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Aurora Prize Laureate to Donate \$1 Million Award to Help Rohingya Refugees

NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar (*The Hindu*) – Aurora Prize Laureate Kyaw Hla Aung, a noted lawyer and activist from Myanmar, this week announced he would donate his \$1 million award money towards humanitarian relief work among Rohingya refugees.

He was given the award this year for his fight against injustice and advocating on behalf of the Rohingya people.

The money will be distributed among three international organizations – Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF), the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) and MERCY Malaysia – providing medical aid and assistance to Rohingya refugees across South East Asia, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative (AHI) has announced. (See related editorial, page 17.)

MSF, UK, will receive \$400,000, while MERCY Malaysia and the ICMC \$300,000 each. This initiative will benefit around 3,75,000 Rohingya refugees, a media release said.

The AHI, founded on behalf of Armenian Genocide survivors, seeks to help those in urgent need of basic humanitarian aid. MSF is directing the funds to further advance the emergency response in the Balukhali Makeshift Settlements in Bangladesh, the AHI said.



Aurora Prize Laureate Kyaw Hla Aung in Armenia

The organisation estimates that it will benefit approximately 2,50,000 Rohingya refugees, it said.

MSF has increased its operations in response to the unfolding of the crisis in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar where Rohingyas, who fled their homes in Myanmar's Rakhine state, are living.

A team of more than 2,000 staff is running 10 health posts, four primary health centres, and five inpatient health facilities (providing 24-hour secondary healthcare).

"This potential support comes at a crucial time, especially as the Monsoon season approaches and with it the likelihood of devastating flooding and landslides in the

camps, MSF Executive Director Vickie Hawkins said.

The ICMC is allocating its share of the Aurora funds to two initiatives directed at empowering Rohingya refugees in Klang Valley and Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia.

It also aims at improving damaged infrastructure at the Kutupalong Camp settlement in Bangladesh. The ICMC estimates that over 20,000 people will benefit from these projects.

We would use the Aurora award to advance our work with Rohingya and other refugees in Malaysia and elsewhere, Secretary General, ICMC, Monsignor Robert J Vitillo, said

see AURORA, page 5

The Bigger They Are, The Harder They Fall

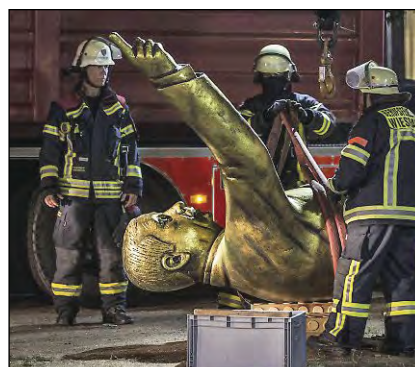
By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WIESBADEN, Germany – "It's a bird!" "It's a plane!" "It's Superman – yes, it's Superman!"

When on August 27 of this year, a four-meter-high statue, bundled up like a mummy in white wrapping, was transported to the German Unity Plaza in Wiesbaden, Germany, as one of the exhibits making up the city-wide Wiesbaden Biennale for Contemporary Art, no one knew the identity of the being concealed inside the packaging. The organizers had requested and received permission to present the thing, identifying it as a "manlike statue" – or a "statue resembling a human being" might be a better translation. From its exterior shape, it was clearly neither a bird nor a plane. And since it could not fly, it was not Superman. Who could it be? One passer-by suggested, given its size and the gesture of its outstretched right hand, it might depict the late former Chancellor Helmut Kohl, a man who had done so much for German unification.

see STATUE, page 5



Firefighters take down the statue of Erdogan.



Program with Filmmaker Bared Maronian Sheds Light on Heroic Story of Armenian Women

LEXINGTON, Mass. – A cultural program on Sunday, September 23, titled "Lights, Camera, Stories!" diverges from the traditional script of many Armenian gatherings. First, it is a collaboration between two organizations – the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) and the Armenian Women's Welfare Association – and second, it focuses on the history of Armenian women, celebrating them through the works of filmmaker Bared Maronian.

By Alin K. Gregorian

Mirror-Spectator Staff

The event, however, is for everyone, Armenian and non-Armenian, and male as well as female. The award-winning filmmaker will speak about his projects and show an abbreviated version of his documentary, "Women of 1915." In addition, he will show footage he shot during the Velvet Revolution in April and discuss the Cultural Impact Foundation which he hopes to get off the ground to help him continue to make more documentaries, including the upcoming "Titanic Love."

The program will take place on Sunday at 5 p.m. at the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum and Library, located at 33 Marrett Road, Lexington.

Proceeds will benefit programs in Armenia and Artsakh sponsored by the host organizations, the Hanganak NGO Clinic Elderly Project in Stepanakert, Artsakh, and the Women's Support Center in Yerevan.

see FILMMAKER, page 16

NEWS IN BRIEF

Former Top Judge Victim of Assault

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Armenia's Investigative Committee continues conducting a large-scale probe as part of the criminal case launched into the armed attack on the house of a former Armenian top judge by three gunmen on August 29.

On that day, three masked attackers armed with assault rifles burst into the mansion belonging to Arman Mkrtumyan, former Chairman of Armenia's Court of Cassation, located in Dzoraghbyur, a village outside capital Yerevan. Due to the resistance shown by Mkrtumyan and his 30-year-old son, one of the assailants was neutralized, while the two others fled the scene, opening sporadic gunfire.

The subdued attacker, identified as Hovannes Ryzhenko, a 45-year-old resident of Armenia's second largest city of Gyumri, has been detained. Ammo cases and an assault rifle with bullets have been discovered and confiscated from the scene.

The ex-judge has suffered gunshot wounds due to the incident, the committee said, adding he has been recognized as a victim.

Police is tracking down the other attackers.

Israel Accuses Drone Maker of Bombing Armenian Soldiers

TEL AVIV (RFE/RL) – Israel has accused an Israeli drone maker of bombing Armenian soldiers in Nagorno-Karabakh at the request of Azerbaijani clients during a sales demonstration.

