics as well as talking points.

“We organize these Advocacy Conferences to be on the radars of the Congressional Leaders,” said Totah, who emphasizes the importance of a strong showing. “It is a shame that we Armenians are only able to attract 200-300 Armenians to attend these conferences, as opposed to Jewish organizations who attract more than 16,000 people from all over the country when they advocate annually. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we Armenians attended Advocacy Conferences in the thousands and imitated the Jewish lobby?”

In addition to her political prowess, Totah is also active in the DC social scene and has a strong presence with dozens of non-profit organizations that she supports. She also makes it a point to empower and honor women, including Empress Farah Pahlavi, whom she honored at her home with 300 guests at a formal tribute gala. It was the first time in Her Majesty’s 38 years of exile that anyone had organized a tribute for her.

“Her Imperial Majesty was a powerhouse during her reign in terms of what she did as a woman in Iran through her philanthropic, educational, arts and women’s programming,” said Totah.

The many awards she has received throughout her life, from the Artsakh Medal of Gratitude to The Ellis Island Medal of Honor to the Shining Star Award by the Sibley Memorial Hospital, to the Encyclical of Gratitude and Appreciation by Karekin II, Catholics of All Armenians, to the American Woman of Valor Award by Save a Child’s Heart Foundation, pale in comparison to her positive life-changing contributions, ultimately fulfilling the valuable lessons of her parents.

“My number-one goal is to continue my efforts for Armenia and Armenian issues while sharing my rich Armenian heritage with other American organizations I work for,” said Totah. “My hope and prayers are that soon we will have a more democratic Armenia with a brighter future.”

(The Armenian Assembly of America’s National Advocacy Conference will take place in Washington, DC September 23-25. The conference and welcome reception will take place on Monday, September 24 and on Tuesday, September 25 for the advocacy day on Capitol Hill, cocktail reception, and gala honoring Annie Simonian Totah. Visit www.aimhye.com for tickets and more information.)

(Photos by Tony Powell)



Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Annie Simonian Totah

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Arts & Living

Mirror-Spectator Increases Coverage Of Golden State

LOS ANGELES — The *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* is expanding its coverage of the community in the Greater Los Angeles area, home to the largest concentration of Armenians in the world.

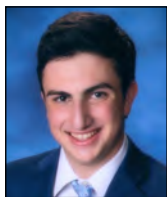
Helping the *Mirror-Spectator* in this endeavor are a trio of writers, Taleen Babayan, Monique Svazlian Tallon and Michael Melkonian.

(Kevork Keushkerian, a Tekeyan member, covers many of the group's activities at the Beshgetourian Center Hall in Altadena.)

•Taleen Babayan, a long-time correspondent for the newspaper in the New York-New Jersey area, earned an MS degree from Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism and a BA in history and international relations from Tufts University. She currently serves as the associate director of communications, development and stewardship at the American University of Armenia in Los Angeles. She volunteers for countless Armenian organizations, including the Tekeyan Cultural Association, Armenian Network of America and the Armenian Radio Hour of New Jersey. The first play she wrote, directed and produced, "Where Is Your Groom?" (Pesad Oor Eh) and its sequel touched upon the themes of assimilation and cultural identity through satire while speaking to audience's hearts and minds as the 25-person Armenian cast and crew performed for 15 Armenian-American communities in sold-out shows across the country. Another play she wrote, directed and produced, "From Sacred Wrath," focuses on an Armenian-American family who shares mixed emotions during the centennial of the Armenian Genocide. This play was also well-received, performed to two sold-out audiences at the Davenport Theatre in Manhattan and named Honorable Mention in the ADAA's William Saroyan Playwriting Prize. Other projects include her short film, "Basbousa," shot on location in Paterson, NJ, which was accepted into the Indie Street Film Festival and Atlantic City Cinefest as well as the selection of her play "Thirty," for the Theater for the New City's New City New Blood reading series in New York City. She has worked in communications, research and development for New York City-based non-profits and has published widely in print and digital media.

•Monique Svazlian Tallon is a first-generation Armenian-American born in San Francisco, CA. She is a Women's Leadership Expert, Executive Coach and the CEO of Highest Path Global, focused on diversity & inclusion training inside organizations. Monique is also the author of *Leading Gracefully: A Woman's Guide to Confident, Authentic and Effective Leadership*. Having lived and worked internationally, her unique worldview is progressive, curious, and well-balanced. She currently lives in Glendale, CA where she is very active in the Armenian community.

•Michael Melkonian, from Los Angeles, is a freshman at Glendale Community College who is majoring in political science and economics, hoping to one day make positive changes through public policy. With a passion for politics and history, Michael has been interning in the political arena since his junior year of high school, which included Brian Mast's Congressional Campaign, Marco Rubio's Senatorial Campaign, and Donald Trump's Presidential Campaign. For the past year and a half, Michael has been interning for high profile political consulting firm, Majority Strategies, and is currently working with their clients for the 2018 Midterm Elections.



Organized by the AGBU Performing Arts Department and Arev Arts Ensemble and Foundation, a concert titled "East and West Music" featured well-known musicians from Armenia, Japan, Spain and the United States.

Dazzling Concerts and Lectures Bring Armenian Music to Asia

SHANGHAI, China — Music truly acts as the ultimate universal language, making geographical distances nonexistent and bringing cultures closer. This summer, Armenian and Asian folk traditions merged with effortless synchrony through a series of concerts and captivating lectures in China and Japan.

Organized by the AGBU Performing Arts Department, these events expanded the reach of Armenian culture to the Far East and promoted artistic collaborations. "This tour was yet another demonstration of our mission to bring Armenian heritage closer to global audiences and support aspiring talents," said pianist and AGBU PAD Director Hayk Arsenyan.

The series commenced with a sold-out concert hosted by AGBU and the Cadillac Shanghai Concert Hall in Shanghai, China, on May 28. Its title, "Sounds of the Silk Road: From Armenia to China," spoke of the essence of the Chinese-Armenian connections dating back to the Medieval Times when the Silk Road boosted trade between the two nations. "After living in Shanghai for years, I have realized that Armenia and China have a lot of similarities: Both countries have centuries-old history, great cultural heritage and wonderful traditional music," said Astghik Poghosyan, the concert's artistic director who also serves as an assistant to the president of the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra. "It is important that we continue to promote and share our culture in other countries because Armenian culture has so much to offer and we should do our best to share it with as many people as possible. I hope we will get more chances to do that in Asia."

Musicians from Armenia, China, France, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the United States offered a unique program, a fusion of Armenian and Chinese folk melodies, played either as separate pieces or mixes on western classical and traditional



Yas Tarumi, a *duduk* player from Japan, joined pianist and PAD Director Hayk Arsenyan to play traditional and classical Armenian music at Waseda University.

Chinese instruments. "It was the first time I used a traditional Chinese instrument to play another country's folk music," Liu Yu Xian, a guzheng player, said. "I feel very happy and honored to get this chance and learn about this culture."

see ASIA, page 13

A Pastor Recounts: The Memoirs of Fr. Zaven Arzoumanian

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

I don't know whether Armenians write memoirs any more than members of other ethnic groups, but certainly the Armenians of previous generations did not shirk from describing the terrible events of persecution that they endured and survived. American Armenians continue to write their accounts of lives spent in different fields of endeavor, while describing the Armenian aspect of their experiences and heritage. Armenian priests have a special place in Armenian memoir literature because of their frequently literate backgrounds and their broad knowledge of Armenian community life. Fr. Dr. Zaven Arzoumanian is one such recent writer. He recently authored *Reflections in Retrospect: Memoirs of Pastor's Six Decades of Service* (Burbank, 2017), a bilingual book of 266 pages (134 in English and the rest in Armenian) published by the Western Diocese



Dr. Zaven Arzoumanian (photo: Aram Arkun)

of the Armenian Church of North America.

Arzoumanian has 60 years of pastoral experience, meaning that he has much material to draw upon. After ending his career as a parish priest, he dedicated himself to writing books, and published 17, while lecturing to different Armenian communities and continuing service to the Armenian Church. He confesses that he wrote the present volume without a diary at hand.

Arzoumanian starts his story with his father's deportation from Everek, near Kayseri. He ends up moving to Cairo in 1922, opening a tailor shop, marrying Serpouhi Nishanian and having six children. Fr. Arzoumanian proudly points to their 17 grandchildren and 28 great-grandchildren as part of the proof on the centennial of the Armenian Genocide that the plan of the criminal organizers failed. His father's father Hagop eventually also came to Cairo and published the Armenian-language History of Everek in 1935.

Arzoumanian was born as Taniel in 1933 and went to the Kalustian National School in Cairo, learning four languages. His grandfather took him to church on Sundays and in

see ARZOUMANIAN, page 13



ARTS & LIVING

A Pastor Recounts: The Memoirs of Fr. Zaven Arzoumanian

ARZOUMANIAN, from page 12

1945 his mother's brother was ordained as a priest. In 1949 he was accepted to the Seminary of the Catholicosate of Cilicia at the age of 16, and in 1954, he was ordained a celibate priest.