The accusation by Israel's Justice Ministry on August 29 did not specifically mention Azerbaijan or Nagorno-Karabakh in its statement. But Israeli media said a complaint filed with the Defense Ministry made it clear that Azerbaijani officials and ethnic Armenian soldiers were involved.

The complaint was leaked to the *Maariv* newspaper, which first reported the incident.

It was unclear who exactly filed the complaint.

In its statement, the Justice Ministry said it plans to indict the chief executive, deputy CEO and other officials and employees of Aeronautics Defense Systems for the incident, which it said occurred in 2017.

The Aeronautics team was suspected of "fraudulently obtaining something under aggravated circumstances," along with violations of Israel's security export control law, the newspaper reported.

An official at Azerbaijan's embassy in Washington, DC, declined to comment.

No one was immediately available at the Armenian Embassy.

Azerbaijan is one of the largest importers of Israeli military equipment. In 2016, an Israeli-made drone dove into a bus carrying seven Armenians, an incident that was captured partially on video.

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Schindler's List at 25

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ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Ex-Yerevan Mayor to Be Questioned in Bribery Case

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Former Mayor of Yerevan Taron Margaryan will be questioned over the Yerevan Foundation fraud case, director of the National Security Service Artur Vanetsyan told reporters on September 4.

“He will certainly be questioned. The date for the questioning will be set by the investigation. The head of the investigative group himself will decide when to summon him for questioning,” he said.

Vanetsyan added he does not interfere with the actions of the investigative group.

Earlier in June, it was reported that Yerevan Foundation officials had demanded bribes from two citizens in order to issue construction licenses to them.

Margaryan stepped down as mayor on July 9.

Zvartnots Airport Handles Record Number of Passengers in August

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Armenia’s two airports saw a strong growth in passenger numbers in the first eight months of 2018, compared to the data of 2017.

Yerevan Zvartnots International Airport and Shirak Airport in the second largest city of Gyumri handled 1,872,998 passengers from January to August this year, up by 12.3 percent from the same period last year, the Armenia International Airports CJSC told Panorama.am.

In August alone, a total of 347,492 people used the services of the two airports, 18.5 percent higher than a year ago.

Zvartnots Airport served a record number of 329,665 passengers in August of the running year, the company said.

The airport registered another record on August 1 welcoming 11,337 passengers.

Farmers Block Highway Over Low Grape Prices

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Dozens of grape farmers from Sardarapat, Bambakashat, Norapet and other villages of Armenia’s Armavir province blocked the major highway leading to capital Yerevan on Tuesday, September 4, to protest low grape procurement prices.

One of the protesting farmers, Karen Sisakyan, said wine distilleries have purchased grapes at an average of 140 drams per kilogram for years amid an increase in prices for irrigation, diesel fuel and pesticides.

“The cost price makes up 120 drams for a villager. Is it possible to live with 20 drams? That price does not suit us,” he said, adding the grape procurement price was 120 drams last year and 140-150 drams in previous years.

The farmer says the grape harvest has shrunk this year, meanwhile prices for pesticides have risen by 30 percent, diesel fuel prices grew to 9,600-9,800 drams from the previously set 6,800 drams and irrigation water prices to 104,000 drams from the previous 62,000 drams.

OSCE Sec. Gen. Ready to Aid Minsk Co-Chairs

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Speaker of the Parliament of Armenia Ara Babloyan on September 4 received Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Secretary General Thomas Greminger.

During the meeting Babloyan said Armenia attaches great importance to the cooperation with the OSCE and expressed hope that Greminger’s visit would contribute to developing and deepening the mutual partnership.

He highlighted the mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement process, as the main format of the negotiation process. “The Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement is based on the recognition and exercise of the Artsakh people’s right to self-determination,” Babloyan said.

He expressed concern over the closure of the OSCE Yerevan Office.

Greminger stated that the visit aims at expanding and strengthening the relations and cooperation with Armenia. He noted that despite the closure of the OSCE Yerevan Office, the organization will continue to move forward the cooperation with Armenia with all possible forms.

As for the settlement of the NK conflict, the OSCE Secretary General said he is ready to support the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs as much as possible.

Armenian PM Downplays Problems With Russian Relations

YEREVAN (RFE/RL and Tass) – Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has downplayed problems in Yerevan’s relations with Moscow, describing them as a “work process in its natural course.”

Answering questions from citizens in a live Facebook broadcast late on September 2, Pashinyan also announced his upcoming visit to Moscow, during which he will meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

He gave no indications of the date of the planned meeting but said it will take place soon.

“This will be our third meeting, and...we will discuss numerous issues that are on the agenda of our relations and will find solutions to numerous problems,” Pashinyan said.

“I don’t mean to insist that all possible problems will be solved, but I can surely say that our natural cooperation continues,” he added.

Some analysts suggest that Russia was irked by several moves by the new Armenian government that included the prosecution of former President Robert Kocharyan and several other senior former officials on charges related to the deadly postelection crackdown on opposition protesters in 2008.

Among those charged with “overthrowing the constitutional order” is Yuri Khachaturov, a former deputy defense minister who currently chairs the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization.

In July, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov denounced the prosecutions, arguing that they ran counter to the new Armenian leadership’s earlier pledges not to “persecute its predecessors for political motives.”

In August, Pashinyan, who played a key role in the 2008 protests as an opposition figure, said Moscow should “adapt” to the new political realities of

Armenia.

Speculation about souring Armenian-Russian relations increased last week when the Kremlin’s official website said Russian President Putin called Kocharyan on August 31 to congratulate him on his 64th birthday.

The Kremlin reported no other details of the phone call that came two weeks after Kocharyan pledged to return to active politics and challenge the current Armenian government.

In another development, the Russian Interfax news agency reported on August 31 that Moscow had refused to extradite to Yerevan a former Armenian defense minister, Mikael Harutiunyan, who is thought to live in Russia, on the grounds that he is also a Russian citizen.