The book of memoirs sketches a number of memorable events Arzoumanian witnessed, such as the contested election of the Catholicos of Cilicia in 1956. However, he reserves the fuller version of such historical events for his prior voluminous work, the continuation of Archbishop Maghakia Ormanian's *Azkabadum*.

Arzoumanian describes his service as the pastor of the Armenian community of Ethiopia (1957-59) and as pastor of Holy Trinity Church and St. Sahag-St. Mesrob Church in

Philadelphia. He left Philadelphia after 20 years to help establish the first Armenian church in Florida for the Eastern Diocese, St. David Armenian Church in Boca Raton, and continued as its pastor for another 20 years, until 2002. For several years after this, he served the community of Pasadena during the construction of St. Gregory the Illuminator church.

Arzoumanian recounts his studies at the University of London and Columbia University, where he received his doctorate in Armenian history in 1983 with his translation of the *History of Ghevond the Eminent Vardapet*. He notes meetings with noted intellectuals like Arshag Alboyajian and various clerics, as well as his travels to different parts of the world. In

essence, he gives a brief glimpse into the activities of a parish priest and writer. It is not a work of personal emotional insights but rather information on the pastor's various activities and encounters, nearly all concerning Armenians.

The content of the Armenian and English versions of the memoirs are slightly different, with each containing some information not in the other. The Armenian section includes letters of appreciation concerning Fr. Arzoumanian and his various works. There are some small infelicities in the English language which a good editor could easily correct. A number of historical and personal photographs have been reproduced.



Dazzling Concerts and Lectures Bring Armenian Music to Asia

ASIA, from page 12

This concert also marked the continuation of the fruitful collaboration between the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and AGBU which began in 2015 when the conservatory's students arranged a traditional Armenian song for the 8th AGBU Performing Artists in Concert at Carnegie Hall (NYSEC).

The tour continued with a concert titled "East and West Music" at the Tsunohazu Kumin Hall in Tokyo, Japan, on June 1. Organized by AGBU and Arev Arts Ensemble and Foundation, the concert was part of the Week of Armenian Culture in Tokyo, regularly hosted by the Embassy of Armenia in Japan. This cultural event offered a glimpse of Armenian heritage to audiences in Japan – a country where Armenians historically did not have a strong presence, and a tiny community was formed recently. "For the past several years, the Embassy of Armenia in Japan has been organizing the Week of Armenian Culture in Tokyo. Artists, musicians and craftsmen from Armenia and the diaspora, as well as friends of Armenia from Japan showcase their art and perform bridging cultures, celebrating the friendly ties between the two countries. This year, we were happy to have the AGBU

Performing Arts Department as our valuable partner," noted Armenia's Ambassador to Japan Grant Pogosyan. He went on saying that thanks to outstanding performances and lectures, locals had an opportunity to better understand Armenian culture.

The evening featured musicians from Armenia, Japan, Spain and the United States who played on the piano, violin and koto (Japanese harp). "I hope our cooperation with the AGBU Performing Arts Department will continue and give us more opportunities to present Armenian culture in Japan," said Karen Israelyan, director and founder of Arev Arts Ensemble and Foundation.

Concerts were followed by lectures – delivered by Arsenyan – first at Hong Kong University and then at Tokyo's Waseda University, the second largest university in Japan. His talks focused on Armenian history, culture, music, and various AGBU programs, including the AGBU Musical Armenia Program. Yas Tarumi, a duduk player from Japan, joined Arsenyan to play traditional and classical Armenian music at Waseda University. "This was a great occasion to introduce our music and culture to the people in Asia through unique interpretations of our folk melodies,"



The Cadillac Shanghai Concert Hall and the AGBU Performing Arts Department hosted a sold-out concert titled "Sounds of the Silk Road: From Armenia to China" in Shanghai, China.

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John and Michele Simourian in Armenia

The Untold Story

The Earthquake that Shook Armenia, the Relief Effort that Changed the World

RELIEF, from page 1

the closer ties between those in the diaspora and the homeland, is also a tribute to the distinctly Armenian — characteristic of not only surviving national tragedy but becoming stronger from it.

For Simourian, that journey began the morning after he learned of the earthquake. From his office as president of his family-owned trans-

tation, Vernon R. Loucks, Jr., chairman of Baxter International and former end for Yale's varsity football team, was only too willing to help with a massive relief effort. Baxter would donate more than a million dollars' worth of modern dialysis equipment — as well as the doctors and technicians to operate them — that was desperately needed in Armenia.

"I consider what we did here perhaps the best thing I ever accomplished in my business career," said Loucks, now 83. "And the real reason I did it was because of the sense of urgency in John's voice."

But Loucks knew that the 20 machines and related equipment needed to get to Armenia immediately or they would do little good to bring medical relief to the earthquake victims. Survivors of collapsed buildings invariably suffer shock, which can lead to fatal kidney damage unless treated with dialysis quickly.

Loucks asked Simourian if he knew anyone in Washington, DC who could cut through the red tape and expedite the transport of the equipment from the United

States to Yerevan. Simourian's next phone call was to the most important person he knew in Washington — US Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, an influential member of the Senate Armed Services Committee who had been an end on the Harvard University varsity football team that Simourian played for during the 1950s.

Kennedy too had seen the television coverage of the devastation that the earthquake had brought and pledged to Simourian that he would do anything he could do and do it as soon as possible. But, according to Simourian, Kennedy insisted on one condition — that neither Simourian nor Loucks make any mention of Kennedy's involvement in getting the desperately-needed approvals and permits granted. Simourian — and Loucks — kept that pledge for three decades even though the doors that he helped open for them were monumental and their impact both life-saving and long-lasting for Armenia.

Kennedy's official papers cataloging his work in the Senate have yet to be made public so documenting the actual steps he might have taken to facilitate the Baxter shipment from the United States to Armenia was impossible. However, Kennedy spoke of his commitment to the relief effort a few weeks later when the

Soviet Union placed a sudden halt on all relief shipments to Yerevan. At a press conference at Boston's Logan Airport where several planes filled with emergency goods had been delayed from taking off, Kennedy said: "It will not only be physical things on that flight but, more deeply, it will be prayers and a sense of loss. This isn't just one plane. There will be a second plane, and a third plane, and a fourth plane. The American people are resolute, and we are going to continue our efforts for Armenia."

But by that time the Baxter dialysis machines had already arrived in Yerevan and had been installed and were being used to treat needy victims. How did it get there — by an extraordinary concession to America's fiercest Cold War adversary. Apparently through Kennedy's intercession, the Pentagon cleared a Soviet military transport plane to land at Andrews Air Force Base in suburban Maryland, the same airfield used by the President's Air Force One, and take off from there to Yerevan.

At the same time, again apparently through Kennedy's influence, the US State Department and the Soviet embassy in Washington gave immediate approval to allow Dr. Allan Collins, a Minnesota kidney specialist, and three Baxter engineers and technicians to fly aboard the military transport plane — squeezed in with the 80,000 pounds of dialysis equipment — from Andrews Air Force Base to Yerevan.

"I've been around government operations before, but I'd never seen anything like this," recalled David Walker, a Baxter engineer who helped retrofit the new dialysis machines to make certain they would work once they arrived in Yerevan. "I still can't believe it happened — loading modern, American healthcare equipment onto a Russian plane on what has to be one of the most secure American military bases there is."

The flight — which stopped in Newfoundland and Moscow before reaching Armenia — lasted 20 hours. On arrival in Yerevan on December 20, the dialysis machines were immediately placed into the two Yerevan hospitals designated to treat those suffering from kidney damage.

The situation on the ground in Yerevan was near-desperate. According to Dr. James Tattersall, a British doctor who was one of the first medical personnel to rush to Armenia on hearing of the earthquake — arriving in Yerevan only days later — the need for the new kidney dialysis machines was urgent. He estimated that approximately 1,500 people, who had been rescued from collapsed buildings in Spitak and Leninakan (now Gyumri) and

rushed to Yerevan for emergency dialysis treatment, died at the hospitals because of the lack of adequate dialysis equipment in operation at the time of the earthquake.

Ultimately, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who cut short a visit to the United States to rush to the earthquake-stricken region, would give official authorization for Armenia to accept humanitarian aid from the United States and the rest of the world. In all, more than 100 countries would respond. But, according to Dr. Sevak Avagyan, then a deputy within the Armenian Ministry of Health, it was the Baxter shipment of dialysis equipment that convinced the Soviet officials that they needed to accept humanitarian assistance from foreign countries.

"The only way to save those rescued from collapsed buildings was to get them on dialysis but our equipment was outdated and totally unable to meet the overwhelming demand," said Avagyan, who is now Executive Director of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry in Yerevan. "Baxter was one of the first to arrive. They opened the door."

Thirty years after the devastating earthquake, Simourian, having told only a few close friends about the relief effort over the years, spoke of it again over a recent dinner with Zaven Khanjian, Executive Director/CEO of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA). Khanjian was so moved by the account, he asked Simourian to allow him to make it public. I was contacted by the AMAA and asked to connect with Simourian. I did and looking as fit and focused when he was earning headlines as a standout athlete at Watertown High School and Harvard, Simourian agreed to tell me the story of the relief mission.

* * *

With its epicenter about 55 miles north of Yerevan, the earthquake began at 11:41 in the morning of December 7. The earthquake reached such a force and brought such immediate destruction that many residents believed for a long time that it was not a natural disaster but an underground nuclear explosion that had struck.

Later determined to be the largest ever to hit inside the Soviet republics, the earthquake measured 6.9 on the Richter scale and lasted about 30 seconds. The two Armenian cities closest to the epicenter, Spitak and Leninakan, suffered between 25,000 to 50,000 deaths, and up to 130,000 people were injured.

For Armenia, a country of about 3 million people, the casualty level made the earthquake one of the most devastating national disasters in modern times.

Leninakan was the bigger of the two cities struck, in fact with a population of 200,000 it was Armenia's second largest in size. Following the quake, the collapse of the buildings was so bad that those who lived there in the past and rushed to the scene to assist, could not recognize their neighborhoods. More than 15,000 of its residents were killed and 75 percent of the city said to be destroyed. Block after block of eight- to ten-story buildings, built during the Soviet regime with inadequate concrete and steel reinforcements, lay in rubble. Even though a Russian military base was located there, it lacked the heavy equipment and cranes needed to move the rubble to search for possible survivors.

Former head of the Armenian Genocide Museum in Yerevan, Hayk Demoyan was a 15-year-old school boy living with his family in Leninakan at the time. He had gone off to school with his brother that Wednesday morning with the warning of his mother echoing in his ears that she had had a nightmare and that the two boys should be extra careful at school that day.

Demoyan took notes of what happened during the next several days and shared them with me recently. He was in his shop class at 11:40 when the school began shaking, and his instructor immediately knew what was happening.

"He told us that it's a quake and that we should run," Demoyan wrote. "That race was the race between life and death. The creaking of the cement stairs, the party leaders' pictures and the sound of the shattering glass, the screams of the students and teachers, all mixed together, creating a truly hellish reality. The sounds coming from outside were frightening and impossible to forget."

On arriving home, he found that all members



John Simourian rushes downfield for Watertown High School's football team - Watertown High School Yearbook

portation company, he called the chief of one of the country's largest manufacturers of dialysis equipment, a man whom Simourian had competed against while quarterbacking Harvard's football team and told him of the crisis.

Having seen television images of the devas-



Vernon R. Loucks, Jr., Chairman, Baxter International



ARTS & LIVING

of his immediate family — his parents, brother and sister — had survived. But so many distant relatives had not, including his two cousins who were trapped beneath a building and spoke to rescuers for two days, before they died.

Anahit Harutyunyan was only 5, living with her parents and sister. Now a reporter in Gyumri, she remembered being at her grandmother's home soon after the earthquake struck. "Everyone was watching the chandelier, not with the expectation of light but to see if it moved," she wrote in an article published in Mediamax.am in Armenia last year.

All the kids in her neighborhood learned to dread the Armenian word for earthquake — *Zhazhq* — and her lasting memory was standing in her grandmother's dining room and staring at the chandelier to see if it would sway violently as it had during the earthquake.

The destruction in Spitak was even worse. The city was virtually destroyed in the quake, and a third of its 15,000 residents killed. The roads in and out of the city were rendered impassable and those fortunate enough to be rescued from collapsed structures could not be transported to Yerevan or hospitals outside of the epicenter. It took more than a week for an organized relief effort to mobilize, and in the interim many survivors slept outside in the December cold. Even the city's main hospital collapsed during the earthquake killing both the patients and medical staff.

"The scale of the destruction drove people crazy, and each person focused on his own family," said an Armenian professional photographer who arrived at the scene within two hours of the catastrophe. "Those who were at the factory or office, ran home. They were walking over bodies."

Even though hundreds of relief workers rushed to the scene to assist in the recovery effort, the lack of power tools and heavy equipment hampered their efforts. An Armenian man who was found digging with his fingers and hands was told by a doctor that if he continued to dig that way, he risked amputation. According to the book, *Armenia in Crisis: The 1988 Earthquake*, the man answered: "What do my hands matter, everything I cherish is under there — my son, my daughter, my wife and my mother."

For those fortunate enough to be pulled from the rubble, kidney failure was an immediate concern. When a person is trapped under concrete or debris, their blood supply will continue to flow to their brain but not their kidneys and lower extremities. "Crush" is the medical term for the condition and serious kidney damage, even death, can result if the patient is not given dialysis treatment within a matter of days.



Miqaelian Hospital today, where the Baxter dialysis equipment was placed

So, realizing that time was of extreme essence that numerous lives of victims who had been rescued from collapsed buildings hung in the balance, Armenians everywhere began to rally. Only a few in the Diaspora had given much time or money to a homeland still caught in the Soviet grip but the emergency presented by the earthquake was something different. The horrific impact of the earthquake was being broadcast every day by CNN and the major television networks and it gave rise to countless frantic conversations in numerous homes of Armenians across America and elsewhere.

One of them was at the Lincoln, Mass. home of George and Carolann Najarian, both of whom had been to Armenia in prior years in part to study the condition of public health but once there had joined the growing call for inde-

pendence for the enclave of Karabakh (Artsakh).

"I don't think many of the others had even been to Armenia — remember this was still during the Soviet regime, but this was something different — the suffering was on a massive scale and we needed to help," Carolann Najarian recalled.

While basic emergency supplies such as food, clothes, blankets and children's goods were foremost on the minds of countless people, a fundraising campaign was outlined among those who met at the Najarians' home. But soon organizations began to be established to address more deep-seated needs in the country, including the Armenian Children's Milk Fund, the Fund for Armenian Relief, the Armenian Health Alliance, Kirk Kerkorian's The Lincy Foundation and, in 1994, Carolyn Mugar's Armenia Tree Project. The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), which had been established in 1918 to provide care and support in numerous other countries for children left orphans by the Genocide, began the Earthquake Orphan Fund and provided care for the first time to children in Armenia.

For certain, the massive humanitarian relief effort did not take care of all of the damage done by the earthquake. At least 2,000 families in Gyumri still live in the tin shanties that provided housing for 40,000 residents immediately after the earthquake. But overall, three decades later, it is inspiring to consider the extraordinary rest of the Soviet Empire — since the earthquake. Public outrage by Armenians toward the shoddy construction of high-rise buildings that had collapsed in the tremors was followed by disgust over the slow and chaotic rescue efforts. Within a year, the Berlin Wall was falling, and Gorbachev was telling all Soviet republics they were free to declare their independence and Armenia was the first to do so, by popular vote in 1990.

But the Simourians could envisage none of those changes as they drove away from the Najarians' home that night after the earthquake struck.

M i c h e l e S i m o u r i a n recalled recently that with tears flowing down her eyes she looked at her husband, and said, "John, we've got to do something." Then she reminded him of his friendship with Vernon Loucks, his Ivy League football foe. Loucks had risen in the ranks of Baxter

Healthcare and taken over as its CEO as well as its Board Chairman the year before, and Michele suggested John call him.

A life-saving mission between two world powers would result from that phone call and remarkably enough it was the product of the respect and trust that two men gained playing football against each other more than 30 years before.

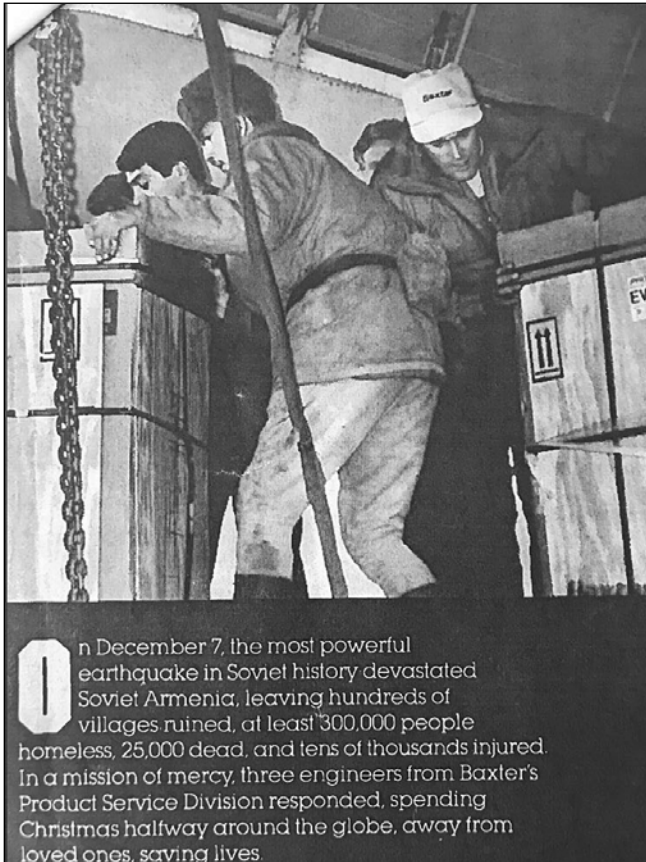
When asked recently about their strongest memory of the other, Simourian and Loucks both remembered the fierce competition each showed during the three varsity football games they played against one another between 1954-1956 — Yale winning two and Harvard one of the games.