However, a spokesman for Armenian prosecutors denied the report, saying that they were unaware of Harutiunyan’s whereabouts.

Harutiunyan is wanted in Armenia on charges stemming from his alleged role in the 2008 postelection crackdown.

In a separate development, on September 3, parliament speaker Ara Babloyan, expressed hope that Armenia will receive contracts from the Syrian government for reconstruction projects. Babloyan made the remarks during a meeting with Syria’s ambassador to Armenia, Mohammed Haj Ibrahim.

Backed by Russia and Iran, forces loyal to the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad are preparing an offensive in Idlib Province, the last stronghold of rebels.

That has put Russia and Iranian firms in a position where they are expected to get contracts from the Syrian government for reconstruction projects in the war-torn country.

The United States and its allies say

reconstruction assistance should be tied to a process that includes UN-supervised elections and a political transition in Syria.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, addressing students and lecturers at Moscow State Institute of International Relations on Monday, also expressed his worries. “We are concerned that the situation in Armenia is still boiling, in particular, events that took place ten years ago are being investigated and arrests are taking place,” Lavrov said. “We believe that it is Armenia’s domestic affair and would like these domestic affairs to remain based on the country’s laws and constitution so that they can be resolved as soon as possible and Armenia can focus on creative tasks,” the Russian top diplomat added.

According to Lavrov, it is in Russia’s interest that the situation in countries with which it has allied relations and those of strategic partnership remains stable “and domestic processes remain based on the constitution so that there are conditions for economic development and social welfare improvements.” “This is what we have been trying to ensure, particularly through our integration association – the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) – and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO),” he said.

“We have been keeping an eye on the events that took place after the constitutional provision, which transferred all major powers from the president to the prime minister elected by the country’s parliament, had come into effect,” Lavrov went on to say. “We took no actions and made no statements that by any stretch of the imagination could be taken as interference in domestic affairs... I cannot say that other players acted in the same way,” Lavrov noted.

Government Criticized for Seeking Extra Water from Vital Lake

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Environment protection groups on Friday, August 24, denounced the Armenian government for moving to increase the amount of water from Lake Sevan that can be used for irrigation this year.

The vast mountainous lake, which is vital for Armenia’s entire ecosystem, is a key source of irrigation water supplied to the fruit-growing Ararat Valley west and south of Yerevan through the Hrazdan river flowing out of it.

An Armenian law allows the government to use no more than 170 million cubic meters of Sevan’s water annually for irrigation and power generation purposes. A bill approved by the government on August 23 would raise that cap by 40 million cubic meters for the current irrigation season.

The measure was proposed by the Ministry of Agriculture. Agriculture Minister Artur Khachatryan warned of water shortages that could have “devastating” consequences for tens of thousands of farmers.

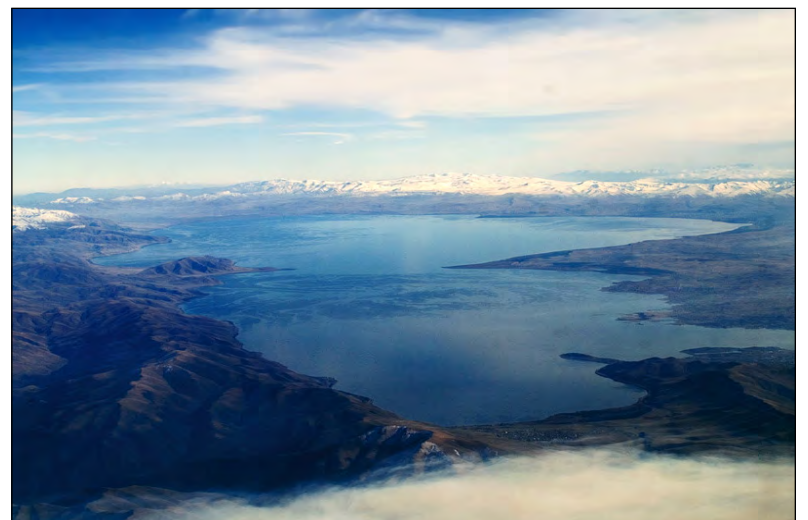
“This solution may not be desirable but it has no alternative,” Khachatryan said at a cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. “We arrived at it as a result of lengthy joint discussions.”

Pashinyan said that the government is agreeing to the proposal “with a heavy heart.” It has no choice but to address farmers’ urgent needs, he said.

The bill, which the Armenian parliament will debate next week, was

approved just a few weeks after a coalition of environment protection groups called SOS Sevan urged Pashinyan to block any extra use of Sevan’s water. It claimed that the bulk of that water would only benefit hydroelectric stations and fish farms operating in the

Zarafian complained that unlike former authorities in Yerevan Pashinyan’s cabinet did not consult with environmentalists before making the controversial decision. She also pointed out that as recently as one year ago Pashinyan and his political allies



Lake Sevan

Ararat Valley. Accordingly, SOS Armenia urged the parliament to block measure.

Inga Zarafian, a representative of the grouping, said that the level of Sevan has dropped in the past year and this process will continue if the bill is passed by the National Assembly. That would only worsen the quality of the lake’s water, she said.

opposed a similar measure taken by Armenia’s previous government.

Evelina Ghukasian, the director of the state-funded Institute of Hydroecology and Fish Breeding, echoed the environmentalists’ concerns. “Water resources are badly mismanaged,” she said. “We oppose the constant use of Lake Sevan as a water reservoir.”



ARMENIA

Pashinyan Ally In Hot Water Over Controversial Remarks

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A top candidate for Yerevan mayor running in this month's municipal elections in an alliance loyal to Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has expressed his regret over some controversial statements he made during a weekend campaign fundraising event.

Hayk Marutyan, a popular comedian, actor and producer who heads the My Step alliance, spoke about the division into "whites and blacks" as he addressed his team members and contributors on Sunday.

"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," said Marutyan.