"I remember him because he played end on offense and defense," Simourian said. "I'm still

sore from some of the tackles he made on me."

And what does Loucks remember about Simourian's play? "He was a threat on every single play. He wasn't the biggest guy on their team, but he was the most versatile," Loucks recalled.

Following their graduations, both served in



Baxter Healthcare and Russian technicians load Baxter dialysis equipment onto a Soviet transport plane at Andrews Air Force Base outside of DC - Baxter newsletter

the military — Loucks as a Marine, and Simourian in the Navy — and after graduating from Harvard Business School at different times both began their successful business careers: Loucks in healthcare and Simourian, with his son, building a trucking company into a national transportation organization, headquartered in Needham, Mass.

Despite his legendary athletic record and successful business career, Simourian says the most important decision he made in his life was to court and marry Michele, now his wife of 56 years. Born in France, Michele met John after coming to Boston and later Simmons College. Long an advocate for Armenian causes and organizations, she has served as a Board member of the AMAA. In addition, she is co-founder with Elizabeth Agabian of AMAA's Orphan and Child Care Committee commissioned by the Association.

If the idea for the relief mission began with Michele urging her husband to re-connect with his Ivy League football foe, Loucks credited one of Baxter's vice presidents, Warren D. (Don) Johnson, with immediately implementing the idea and getting the equipment and engineers ready for flight to Armenia.

Johnson was accustomed to emergency missions. A retired lieutenant general in the US Marine Corps, Johnson had been a fighter pilot during World War II and risen to become chief of staff of the US Strategic Air Command in Omaha and then director of the US Defense Nuclear Agency which was responsible for maintaining the country's atomic bombs and nuclear testing programs.

Because he had participated in negotiations between the US and the Soviet Union to reduce their nuclear arsenals, Johnson told Simourian he had contacts in Russia whom they could draw on. But echoing what Loucks had told him, Simourian recalled Johnson telling him that they needed someone in Washington who could facilitate getting the Baxter equipment transported from the United States to Yerevan.

That solidified it for Simourian — Kennedy was his only hope. In the early morning hours of December 18, 1988, a little more than 10 days after the earthquake had struck Armenia, the Russian Aeroflot plane landed at Andrews Air Force Base, was quickly loaded with the 80,000 pounds of dialysis equipment and took off.

William Lundeen, another of the three Baxter engineers who helped load the 20 dialysis machines aboard the plane in the pre-dawn dark, says he wasn't alone in wondering about

the perilous nature of the mission he had joined. When he stepped out of a hangar to approach the transport plane, Lundeen recalls coming across a unit of US military commandos all dressed in black, whose commander told him: "We don't know who's coming off that plane, and we want to be sure we're prepared for anything."

It is evident Johnson too didn't know what the Baxter engineers and Dr. Collins, the kidney specialist from Minnesota, should expect once they landed in Moscow, the last leg of their flight before reaching Yerevan. In a cable to them, Johnson stressed they should memorize the name and telephone number of Dr. Yevgeny Chazov, the top Health Minister in the Kremlin, in case they ran into any trouble.

Several years before, Chazov had joined with the renowned Boston-based cardiologist Dr. Bernard Lown to establish the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, and the group was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985.

Johnson's cable also listed Norman Stein as a person to contact in case the group ran into any problems while in the Soviet Union. Stein, who had raised money for the anti-nuke organization and traveled to Russia on several previous occasions, recalls advising the Baxter group: "Whatever you do, never leave the medical equipment out of your sight, or it will disappear, and you'll never see it again."

On reaching Yerevan, they received a welcoming embrace from the Soviet officials and Armenian medical personnel — a clear measure of how desperate the medical situation had become. Because of the antiquated medical equipment, neither of the two hospitals designated to treat the earthquake victims were able to provide the needed care, and hundreds were dying every day or being sent to Moscow.

The three Baxter engineers went to work immediately outfitting their dialysis machines to the water treatment resources that existed at the two hospitals. By the end of December, the Baxter dialysis machines had been joined by other pieces arriving from West Germany and England and together they were able to meet the critical demand that the earthquake had brought — the doctors were able to provide life-saving kidney dialysis treatment to 400 patients.

Anna Bulgarian, a 14-year-old who had been pulled from a collapsed building, was one of the first to receive treatment from Dr. Collins. She was in a deep sleep when hooked up to the dialysis equipment but within two hours, her eyes opened, and she perked up enough to wave to Lundeen. "That was a real emotional level for everybody because this was the realization of the whole mission," Lundeen said.

Lundeen and his two colleagues returned to the United States by the end of December but that did not end the Baxter commitment to Armenia — Loucks sent another five technical and medical personnel to replace them. The second team's job was to continue to treat earthquake victims while working to make sure that Baxter's dialysis machines became part of Armenia's commitment to a modernized health care system.

Later that spring, Loucks summoned all of those Baxter employees who had participated in the relief effort to an appreciation dinner at the company's headquarters in Illinois, and he asked John and Michele Simourian to attend. "I knew we had done something that none of us would ever forget," Loucks said, "and I wanted to thank John and Michele as representatives of the Armenian people for letting us serve them."

Stephen Kurkjian is a retired reporter and editor for the *Boston Globe* and a founding member of the *Globe's* investigative Spotlight Team. He shared in three Pulitzer Prizes as a member and editor of the Spotlight Team. In recent years, Kurkjian authored the non-fiction book *Master Thieves*, which is regarded as the most authoritative account of the historic and still-unsolved theft of masterpieces from Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Kurkjian has also written extensively on the Armenian Genocide and is a Board member of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research.

(Reporters Anahit Harutyunyan and Ani Hovhannissyan contributed from Armenia.)



ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

FLORIDA

JANUARY 20-27, 2019 — Armenian Heritage Cruise XXII 2019. Western Caribbean Cruise aboard the Royal Caribbean’s Allure of the Sea. Traveling to Nassau, Cozumel, Roatan, Costa Maya. Cabin Rates, starting from \$949/person based on double occupancy, including port charges and ACAA registration fee. Government rates of \$137.45 are additional. Armenian entainment, 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.

CALIFORNIA

SEPTEMBER 28 —Tekeyan Cultural Association Los Angeles chapter will host a literary presentation titled “William Saroyan at 110: The Man and the Writer,” featuring speaker Prof. Osheen Keshishian. Followed by artistic program. Friday, 7.30 pm. Glendale Central Library, 22 E. Harvard St., Glendale.

NOVEMBER 17 — Join the Armenian EyeCare Project for its Annual Gala at the beautiful Balboa Bay Resort in Newport Beach, CA. The fun-filled evening will begin at 6:30pm with a cocktail hour and silent auction followed by a delicious Mediterranean-inspired meal, live music and dance entertainment, and an exciting live auction. Tickets are \$500 per person and for those 35 and under, \$250 per person. To RSVP or for more information, please call 949-933-4069, email leslie@eyecareproject.com or visit eyecareproject.com/gala

MASSACHUSETTS

SEPTEMBER 16 — Sunday afternoon at the Park for Families. Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway. 2-4 p.m. Cindy Fitzgibbon, WCVB-TV5, emcee. Featuring Bino Veiga & Gil Pinto playing Cape Verdean classics. At 2.30 p.m. “Match the Pair.” Games for all ages! Face painting: for Kids by Kids, Hoodsies. RSVP Appreciated at hello@armenianheritagepark.org.

SEPTEMBER 16 — Armenian Church of the Holy Translators invites you to the annual Armenian Food Festival. Come and enjoy a day filled with traditional Armenian food, music, dancing, and fun children’s activities! Sunday, from noon – 5 p.m. at The Armenian Church of the Holy Translators 38 Franklin Street, Framingham. For further information, contact the church office: 508-875-0868.

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

SEPTEMBER 23 — “Timeless Classics,” Music of J.S. Bach, performed by Sargis Karapetyan Quartet with Victoria Avetisyan, mezzo-soprano; Deanna Johnson, flute; and Nune Hakobyan, piano and organ; 1 p.m.; Holy Trinity Armenian Church Sanctuary, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA. Event is free and open to the public. For more information, call the Church office at 617.354.0632, or e-mailoffice@htaac.org.

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: E-mail:lightscamerastories@gmail.com or Online: aiwainternational.org/lightscamerastories

SEPTEMBER 27 — Annual Fall Dinner and Drawing sponsored by the Friends of Holy Trinity 1000 Club, Thursday, 6:30 p.m.; Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, Holy Trinity Armenian Church,145 Brattle St., Cambridge MA. All are invited, and you don’t have to be a member of the 1000 Club to attend and enjoy a delicious losh kebab and pilaf dinner. Tickets are \$9.99 per person and are on sale at the door. The dinner will be followed by the regular monthly raffle drawing at 8 p.m., for monthly prizes of \$2,000, plus 4 \$25 door prizes. “One-time” numbers will be sold on the night of the dinner. Special offer: purchase five “one-time” numbers for

\$20, save \$5. For more information, contact the Church office at 617.354.0632, or email office@htaac.org.

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 Reghellis. 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.

SEPTEMBER 30 —Holy Trinity Armenian Church welcomes Susan Osman, television and radio anchor and host, including almost 20 years with the BBC. Author and screenwriter. 12.15 p.m. in Johnson Hall, Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Her talk, “I Heard God Laughing” Hafiz will address how God often has different plans for us than we have for ourselves. For more information, contact the church office at 617-354-0632 or email office@htaac.org.

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 or visit www.stjameswatertown.org.

OCTOBER 19 — The Armenian Museum of America will embark on a bus trip to The Metropolitan Museum of Art on Friday to see their new exhibition “Armenia!,” which explores the arts and culture of Armenians from the 4th-17th centuries. Two illuminated manuscripts from the Armenian Museum’s collection will be among the incredible objects on display. Tickets are \$175 and for members only. The bus will leave Watertown at 7 am, and tickets include round-trip transportation to The Met on a coach bus with WiFi and restrooms, admission to The Met, an Armenian continental breakfast on the bus, and a guided interpretative tour from Christina Maranci, PhD, Professor of Armenian Art and Architecture. The group will leave The Met at 6 p.m., and an evening snack will be provided on the bus before arriving back in Watertown around 10 pm. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.armenianmuseum.org or call 617.926.2562, ext. 4.

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.

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. Program at 7.30 p.m. “INCARCERATION Untangling the web of injustice.” Speakers: Secretary Andrea J. Cabral, former Massachusetts Secretary of Public Safety, Author, Enforcing and Defending Chapter 209A Restraining Orders in Massachusetts; Marc A. Levin, Esq, Vice President of Criminal Justice, Texas Public Policy Foundation and Right on Crime; Founder, Foundation’s Criminal Justice Program Moderator: Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian. 30th Sheriff of Middlesex County. President, Massachusetts Sheriffs’ Association. Founding Member, Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime & Incarceration. Reception follows at the Bostonian Hotel. An endowed public program

of Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway. Advance Registration is appreciated. hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

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

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

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

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

NEW JERSEY

SEPTEMBER 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 Ajamian 201-681-7671, ajamiann@aol.com or Lynn Beylerian 201-914-0354, lynnbeylerian@gmail.com. Send checks to Lynn Beylerian 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 Papasian. 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

NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER 15 — Oceania Street Armenian Festival. Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs’ annual Oceania Street Armenian Festival will take place on Saturday, from noon until 8 p.m. Rain or shine. Ample outdoor covered seating. Street parking available. Come and enjoy delicious Armenian delicacies, musical entertainment by the Tarpinian Ensemble, dance performances, Book-Tique, Attic Treasures, street vendors and much more. Many chances to win great prizes. For more information, call church office at (718) 225-0235.

SEPTEMBER 22 - 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>

SEPTEMBER 30 — “Armenia Way” Official Street Co-Naming Ceremony. Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan and the Parish Council of the Armenian Church of the Holy Martyrs are happy to announce that the official ceremony to co-name 210th Street between Horace Harding Expressway and 58th Avenue in Bayside, New York as “Armenia Way” will take place on Sunday, at 12:30 p.m. Please join us as we celebrate this historic occasion with the participation of politicians and community leaders. Special celebratory fellowship will follow the ceremony.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



ARTS & LIVING

8th Arthur Halvajian Memorial Armenian Poetry Competition

PROVIDENCE, R.I. —The Armenian Students Association, Inc. is delighted to announce the start of its 8th annual poetry competition. As in the past years, the ASA, Inc. is partnering with the Armenian Poetry Project for the writing competition named in memory of Arthur Halvajian, a trustee who led its board in sponsoring the first competition.

“In the past, we have enjoyed reading about the winning entries and look forward to reaching out to even more communities in North America” said Alice Movsesian, a member of the ASA, Inc. Board of Trustees as well as its liaison to the competition’s organizing committee.

ASA National Board Vice President M. Manoog Kaprielian, a staunch supporter of poetry, believes in its power to heal communities and individuals who have settled throughout the United States and Canada.

The Armenian Poetry Project, led by poet Lola Koundakjian, is a research and documentation site for 19th to 21st century Armenian poems and related topics. Currently containing over 3000 poems, it celebrated its 12th anniversary in April.

APP has a worldwide following and releases poems through RSS feeds, Twitter and podcasting.

Rules:

All individuals of Armenian descent, residing in the United States and Canada are invited to submit their work, in English or Armenian for the competition.

Poems must be original, unpublished and not accepted for publication.

They should be written in English or Armenian and not exceed 50 lines.

Only one original unpublished poem per individual may be submitted.

The deadline for submissions is November 1, 2018; winners will be announced by the jury in December 2018.

Entries should be e-mailed by November 1, 2018 to ArmenianPoetryProject@gmail.com with the subject heading “Halvajian ASA/APP Poetry competition.”

The competition groups submissions into three categories; students (ages 12-17), college age (ages 18-22), and adult (ages 23 and older).

A top prize will be awarded for each of the categories in the amounts of \$75 (students), \$125 (college age), and \$300 (adult).

Each poem submitted by students must be accompanied by the author’s full name, age, home address/telephone number, school name and sponsoring teacher’s telephone number.

College and adults only add age and contact information.

To learn more about the Armenian Poetry Project visiting <http://armenian-poetry.blogspot.com>.

Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian



Roasted Fall Vegetables

INGREDIENTS

1 large head of cauliflower, in 1 1/2" florets
5-6 garlic cloves, peeled
1 large red, yellow or white onion, cut into wedges
8 oz. baby bella mushrooms, cleaned, cut in half
1 large sweet potato or Yukon Gold potato, peeled and cubed
1 cup carrots, peeled and sliced thickly
1 cup zucchini, butternut or summer squash, cut in 1/2" rounds
1 cup red, orange or yellow bell peppers, seeded and cut in wedges
1 cup Brussels sprouts, trimmed, cut in half
2-3 tablespoons olive oil, as needed
2 teaspoons dried rosemary leaves, crushed
1 teaspoon dried sage leaves, crushed
Salt, basil, oregano, paprika, freshly ground black pepper (to taste)
Lemon juice, olive oil, chopped basil, parsley, green onions, cilantro for garnish
Crumbled feta or blue cheese or grated Parmesan cheese for garnish

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. In a large bowl, toss all ingredients (except garnish) with olive oil until evenly coated. Cover a non-stick baking sheet (or roasting pan) with foil and spread vegetables evenly on baking sheet.

Bake for 35-45 minutes tossing every 10 minutes until vegetables are tender and lightly caramelized. Remove from oven and garnish with choice of basil, parsley, green onions, cilantro and cheese. Season with lemon juice, toss, and drizzle with olive oil, if desired.

Serves 6-8.

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



Element Band to Perform at Ford Theatres on September 16

LOS ANGELES — Element Band will perform at Ford Theatres on Sunday, September 16 at 7:30 p.m., featuring music from their new album, “É.”

“For the past 14 years Element Band has been dedicated to continuing the tradition of Armenian music and bringing that tradition to new audiences around the globe. É is the band’s most intricate work to date. We’re very excited to present this work at Ford Theatres,

one of our favorite venues in Southern California,” said Element Band director Ara Dabandjian.

Dabandjian’s trademark arrangements and instrumentations, paired with Soseh Aramouni’s hypnotic vocals, create a rare chemistry that makes Element Band’s performances unparalleled. In addition to Dabandjian and Aramouni, Element Band’s musical ensemble includes vocalist Natalie Avunjian, Shant

Mahserejian on violin, Aragas Abramian on guitar, Armen Manavazyan, the band’s contrabassist, and Vinny Mezian on drums and percussion. The band is rounded out by a gifted dyad of musical guests including Artyom Manukyan on cello, Mahsa Ghasemi, also on cello, Ando Harutyunyan on drums and percussion, and Vahan Bznuni on piano and keyboards.

For information visit FordTheatres.org.

CALENDAR

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

NEW YORK

OCTOBER 13 — Concert: “Armenian Songs From My Heart.” On the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the Consecration of Holy Martyrs, Ruthann Turekian (soprano) dedicates this concert to Dn. Onnik Dokmeciyan, Dn. Edward Karnikian and Mary Selvinazian, for their support of her musical pursuits and to her late mother, Margaret Bedrossian Turekian. Concert includes works by Gomidas, Alemshah, Hekimian, Suni, Khachaturian and others. Concert in Holy Martyrs Church sanctuary to start at 7:30pm (doors open at 6:45pm). Tickets \$40 (advanced purchase), \$45 at the door. For tickets, please call (718) 225-0235. Reception to follow concert in Kalustyan Hall.

WASHINGTON D.C.