In his speech at the event the mayoral candidate also praised the professionalism of his team, using the expression "there is no game against us", which was used by some Armenian leaders in the past and has acquired a negative connotation in Armenian society.

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."

Former Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan, in particular, published an angry post on his Facebook account, describing Marutyan as a "provincial clown."

Gayane Abrahamyan, who is a candidate for

the Council of Elders with My Step, said that Marutyan's remarks were not directed against the society and that he did not mean to put himself and his team above the society with his

And it was this system of values that was stressed," Abrahamian said.

Reacting to the criticism from ex-defense minister Sargsyan, Abrahamyan reminded that



Hayk Marutyan, an actor and producer, candidate for Yerevan mayor from the My Step alliance

statements.

"First of all, he stressed that we have a strong team, as in our election slate there are not only representatives of the [Pashinyan-led] Civil Contract party, but also people who took part in civil initiatives in different years.

Serzh Sargsyan also made some controversial statements while being incumbent president and they never elicited any reactions from his ally. Besides, she said, unlike Sargsyan, Marutyan is not in power yet.

In admitting his mistake Marutyan said that

the only entity in Armenia against which "there is no game" is the people of the country.

Representatives of the parties and groups running in the September 23 elections commented on the situation in different ways.

Top candidates from the Prosperous Armenia and Dashnaktsutyun parties chose not to comment on Marutyan's statements, while Anahit Tarkhanian, a mayoral candidate from the Yerevan Public group, said that My Step's candidate's statement "is the tactics of his whole team."

"We all should understand that there are no 'blacks and whites' in society. There is a community where different opinions exist," Tarkhanian said.

Hovsep Khurshudian, of Heritage, meanwhile, said that if Marutyan meant forces that are going to thwart the elections, then they also consider such forces to be "black". Yet, according to Khurshudian, what Marutyan said was different. "Let's accept his regretting his words and move on... He has ambitions to govern the capital of the new Armenia, and in this sense he should try as far as possible not to cause aversion among friendly forces," the Heritage candidate said.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Pashinyan on Tuesday weighed in on the issue, acknowledging that Marutyan's remarks were "not quite correct." "I think that any statements, any political statement made by us should fit the [logic] of the revolution of love and solidarity. So, I think we should talk about more vivid colors than black," he commented.

2008 Post-Election Events Need Thorough Investigation, Says US Envoy

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Washington's view remains that "there has been a need for a thorough and fair investigation into the events of March 2008," United States Ambassador to Armenia Richard Mills said on Wednesday, September 5, commenting on recent developments in the probe concerning deadly post-election violence that took place in Armenia a decade ago.

In late July Armenia's former president Robert Kocharyan was charged with breaching the country's constitutional order by illegally using the armed forces against opposition supporters who protested against alleged fraud in a disputed presidential election. Eight protesters and two police personnel were killed when security forces broke



US to Armenia Richard Mills

up those demonstrations on March 1-2, 2008.

Kocharyan spent more than two weeks in custody before being released by the Court of Appeals that cited a constitutional provision giving the ex-president immunity from prosecution.

Several other former senior officials, including Colonel-General Yuri Khachaturov, the current

head of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization, have also been charged in connection with the 2008 events.

These developments appeared to have particularly irked Russia whose foreign minister Sergei Lavrov within a space of just one month

twice commented on Armenian internal affairs.

On July 31, Lavrov denounced the prosecutions, arguing that they run counter to the new Armenian leadership's earlier pledges not to "persecute its predecessors for political motives." And earlier this week Lavrov repeated his concerns. "Of course, we are worried by the circumstance that the situation in Armenia remains heated, events that happened 10 years ago are being investigated... No doubt, we consider those to be an internal affair of Armenia and wish that internal affairs remain within the framework of law and on the firm basis of the Constitution and be overcome quickly," the top Russian diplomat said.

In response to a question about whether he considered such comments to be interference in Armenia's internal affairs, Mills said: "I have seen those comments. It's for the Armenian government to respond to comments from the Russian government. Our view remains that there has been a need for a thorough and fair investigation into the events of March 2008. And it is important that that investigation be carried out in accordance with the rule of law and Armenian due process."

Mills talked to media today on the sidelines of a US-Armenian business conference on franchise opportunities.

"We are here today for a very important development in the US-Armenian trade relationship, that is a one-day conference that the embassy is sponsoring to bring together Armenians interested in franchise opportunities with US corporations and businesses. And I think it shows that we believe that there are real opportunities here for US business and for Armenian business to prosper together in the new Armenia," the US ambassador said.

"This conference today brings together over 50 Armenian government and business people as well as representatives from several major US companies to talk about franchise and business opportunities here. So, as I said, we believe that there are real opportunities for business and trade that will benefit both sides. And we are encouraging the government to continue to work to help improve and develop Armenia's business climate. The business climate, the investment climate can be fragile. And all it takes is one government mistake, or a bad law, or a bad decision and investors can be scared away. That's why I hope the government will continue to pay attention to the environment it is creating for business and investment here."

Armenian PM, Parliament Speaker Meet

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Speaker of the National Assembly Ara Babloyan held a meeting on Monday, August 27, to discuss the country's domestic political situation.

The meeting was initiated by Speaker Babloyan, the parliament's press service told Panorama.am.

As a result of discussions over a number of issues the heads of legislative and executive powers registered in particular that irrespective of political views everyone in Armenia has a right to freedom of speech and opinion.

The officials also recorded that the independence of courts is the key guarantee for ensuring justice in the country, therefore the mechanism of checks and balances between the executive, legislative and judicial powers must not be distorted in any case.

They agreed that Armenia's judiciary has not yet exhausted its potential, however if the parties come to a conclusion that there is a need to introduce the institute of "transitional justice", it should be done through amendments to the Constitution and the relevant legislation and should no way affect the justice.

The PM and parliament speaker stressed the need to hold snap parliamentary elections within one year.