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

CANADA

OCTOBER 5 — Montreal book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian on her father’s memoir,

Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army, Friday, 7:30 p.m. AGBU Montreal Center — Demirdjian Hall, 805 Manoogian Street Saint Laurent, QCH4N1Z5. Reception and book signing to follow. (All proceeds from the sale of the books will be donated to the AGBU). RSVP — info@agbumontreal.org (514) 748-2428

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



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Armenian-Russian Relations on Track Despite Pessimism in Media

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Armenian political circles and the news media in Yerevan put on their magnifying glasses to observe the Nikol Pashinyan-Vladimir Putin meeting on September 8 and draw conclusions from it. Of course, for a country of Armenia's size, such a meeting is crucial. But viewed from the Russian perspective, it could mean a miniscule political agenda item tucked in among others.

The Putin-Pashinyan meeting took place within a political whirlwind in and around the Kremlin. Mr. Putin met President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan on September 1, in Sochi. He also met with the presidents of Turkey and Iran to seal Syria's fate, flew to Vladivostok to meet Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to sign trade and industrial cooperation bills, while hosting a delegation from Vietnam in Moscow and ordering and supervising the largest military exercises since the end of the Cold War, in cooperation with China and Mongolia.

Quite an intense week of political activity for President Putin, and yet, he devoted two and a half hours of his time to meet with Armenia's Prime Minister Pashinyan.

This was the third meeting between the two leaders and the one most anticipated. The first meeting took place on May 14 in Sochi almost a week after Pashinyan had taken office, within the framework of the Eurasian Union gathering. The second happened on the occasion of the World Cup in Moscow in June.

The reason the third meeting was so anticipated was that relations had been souring between the two countries and problems were emerging to give rise to political speculations in both capitals.

Armenia was putting its house in order, and along the way had to sacrifice some sacred cows. Russia had not interfered in Armenia's internal affairs when the Velvet Revolution was growing. Although that hands-off approach was much appreciated in Yerevan, they knew full well that the reason for that policy of restraint came mostly from the past negative experiences in Ukraine and Georgia rather than any other consideration.

Moscow was watching the developments in Armenia with controlled patience, its level of nervousness escalating every time western statesmen and news media labeled the Velvet Revolution as a color revolution similar to the ones in Ukraine and Georgia, which ended up undercutting Russia's influence in the region.

Most of the time, during this latest meeting, President Putin was quiet, except when he signaled his displeasure that his old friend Robert Kocharyan was incarcerated. He sent a birthday message to the former Armenian leader, something he had neglected to do since 2007, when Kocharyan was in power.

Since taking office, Pashinyan has never missed an opportunity to exalt the historic and strategic Armenian-Russian relations, but on the Russian side, Pashinyan's anti-Russian rhetoric during his opposition campaign was still fresh in their memories. In Moscow's calculations, however, the words did not match the government's actions, when Armenia charged General Yuri Khachaturov with the crime of subverting the constitution by ordering the arrest and shooting of demonstrators in 2008, while he was serving as the secretary general of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Then the Kremlin relegated to Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov the task of expressing its displeasure in view of the developments in Armenia. Lavrov characterized Khachaturov's arrest — without notifying Russian partners — as an assault on CSTO's reputation. Lavrov even hinted at the "simmering heat" in Yerevan to which Pashinyan humorously replied that indeed, the weather had been very hot lately.

In the atmosphere of escalating tensions and suspicions, it was feared that Russia may halt the delivery of \$100 million worth of modern military hardware to Armenia. But fortunately, that fear was baseless.

The political team representing Armenia's current government enjoys a lower level of trust among the Russian partners compared to the previous authorities, according to Artur Martirosyan, a conflict management specialist.

Asked to comment on the talks, before they took place, against the backdrop of existing uncertainties, Martirosyan said that the two leaders are meeting for the very purpose of finalizing certain points of contention and agreeing upon matters of urgent importance. "But that meeting, by and large, is being held for reasons of settling matters linked to that distrust. We can, certainly, leave it to Russia, but in the light of our [strategic] alliance with that country, the distrust cannot and should not remain Russia's affair only," he explained.

Despite all the apprehension, the meeting was concluded on a positive note. Pashinyan was almost jubilant in his statement. "My meeting with Russia's President Vladimir Putin has just ended. We had a productive talk and stated that Armenian-Russian relations are at a brilliant level. There is not a single problem in any field of our relations," he said.

Although much more guarded, Putin's statement also had a positive spin. "Relations between Armenia and Russia are developing steadily in all directions. This concerns political relations, military, security issues and economic cooperation spheres," the Russian leader said.

For energy-hungry Armenia, importing Russian gas is of vital importance.

"We are the largest investor in the Armenian economy and we can affirm that in this respect our relations are rather diversified," Putin stated. He also touted the fact that Armenia buys Russian gas at the cheapest price of \$150 per thousand cubic meters, to which Pashinyan retorted that by the time consumers receive that gas in Yerevan, the price rises to \$270-\$275 per thousand cubic meters due to the high Georgian transit fees and

the Russian Gazprom's monopoly in Armenia.

Putin promised to study the case.

Couched in a palatable diplomatic format, Pashinyan has delivered a message that his backers at home and in the West much appreciate, that of Armenia's sovereign status in dealing with Russia.

Armenia is no longer an "inferior vassal," as the guru of the Velvet Revolution, Levon Shirinian would say. Indeed, Pashinyan has stated: "Russia and Armenia have no unsolvable problems. Our countries rely on the principles of respect for the interests

of each other's affairs and non-interference therein. We are determined to develop relations further, not only bilaterally, but also within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union and Collective Security organizations."

Besides confirming mutual respect and pledge for future productive cooperation, Pashinyan has come up with making a positive step in the Karabakh issue. Indeed, Vahram Atanesyan, the correspondent for Hay Dzayn in Stepanakert, who reviews Azeri press meticulously, states that there was speculation in that country that Putin was ready to reprimand Pashinyan on his position on Artsakh. But, the commentator states, they were bitterly disappointed. The Azeri leadership came to the realization that Aliyev's bellicose rhetoric will not make a dent in Yerevan. Pashinyan delivered a clear message to Putin and to Baku that Armenia will be ready to compromise when Baku is ready for them. Also, only elected officials of Artsakh may speak on behalf of the people there. As far as the seven regions under Artsakh are considered, the so-called "occupied territories," they are part of that republic by its constitution.

Indeed, when we read the speech and the news release after the Putin-Aliyev meeting, reference to Artsakh by Putin is generic, run-of-the-mill statement but excludes the military solution.

The balance of power between Armenia and Azerbaijan is in Moscow's hand. Putin has refrained from playing his Azeri card against Armenia, because he uses his options sparingly and because of political prudence, rather than charity.

At the end of the day, if we take a fair account of the meeting, the best way to describe it was Pashinyan's characterization: that despite apprehensive predictions in Armenian and Russian media, the meeting was a reasonable success.



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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Prophet Muhammad's Rarely Known Decree to the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem

For many years, I have heard that there had been written communication between the Prophet Muhammad and the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, but I had not seen any of the documents to that effect.

Two months ago, I read a fascinating article published in the Armenian newspaper Aztag in Beirut, Lebanon, by Dr. Garbis Harboyan of Montreal, Canada, who had uncovered the details of the communication between Prophet Muhammad and then Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem and their successors.

Dr. Harboyan mentioned his sources as: Gregory Krikorian's *Through the Eye of an Armenian Needle*, published by the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia in 2002. Krikorian had stated that his book was the summary and English translation of *History of Jerusalem*, a two-volume, 1385-page book by Dikran Sayalanyan, published by the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 1931. Dr. Harboyan also mentioned that he had recently seen the book, *Armenian Art Treasures of Jerusalem*, by Bezalel Narkiss, Michael E. Stone, and Avedis Sanjian, published in New York, in 1979, which included a copy of Prophet Muhammad's decree to the Armenian Patriarchate. The Armenian Patriarchate was established in Jerusalem almost 2,000 years ago. Many Armenians had gone on pilgrimage to Jerusalem after converting to Christianity in 301 AD. They had built a part of Sourp Hagop Convent in 420 AD. By the sixth Century, Armenians had constructed 66 religious institutions in Jerusalem.

In 626 AD, the Armenian Patriarch Apraham of Jerusalem, seeing the looming dangers of Islamic expansion and con-

quest, went to the Holy Islamic city of Mecca with a delegation of 40 prominent Armenians to meet with Prophet Muhammad to secure his protection.

Dr. Harboyan reported that the Prophet had welcomed the Armenian guests with affection, respect, and kindness, and listened to Patriarch Apraham's suggestions. The Armenian delegation expressed its submission to the Prophet, readiness to cooperate with him, and sought his protection.

At the end of the meeting, Prophet Muhammad issued a decree which stated: "I, Muhammad, the son of Abdallah, prophet and servant of God, I pay my respect to Patriarch Apraham, I honor him and all archbishops, bishops, and priests in Jerusalem, Damascus, and Arab regions, in other words, those people who are subject to Jerusalem, such as Ethiopians, Copts, and Assyrians. I recognize and guarantee their monasteries, churches, educational centers, properties and lands. I, Prophet Muhammad, with the witness of God, and the 30 people around me, I grant my patronage and protection, and I dispense my mercy to the Armenian churches, wherever they may be, throughout Jerusalem, the Holy Tomb of Christ, Sourp Hagop Church, Bethlehem Church, all prayer houses, monasteries, Golgotha road, and the holy sites. I also secure and ensure that my protection also extends to Christian hills, valleys and Christian income-generating institutions. I declare all of this in my name as Prophet and in the name of my Muslim faithful."

The Prophet Muhammad instructed his successors to respect his decree and execute it in all of its details. Present at that meeting was Omar the son of Khattab who became one of the Prophet's successors and issued a similar decree confirming the Prophet's decree.

Thus, the Prophet's decree became the first official document confirming the status of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, the original decree cannot be located in the Patriarchate's archives. However, a yellowish copy exists in the Patriarchate's Mardigian Museum.

When Omar took over as Khalif in 634 AD, he appointed Abu Obeid as the head of the army. Abu Obeid's forces attacked Damascus and Jerusalem. The Greek Patriarch Sophronius and Armenian Patriarch Krikor met with Abu Obeid and informed him that occupying Jerusalem would enrage God, because Jerusalem is a holy city. Abu Obeid reported to Khalif Omar about his meeting with the two

Patriarchs. Omar personally came to Jerusalem. The brother of the Greek Patriarch met with Omar and reminded him about the decree of Prophet Muhammad. Omar then issued his own decree and confirmed the Prophet's decree. Omar entered Jerusalem with his followers, visited the religious sites, and suggested building a Mosque in a plot of land next to the church of Christ's tomb. The Mosque was built in 935 AD and named "Al Omariye." Omar allowed freedom for Christian worship, but forbade the ringing of church bells.

Omar was succeeded by Khalif Ali who also issued a decree for Armenians in Jerusalem, confirming the previous decrees by the Prophet and Omar.

In 1097 AD, the Crusaders invaded and liberated Jerusalem. In 1187 AD, Salahuddin al Ayoubi who is Kurdish and his family originated from Dvin in Armenia, occupied Jerusalem and expelled the majority of 100,000 Christians from the city. He took over all the Latin churches in Jerusalem and forbade church services. However, he granted Armenians partial freedom.

Armenian Patriarch Apraham with a group of his clergy met with Salahuddin and showed him Prophet Muhammad's decree. Salahuddin then issued his own decree and confirmed the decrees issued by the Prophet and Khalifs Omar and Ali. Salahuddin particularly noted in his decree Armenians' jurisdiction over churches, holy places, Sourp Hagop Convent, churches of Bethlehem and Nablus, the Holy Tomb, other holy sites, and especially Armenians' freedom to worship. He also lowered the taxes on Armenian merchants and pilgrims.

In 1517 AD, Ottoman Sultan Selim occupied Jerusalem and issued his decree which confirmed the privileges bestowed upon the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem by Prophet Muhammad, Khalif Omar, and Salahuddin. Sultan Selim's successor, Sultan Suleiman, issued his own decree reconfirming the Armenian rights in Jerusalem. Subsequent Sultans also issued decrees, such as Mehmed IV in 1659 AD, Sultan Mahmud I in 1735 AD, and Sultan Abdulmejid I in 1853 AD.

The Prophet Muhammad's decree, besides being a valuable historical document, indicates that Armenian Christians and Muslims have enjoyed the most cordial relations from the ancient times to the present.

Armenians need to publicize the Prophet's crucial decree as well as those of his successors to counter the anti-Armenian propaganda spread by Turkey and Azerbaijan in the Islamic world.

9/11 Remembered: Robert Fisk's Close Encounter with Osama Bin Laden

(This is an edited extract from Robert Fisk's book, *The Great War for Civilisation*, first published in 2006.)

By Robert Fisk

ONE HOT EVENING in late June 1996, the telephone on my desk in Beirut rang with one of the more extraordinary messages I was to receive as a foreign correspondent. "Mr Robert, a friend you met in Sudan wants to see you," said a voice in English but with an Arabic accent. At first I thought he meant another man, whose name I suggested. "No, no, Mr Robert, I mean the man you interviewed. Do you understand?" Yes, I understood. And where could I meet this man? "The place where he is now," came the reply. I knew that Bin Laden was rumoured to have returned to Afghanistan but there was no confirmation of this. So how do I reach him? I asked. "Go to Jalalabad - you will be contacted."

A month later. "CLACK-CLACK-CLACK." It was as if someone was attacking my head with an icepick. "CLACK-CLACK-CLACK-CLACK-CLACK-CLACK-CLACK." I sat up. Someone was banging a set of car keys against the window of my room in the Spinghar Hotel. "Missster Robert," a voice whispered urgently. "Missster Robert." He hissed the word "Mister." Yes, yes, I'm here. "Please come downstairs, there is someone to see you." It registered only slowly that the man must have climbed the ancient fire escape to reach the window of my room. I dressed, grabbed a coat - I had a feeling we might travel in the night - and almost forgot my old Nikon. I walked as calmly as I could past the reception desk and out into the early afternoon heat.

The man wore a grubby, grey Afghan robe and a small round cotton hat but he was an Arab and he greeted me formally, holding my right hand in both of his. He smiled. He said his name was Mohamed, he was my guide. "To see the Sheikh?" I asked. He smiled but said nothing.

I followed Mohamed all the way through the dust of Jalalabad's main street until we arrived next to a group of gunmen in a pick-up truck in the ruins of an old Soviet army base,

a place of broken armoured vehicles with a rusting red star on a shattered gateway. There were three men in Afghan hats in the back of the pick-up. One held a Kalashnikov rifle, another clutched a grenade-launcher along with six rockets tied together with Scotch tape. The third nursed a machine gun on his lap, complete with tripod and a belt of ammunition. "Mr Robert, these are our guards," the driver said quietly, as if it was the most normal thing in the world to set off across the wilds of Afghanistan's Nangarhar province under a white-hot afternoon sun with three bearded guerrillas. A two-way radio hissed and crackled on the shoulder of the driver's companion as another truckload of Afghan gunmen drove up behind us.

We were about to set off when Mohamed climbed back down from the pick-up along with the driver, walked to a shaded patch of grass and began to pray. For five minutes, the two men lay half-prostrate, facing the distant Kabul Gorge and, beyond that, a far more distant Mecca. We drove off along a broken highway and then turned on to a dirt track by an irrigation canal, the guns in the back of the truck bouncing on the floor, the guards' eyes peering from behind their chequered scarves. We travelled like that for hours, past half-demolished mud villages and valleys and towering black rocks, a journey across the face of the moon.

By dusk, we had reached a series of cramped earthen villages, old men burning charcoal fires by the track, the shadow of women cowed in the Afghan burka standing in the alleyways. There were more guerrillas, all bearded, grinning at Mohamed and the driver. It was night before we stopped, in an orchard where wooden sofas had been covered in army blankets piled with belts and webbing and where armed men emerged out of the darkness, some holding rifles, others machine guns. They were the Arab mujahedin, the Arab "Afghans" denounced by the presidents and kings of half the Arab world and by the United States of America. Very soon, the world would know them as al-Qa'ida.

Mohamed beckoned me to follow him and we skirted a small river and jumped across a stream until, in the insect-filled darkness ahead, we could see a sputtering paraffin lamp. Beside it sat a tall, bearded man in Saudi robes. Osama bin Laden stood up, his two teenage sons, Omar and Saad, beside him. "Welcome to Afghanistan," he said.

He was now 40 but looked much older than at our last meet-

ing in the Sudanese desert late in 1993. Walking towards me, he towered over his companions, tall, slim, with new wrinkles around those narrow eyes. Leaner, his beard longer but slightly flecked with grey, he had a black waistcoat over his white robe and a red-chequered kuffiah on his head, and he seemed tired. When he asked after my health, I told him I had come a long way for this meeting. "So have I," he muttered. There was also an isolation about him, a detachment I had not noticed before, as if he had been inspecting his anger, examining the nature of his resentment; when he smiled, his gaze would move towards his 16-year-old son Omar - round eyes with dark brows and his own kuffiah - and then off into the hot darkness where his armed men were patrolling the fields.

Just 10 days before, a truck bomb had torn down part of the US Air Force housing complex at al-Khobar in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, and we were speaking in the shadow of the deaths of the 19 US soldiers killed there. And Bin Laden knew what he wanted to say. "Not long ago, I gave advice to the Americans to withdraw their troops from Saudi Arabia. Now let us give some advice to the governments of Britain and France to take their troops out - because what happened in Riyadh and al-Khobar showed that the people who did this have a deep understanding in choosing their targets. They hit their main enemy, which is the Americans. They killed no secondary enemies, nor their brothers in the army or the police in Saudi Arabia... I give this advice to the government of Britain." He said the Americans must leave Saudi Arabia, must leave the Gulf. The "evils" of the Middle East arose from America's attempt to take over the region and from its support for Israel. Saudi Arabia had been turned into "an American colony."

Bin Laden was speaking slowly and with precision, an Egyptian taking notes in a large exercise book by the lamplight like a Middle Ages scribe. "This doesn't mean declaring war against the West and Western people - but against the American regime which is against every American." I interrupted Bin Laden. Unlike Arab regimes, I said, the people of the United States elected their government. They would say that their government represents them. He disregarded my comment. I hope he did. For in the years to come, his war would embrace the deaths of thousands of American civilians.