Meantime, they named referendum as the most democratic mechanism to conduct snap elections through constitutional amendments, since the Constitution, subject to amendments, has been adopted by a referendum. They agreed that the pick of these options should be based on broad public and political discussions.

President Armen Sarkissian has welcomed the meeting and hailed the agreements reached at therein. He said he hopes positive results will be tangible in the near future.

"President Armen Sarkissian is closely following the processes taking place in the country. The President expects all political forces to be guided by the primary interests of the country's security, stable and peaceful development, reads a statement released by the President's Press Office.

According to President Sarkissian, the state's interest, the security of the country and respect for the rights of the individual and the citizen are a priority.

Major Armenian Copper Mine Still in Limbo

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Armenia's second largest copper and molybdenum mine is facing an uncertain future eight months after being shut down because of environmental risks.

Vallex Group, a private mining company, sent 1,200 or so employees working at the Teghut deposit on indefinite leave in early January, citing the need for "planned prophylactic repairs." Vallex claimed that it needs time to commission feasibility studies on its plans to significantly boost production there.

Environment protection activists said, however, that the shutdown is the result of growing toxic leaks from the mine contaminating a nearby river. For their part, government officials said that the company's waste disposal facilities need major upgrades.

In April, Vallex rehired around 300 of the laid-off employees to work at other metal mines belonging to it. The remaining 800 workers, most of them residents of nearby villages, are still jobless.

One of them, Hayk Marutyan, said on August 22 that the Vallex management has failed to make good on its promises. "We were told that the company is going to resume work, and so people took loans [from banks] to improve their living conditions," he told RFE/RL's Armenian service. "They now have trouble repaying those loans."

According to Armenia's Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinian, in order to restart mining operations at Teghut Vallex needs substantial investments to refurbish its tailings dump which poses a threat to the environment. The Liechtenstein-registered company is now trying to secure a fresh loan from the Russian bank VTB for that purpose, he said.

"We [the government] will do everything so that those negotiations are completed and a solution is found very soon," Avinian told reporters during a visit to the northern Lori province encompassing Teghut.

"We have no solution at the moment," he said. "Either Vallex will again exploit the Teghut mine or a new company will take over."

VTB had already provided the bulk of \$380 million which Vallex claims to have spent on building mining and ore-processing facilities at Teghut.

Environmentalists opposed open-pit mining there even before it began in 2014. They argued, among other things, that the multimillion-dollar project will lead to the destruction of hundreds of hectares of rich forest.

Vallex pledged to plant a new and bigger forest in adjacent areas. It also promised to create 1,300 jobs, build new schools and upgrade other infrastructure in local communities.



INTERNATIONAL

International News

Eastern Partnership School Opens in Tbilisi

TBILISI, Georgia (Public Radio of Armenia) – The first Eastern Partnership European School opened on September 4 here. As one of the Eastern Partnership's 20 deliverables for 2020, it will provide students from the EU's six Eastern partner countries with an innovative academic program while fostering multicultural exchanges and cooperation.

The school will have 30 students from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The start of the academic year was marked with the official inauguration of the European School by EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn and Mamuka Bakhtadze, prime minister of Georgia.

Judo Team Will Not Participate in Baku World Championship

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – Armenia's national team will not participate in the 2018 Judo World Championships in Baku due to lack of proper security guarantees.

"The host country has refused to provide proper security guarantees to the Armenian delegation," the Armenian Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs said.

The World Championships Seniors and Teams Baku 2018 will be held from September 20 to 27.

Mkhitaryan Wins Goal of The Month

LONDON (Public Radio of Armenia) – Henrikh Mkhitaryan's strike against Chelsea has been voted as Arsenal's August Goal of the Month, according to Arsenal's official website.

The Armenia international rifled a low, first-time effort past Kepa Arrizabalaga to score Arsenal's first Premier League goal under Unai Emery.

Mkhitaryan's strike was the overwhelming winner with 61 percent of the votes cast.

Siblings to Be Deported From Holland

AMSTERDAM (Public Radio of Armenia) – Two Armenian children who have spent a decade in the Netherlands, are to be deported to Armenia after they came out of their hiding, Aljazeera reported.

Dutch officials on Tuesday, September 4, said Howick, 13, and his sister Lili, 12, who had been hiding for the previous three days to avoid imminent deportation, will be sent to their mother in Armenia's capital, Yerevan, before September 8.

They had arrived in the Netherlands in 2008.

Last year, the mother, Armina Hambartsumyan, lost a decade-long legal battle for asylum and was sent to Armenia without her children.

Before she was deported, the 37-year-old sent the two children into hiding but they were found by Dutch officials and sent to a foster family.

Last week, the Council of State, the Netherlands' highest court, decided that the children should be deported to Armenia to live with their mother.

Before they went into hiding, the children wrote letters to Dutch King Willem-Alexander, begging them to be allowed to stay.

"All our friends live here. We have moved 17 times already, but now we finally live in a nice place," they wrote, adding that they missed their mother, but she was unable to take care of them. The only option for us is her coming to the Netherlands, because here, we can live as a normal family."

Meanwhile, their supporters – including Princess Laurentien, the king's sister-in-law – had been campaigning to keep them in the Netherlands.

Howick and Lili also appeared in a TV show with Princess Laurentien, who said it is important to remember that these were "young children who needed stability."

Defence for Children, a Dutch non-governmental organization, also warned that the children could suffer if they are deported.

Turkey's Last Armenian Village Honors Long-Ago Stand

By Ayla Jean Yackley

VAKIFLI, Turkey – Turkey's sole remaining Armenian village endured an onslaught by the Ottoman army a century ago and a rebirth in a staunchly nationalist republic. Today, the inhabitants of Vakifli battle far different pressures that threaten the community's survival.

Set atop a remote hill in Turkey's Hatay province, Vakifli has seen its population dwindle in recent decades as younger generations depart to pursue employment, education or marriage elsewhere. The village, about 13 miles from the Syrian border, also has weathered the fallout from the seven-year conflict there.

These earthly concerns are put aside for three days each August when more than 1,000 pilgrims and tourists descend on Vakifli to mark the Christian holiday of Asdvadzadzin, or the Assumption of Mary, and the blessing of the grapes, an ancient rite that celebrates the first fruit of the harvest. This year, Archbishop Aram Atesyan of Istanbul presided over the mass and sanctified the feast on August 12.

The event also pays homage to the six other Armenian villages that once occupied the slopes of Mount Moses, or Musa Dagh in Turkish, which stands north of Vakifli. The night before the mass, villagers light fires beneath seven cauldrons to prepare harissa, a stew of beef, wheat and salt that evokes the provisions their forebears survived on during exile to the mountaintop to escape the Armenian genocide in 1915.

The extraordinary story of the Musa Dagh resistance, and Vakifli's perseverance a century later, are rare examples of survival among Turkey's Armenians. Subject to massacres during World War I in which up to 1.5 million Armenians were killed, Armenians have mostly disappeared from the lands in Turkey they occupied for millennia. Scholarly consensus holds that the killings amounted to a genocide, a judgment the Turkish government continues to reject.

For the descendants of the Musa Dagh rebels, honoring their memory each year represents their own form of resistance against the inexorable forces of demographic change.

"We grew up with these stories," said Garo Bebek, 22, who spent the night during this year's Asdvadzadzin festival stirring the cauldrons with a group of friends and relatives. "We are the last of the youth here, and if we go, we know that soon there may

be nothing left."

Bebek's great-grandfather was a small child when his family and 5,000 others scaled Mount Moses in the summer of 1915. News of attacks on Armenians elsewhere in Turkey had already reached the villages when they received the government's deportation order. Rather than submit to the long march to the Syrian desert and near-certain death, about 150 armed men fended off 4,000 or more Turkish troops for 53 days until their evacuation to Egypt on Allied battleships.

Their saga was memorialized in Austrian novelist Franz Werfel's 1933 *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. The book also served as a forewarning of the menace that would soon befall European Jews, who passed around copies of the novel in the ghettos of Poland and Lithuania during the Holocaust.

Over the decades, Turkish officials have "argued that [Armenians] rebelled and they did what was necessary," said Yektan Turkyilmaz, a visiting fellow at the Friedrich Meinecke Institut at Freie Universitat in Berlin, who studies the period leading up to the genocide. "What Musa Dagh shows us [...] is Armenians were killed not because they resisted, but because they succumbed. In most areas, there was no resistance, and that's where we have catastrophe."

These days, there are few hints of those past horrors in idyllic Vakifli, a collection of stone houses nestled among poplars, Judas trees and olive groves, the scent of laurel infusing the air. A converted silk factory houses the town's only church. Turkish authorities shut the Armenian school, where children once learned their endangered local dialect, eight decades ago.

Elderly denizens gather at the former school's courtyard or a cafe down the road for a chat or game of backgammon. Below the town is a hilly blanket of green that gradually gives way to the Mediterranean Sea.

Vakifli's 130 residents farm 50 acres of land, raising citrus fruits, walnuts, and honey. Women jar fruit and sell homemade jams and pomegranate syrup to tourists who flock here for the cool breeze in summer – and a window into Turkey's multicultural past.

Hatay, which sticks out like a thumb along Turkey's eastern Mediterranean coast, escaped much of the forced assimilation during the early years of Turkey's republic and remains unusually diverse, home to various denominations of

Christians, a small Jewish community and Alawites, Alevites and Sunni Muslims.

After the war, Armenians returned to the province, which was then part of the French Mandate for Syria. A controversial 1939 referendum ceded the land to Turkish control, prompting most of the area's 10,000 Armenians to leave for Lebanon and Cyprus, Turkyilmaz said. "All that is left that has remained wholly Armenian is Vakifli," he said.

Only 20 or so of the villagers are under the age of 25, and whether they will make their lives here "is the question on everyone's mind. Our elders implore us to stay," said Levon Capar, 20, who studies computer science at a university an hour's drive away. "If I stay, the most I can do is tend to my father's gardens, and it's impossible to survive on that. After I finish school, I will go wherever I find work."

Vakifli celebrated just one wedding this year, and the bride moved to her husband's home in the nearby city of Mersin, said Berc Kartun, 55, the village's mukhtar, or leader. "It is hard to get married and start a family here. Most everyone is related."

Istanbul, Turkey's largest city with an estimated 15 million people, is home to about 1,000 Vakifli natives, among a total population of 60,000 Armenians. Others have moved to Europe, Canada and the United States.

"In Istanbul, people from our village take a second, Turkish name to do business. Here we have one name. We don't hide. Different cultures live side by side here," Kartun said.

That coexistence is now endangered by a new threat: Syria's sectarian war. Hatay has sheltered hundreds of thousands of refugees and was forced to close its border to trade with Syria. Earlier in the conflict, borderlands were reportedly used as a staging ground for Salafist fighters.

In years past, Armenians from Syria and Lebanon with roots in Hatay took buses back every year to celebrate the Asdvadzadzin feast, but the trip is no longer possible. Kartun said the conflict had set back his region's economy "by a decade," as other tourists feared traveling to Vakifli and nearby historic sites. The village's farming cooperative struggles under debt and cannot turn a profit, he said.

"Earlier in the war, we would listen to the sounds of Russian artillery fired from the sea, and sometimes the walls of our houses would shake," he said. "For two or three years, no one came to the festival, afraid fighting would spread here."

The war hit even closer to home in the spring of 2014, when a few dozen elderly Armenians from the Syrian town of Kessab, 13 miles to the south, fled opposition fighters who had captured their town from government forces. Most were eventually evacuated to Lebanon, though one man died 20 days after reaching Vakifli, Kartun said. He is buried in the town cemetery.

In recent years, Turkish soldiers patrol roads to the village to prevent any violence during the festival. "They want to ensure that not even the smallest incident happens in a village like this again," Kartun said.