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9/11 Remembered: Robert Fisk's Close Encounter with Osama Bin Laden

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"The explosion in al-Khobar did not come as a direct reaction to the American occupation," he said, "but as a result of American behaviour against Muslims, its support of Jews in Palestine and of the massacres of Muslims in Palestine and Lebanon – of Sabra and Chatila and Qana – and of the Sharm el-Sheikh conference."

But what Bin Laden really wanted to talk about was Saudi Arabia. Since our last meeting in Sudan, he said, the situation in the kingdom had grown worse. The ulema, the religious leaders, had declared in the mosques that the presence of American troops was not acceptable and the government took action against these ulema "on the advice of the Americans." For Bin Laden, the betrayal of the Saudi people began 24 years before his birth, when Abdul Aziz al-Saud proclaimed his kingdom in 1932. "The regime started under the flag of applying Islamic law and under this banner all the people of Saudi Arabia came to help the Saud family take power. But Abdul Aziz did not apply Islamic law; the country was set up for his family. Then after the discovery of petroleum, the Saudi regime found another support – the money to make people rich and to give them the services and life they wanted and to make them satisfied." Bin Laden was picking away at his teeth with that familiar twig of mishwak wood, but history – or his version of it – was the basis of almost all his remarks. The Saudi royal family had promised sharia laws while at the same time allowing the United States "to Westernise Saudi Arabia and drain the economy." He blamed the Saudi regime for spending \$25bn in support of Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq war and a further \$60bn in support of the Western armies in the 1991 war against Iraq, "buying military equipment which is not needed or useful for the country, buying air-

craft by credit" while at the same time creating unemployment, high taxes and a bankrupt economy. But for Bin Laden, the pivotal date was 1990, the year Saddam invaded Kuwait. "When the American troops entered Saudi Arabia, the land of the two Holy places, there was a strong protest from the ulema and from students of sharia law all over the country against the interference of American troops. This big mistake by the Saudi regime of inviting the American troops revealed their deception. They were giving their support to nations which were fighting against Muslims."

Bin Laden paused to see if I had listened to his careful, if frighteningly exclusive history lesson. "The Saudi people have remembered now what the ulema told them and they realise America is the main reason for their problems... the ordinary man knows that his country is the largest oil producer in the world yet at the same time he is suffering from taxes and bad services. Now the people understand the speeches of the ulemas in the mosques – that our country has become an American colony. What happened in Riyadh and al-Khobar is clear evidence of the huge anger of Saudi people against America. The Saudis now know their real enemy is America." The overthrow of the Saudi regime and the eviction of US forces from the kingdom were one and the same for Bin Laden. He was claiming that the real religious leadership of Saudi Arabia – among whom he clearly saw himself – was an inspiration to Saudis, that Saudis themselves would drive out the Americans, that Saudis – hitherto regarded as a rich and complacent people – might strike at the United States. Could this be true?

Bin Laden sometimes stopped speaking for all of 60 seconds in order to reflect on his words. Most Arabs, faced with a reporter's question, would say the first thing that came into their heads for fear that they would appear

ignorant if they did not. Bin Laden was different. He was alarming because he was possessed of that quality which leads men to war: total self-conviction.

Bin Laden had asked me – a routine of every Palestinian under occupation – if Europeans did not resist occupation during the Second World War. I told him no Europeans would accept this argument over Saudi Arabia – because the Nazis killed millions of Europeans yet the Americans had never murdered a single Saudi. Such a parallel was historically and morally wrong. Bin Laden did not agree. "We as Muslims have a strong feeling that binds us together... We feel for our brothers in Palestine and Lebanon... When 60 Jews are killed inside Palestine" – he was talking about Palestinian suicide bombings in Israel – "all the world gathers within seven days to criticise this action, while the deaths of 600,000 Iraqi children did not receive the same reaction." It was Bin Laden's first reference to Iraq and to the United Nations sanctions that were to result, according to UN officials themselves, in the death of more than half a million children. "Killing those Iraqi children is a crusade against Islam," Bin Laden said. "We, as Muslims, do not like the Iraqi regime but we think that the Iraqi people and their children are our brothers and we care about their future." It was the first time I heard him use the word "crusade."

For some time, there had been a steadily growing thunderstorm to the east of Bin Laden's camp and we could see the bright orange flash of lightning over the mountains on the Pakistan border. But Bin Laden thought this might be artillery fire, the continuation of the inter-mujahedin battles that had damaged his spirit after the anti-Soviet war. He was growing uneasy. He broke off his conversation to pray. Then, on the straw mat, several young and armed men served dinner – plates of yoghurt and cheese and Afghan naan bread and more tea. Bin Laden sat between his sons, silent, eyes on his food.

He began talking to his men about amniya,

security, and repeatedly looked towards those flashes in the sky. Now the thunder did sound like gunfire. I tried to ask one more question. What kind of Islamic state would Bin Laden wish to see? Would thieves and murderers still have their hands or heads cut off in his Islamic sharia state, just as they do in Saudi Arabia today? There came an unsatisfactory reply. "Islam is a complete religion for every detail of life. If a man is a real Muslim and commits a crime, he can only be happy if he is justly punished. This is not cruelty. The origin of these punishments comes from God through the Prophet Mohamed, peace be upon him." I asked permission to take his photograph, and while he debated this with his companions I scribbled into my notebook the words I would use in the last paragraph of my report on our meeting: "Osama bin Laden believes he now represents the most formidable enemy of the Saudi regime and of the American presence in the Gulf. Both are probably right to regard him as such." I was underestimating the man.

Yes, he said, I could take his picture. I opened my camera and allowed his armed guards to watch me as I threaded a film into the spool. Without warning, Bin Laden moved his head back and the faintest smile moved over his face, along with that self-conviction and that ghost of vanity which I found so disturbing. He called his sons Omar and Saad and they sat beside him as I took more pictures and Bin Laden turned into the proud father, the family man, the Arab at home.

Then his anxiety returned. The thunder was continuous now and it was mixed with the pattering of rifle fire. I should go, he urged, and I realised that what he meant was that he must go, that it was time for him to return to the fastness of Afghanistan. When we shook hands, he was already looking for the guards who would take him away.

(Robert Fisk is the Middle East correspondent for the *Independent* newspaper. This column originally appeared in the September 11 edition of the newspaper.)

Artak Zakaryan: Without the Official Position of Artsakh, No Problem Can Be Settled or Agreed

YEREVAN – Hay Dzayn website recently conducted an interview with former Deputy Minister of Defense Artak Zakaryan on the topic of Artsakh. The interview was conducted by journalist Gohar Avetisyan and translated into English by Lusine Melkonyan.

September 2 marks the 27th anniversary of the proclamation of the Artsakh Republic independence. What do you think is the historical and political significance of the day?

During the Artsakh movement history September 2 was an important event, which became the cornerstone for Artsakh's right to self-determination. In 1991, both legal and political grounds were created for the proclamation of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic as an independent state. The entire political process of the Artsakh conflict settlement was conditioned by the significance of September 2. The proclamation of the Republic gave an opportunity to be guided by the principle of self-determination in the international arena. Under the UN Charter, as well as the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, Artsakh gained a full opportunity to fight for its unrecognized independent statehood.

Being unrecognized, of course, many problems in Artsakh are not solved just like in the case of internationally recognized states, starting from international security guarantees to economic interactions. But it's just a matter of time.

In one of your interviews you mentioned that the recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent state is the key to the conflict settlement and as long as Artsakh is not recognized, the security guarantees of the Armenian people are not guaranteed either. Today, is this key applicable and what do we have to do in this direction?

Yes, the international recognition of Artsakh is one of the cornerstones without which the conflict cannot be resolved. Otherwise, we will

have a deepening conflict, which can endanger regional security and sustainable development. It is no coincidence that the right to self-determination under the Minsk Group co-chairs is viewed as one of the three indivisible principles. Consequently, international recognition of the right to self-determination is a decisive factor in the final settlement of the issue.

Unlike the previous leaders of Armenia, current Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said he did not consider himself competent to hold talks instead of Artsakh, since he was neither from Artsakh nor participated in the Artsakh liberation war. How effective do you think this approach is?

In any sense, it does not matter to be from Artsakh or participate in the Artsakh war when it comes to political responsibility. Today's authorities, of course, bear political responsibility for the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem and have certain work to do in both the foreign and internal life.

During German chancellor Angela Merkel's visit, the latter hinted that Germany can also play a role in the Artsakh conflict resolution. What can you say about this statement, or in general, how do you assess the desire of any other country, besides the co-chair countries, to take part in the peace process?

Germany is a member of the Minsk Group but is not included in the co-chairmanship. The Federal Republic of Germany, as one of the leading EU countries, can play a role in the issue of recognition of the right to self-determination, and as I have already said, the right to self-determination is one of the most important principles of democracy. If democracy continues to be relevant in the world, therefore, democracy-loving states cannot ignore Artsakh's right to self-determination. If Germany is willing to make its best efforts to recognize Artsakh's right to self-determination, we can only welcome it.