Behind the soldiers looms Mount Moses, where a monument, in the shape of the ship that rescued the Armenians, stood before soldiers dynamited it in the 1980s following a military coup. The graves of 18 fighters who perished defending Musa Dagh were also destroyed.

Now the village plans to open a museum with artifacts the villagers have kept from the century-old battle.

After the 1980 coup, Kartun's family burned the only photograph of his grandfather on the mountain, fearful its discovery by the authorities would incur retribution. "He was just 18 or 19 years old, a soldier with his first whiskers," he said. "If I still had it, it would have gone in the museum. There's nothing to be done, it's lost. That's kismet."

(Ayla Jean Yackley is a journalist based in Istanbul. This article originally appeared in Eurasia.net.)



The Israeli delegation at Yerevan's Tsitsernakaberd memorial

Israel's Foreign Ministry Official Pays Tribute to Memory of Armenian Genocide Victims

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Alexander Ben-Zvi, deputy director general of the foreign ministry of Israel, visited the Tsitsernakaberd memorial in Yerevan to pay tribute to the memory of the Armenian Genocide victims in late August. The Israeli official laid flowers at the Eternal Flame.

"The tragedy of the Armenian people has never been questioned. There is a historical question how to call it, but what had happened is a fact that is accepted by all. This is not a matter of making it a topic for political discussions, let the historians decide what name to give to this tragedy," he said.

He also toured the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute.



INTERNATIONAL

Top Anti-Armenian Gulenist Lobbyist Tied to Azerbaijani Laundromat Case

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The curious story behind the arrest of a pro-Azerbaijani and pro-Turkish lobbyist who was detained in Yerevan by law enforcement agencies at the end of August gets more and more bizarre.

Kevin (Kemal) Oksuz, the Turkish-born American citizen wanted by the United States who was arrested in Yerevan on August 29, is nowhere near to be considered a minor lobbyist.

It appears the man has, or at least at some point had, close ties with the government of Azerbaijan.

Moreover, Oksuz's name is tied to the notorious Azerbaijani state-sanctioned bribery scheme known as the Azerbaijani Laundromat.

Oksuz is also a part of the Gulen movement in North America, being heavily involved in its operations. Currently Azerbaijan has the same position on the Gulen movement as Turkey – the Gulen movement is outlawed.

Oksuz was the center of a US Congressional inquiry into a controversial trip organized by his US-based nonprofit for American lawmakers to Azerbaijan. The Congressional inquiry revealed that Azerbaijan's state-owned SOCAR oil company secretly funded the trip and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars, including on lavish gifts for the American politicians.

Oksuz chaired the Assembly of Friends of Azerbaijan (AFAZ), a Houston-based tax-exempt nonprofit, an influential organization closely tied with Azerbaijani authorities. He later moved the nonprofit to Washington, according to reports.

"AFAZ may have been established in 2012 but took its first official actions in April 2013, approximately one month prior to the Convention. The organization was created in Houston, Texas by the leadership of SOCAR and has since moved to Washington, DC. Its CEO and president was Kemal Oksuz. At the time, Kemal Oksuz was also the President of TCAE," the Office of Congressional Ethics of the US House of Representatives Report Review No. 15-9180 reads. TCAE is the Turquoise Council of Americans and Eurasians.

The most interesting part of the report is about Kemal Oksuz's relationship with SOCAR,



Kevin (Kemal) Oksuz

It was Oksuz who introduced the other Turkic nonprofit organizations to Azerbaijani officials, and coordinated Turkic efforts related to Azerbaijan, the report said.

For example, it appears that following the Convention in September 2013, Oksuz worked with several Turkic nonprofits to send letters and video messages from Members of Congress to the President of Azerbaijan. A consultant for SOCAR noted that the "SOCAR chair, parliament speaker, and Ambassador value Kemal's opinion," the report said. The report also notes that it is SOCAR that selected Oksuz to be president of AFAZ.

According to a 2014 article of the Houston Chronicle, AFAZ "operates as a U.S.-based public relations arm of SOCAR," which is in turn wholly controlled by the Azerbaijani government. The nonprofit lists Rauf Mammadov, director of SOCAR America, as its treasurer.

Oksuz denied that AFAZ is tied to SOCAR, but the Congressional report clearly leaves no doubt that it operated through Azerbaijani oil dollars and that Oksuz is a personal acquaintance of many top level Azerbaijani government officials, perhaps even President Ilham Aliyev himself.

But on top of all this, it appears that Oksuz is also involved in the Azerbaijani Laundromat case – the highly publicized corruption scandal

which was uncovered by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. The Azerbaijani Laundromat is a complex money-laundering operation and slush fund that handled \$2.9 billion over a two-year period through four shell companies registered in the UK. The Azeri state-sanctioned bribery scheme was used to pay off European lawmakers. But in a follow-up report about the Azerbaijani Laundromat case, the OCCRP reported in a May, 2018 article titled "Baku's Man in America" that another recipient of the Laundromat money "was an influential American oil and gas consultant of Azerbaijani origin who worked to influence US policy in his native country's favor."

"Adil Baguirov, a business owner based in Dayton, Ohio and a vocal member of the Azerbaijani Diaspora, received the \$253,150 transfer just months after a non-profit organization he runs, the Houston-based US Azeris Network, helped host a conference in Baku, Azerbaijan's capital, that was attended by 10 members of Congress. The junket was widely criticized, and investigated by the House Ethics Committee, for being secretly funded by Azerbaijan's state oil company," the OCCRP said.

"Baguirov's Washington lobbying in the interests of Azerbaijan goes far beyond the 2013 conference. He has also helped organize other US-Azeri conferences in Washington, repeatedly testified before the House in favor of US military aid to Azerbaijan, served as the coordinator of the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus, and worked prominently in a Houston-based company that claims to have organized a trip by the country's president, Ilham Aliyev, to the White House.

Baguirov and his family run in elite circles back home. They are known to have close ties to President Aliyev – who awarded Baguirov a medal for his efforts in the US – and he and his father serve in numerous advisory roles to the Azerbaijani and Russian governments respectively," the report stated.

"Oksuz has been active for years in several nonprofits that are part of the so-called Gulen movement," the *Houston Chronicle* reported earlier in 2015.

Media reports show that Oksuz was engaged in similar activities at least as far back as 2003, when the *Chicago Tribune* reported that the Turkish-American is planning to open a new cultural center in Mount Prospect, Illinois.

"Niagara Educational Services, founded by Turkish-Americans in 1997 as a tutoring center, operates a kindergarten to 8th-grade Science Academy of Chicago, said Kevin Oksuz, who would serve as director of the new cultural center.

The organization's programs and outreach are cross-cultural, which would be reflected at the Mt. Prospect center. Programs would be developed based on "the needs, expectations and demands" of its members, and membership would be open to people of all religious and ethnic backgrounds," Oksuz said, according to *Chicago Tribune*.

As intriguing and controversial as Oksuz's past may seem, the fact that he ended up being arrested in Yerevan is more bizarre, not to mention that he was operating a business here since 2017. Moreover, his office was located in downtown Yerevan. Although the phone number listed in his company was unavailable, the business center, Elite Plaza, confirmed that Kemal Oksuz's Sena Group, an event management and travel company, is registered in their premises.

Security services are yet to release a follow-up statement over the issue following the initial press release about the arrest.

Oksuz is currently under arrest pending further proceedings over the extradition to the United States.

On September 3, the Prosecutor General's office told Armenpress that Kevin (Kemal) Oksuz has been remanded into custody as requested by the prosecution.

In addition, Turkey's minister of justice Abdulhamit Gül, Speaking to TRT, said that a Turkish court has also issued an arrest warrant for Oksuz.

"We continue following this case. However, Interpol isn't treating our requests positively. Nevertheless, we will continue submitting requests over this person and other members of the terror group [Gulenists], he said.

The Bigger They Are, the Harder They Fall

STATUE, from page 1

But no. When the wrapping was ceremoniously peeled off, there appeared a manlike creature, in a business suit, with his right hand extended and his index finger pointing. (At first glance one might have thought, aha, a Hitler salute! But that is banned.) It appeared to be gold-plated but, given the market price of precious metals these days, that assumption might be swiftly questioned. From the look on its face you could immediately tell, it was none other than Erdogan, Recep Tayyip himself, president of Turkey and would-be Sultan of a resurrected Ottoman Empire.

Nationalist supporters rushed to immortalize themselves by posing for selfies before the statue. Others were not amused. Passers-by who sympathized with the Turkish opposition, including ethnic Kurds, expressed their opinion that such an individual had no right to be there, perched on a little pedestal in a public plaza commemorating the unity of Germany. Verbal clashes soon broke out, someone armed with a can of spray paint wrote "F - - - Y O U" (minus the dashes) across the belly, and soon the demand was raised to have the thing removed. Rumors began to circulate that an organization of Kurds was planning a demonstration, with protesters streaming in from all over the country. Calls and emails besieged the city authorities.

In his defense, the Wiesbaden State Theater Artistic Director Uwe Eric Laufenberg explained that the aim of the statue was to provoke discussion. "We set up the statue in order to discuss Erdogan," he said. "Art is there to show what is," he added. This might be provocative and difficult to understand, he

acknowledged, "But in a democracy one has to tolerate all opinions." The aim was to test the limits of artistic freedom, apparently.

The city authorities, it turned out, had not been informed beforehand of the identity of the man that the manlike statue was to depict. They allowed it to stand after unveiling during the first morning but that same evening announced it would take action against the thing. Lord Mayor Sven Gerich told reporters that if the aim had been to stage a deliberate provocation, that aim had been reached. The city had provided the space for that, but now it was becoming an issue of public order. Given the heated arguments and near physical clashes erupting on the square, against a backdrop of massive pro and con arguments flashing across social media, the city decided that this was disturbing the peace, and that public order must not be endangered. Besides, to guarantee public order would have required deployment of extraordinary security forces, and that can be costly.

That night, a huge crane appeared on the site and brought Erdogan down from his platform, loading him onto a truck, which the fire brigade drove away. At the end of the week after the festival had closed, organizers were allowed to pick up Erdogan from the fire station. Its imminent fate is not clear.

The Way of Dictators

If you are old enough to remember seeing Superman in a comic book, or on TV in black and white, you probably can remember scenes of crowds craning their necks to see their favorite dictator, say Josef Stalin, for example. And you will have witnessed not only the end of

the reign of such strongmen but also the inglorious fate of the monumental statues erected to project their fearsome images in public squares. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, many effigies of would-be immortals also came thudding down, toppled by political pressures of the democratic opposition.

The event in Wiesbaden triggered memories of other statues pulled down in recent years, not only Stalin and Lenin, but also Saddam Hussein, deposed by US Marines in 2003, and even a Confederate soldier in Durham, NC in 2017.

There was another such event, strikingly similar, a few years ago in Israel. On December 6, 2016, a gilded statue of Benjamin Netanyahu appeared in a Tel Aviv plaza, – not just any plaza, but Rabin Square, dedicated to the memory of the Labour Party leader who sought a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and paid for it with his life. The artist who created that statue (about the same size as Erdogan's), one Itay Zalait, defended his controversial art work by saying he wanted to "test the boundaries of free speech." He had announced he would "undertake a subversive artistic political act which would garner much media attention." He chose the location apparently because it was formerly called Kings of Israel Square, and the name of his statue was "King Bibi." Authorities slapped an official warning sticker on his monument, giving him four hours to remove it. The word went out over social media, "topple Netanyahu," and throngs of Israelis heeded the battle cry, rushing to the square to pull it down.

Whether or not there is any conceptual, ideal – or perhaps actual – connection between on-

again, off-again allies and enemies Bibi and Erdogan in this particular case is pure speculation. Or perhaps, pure provocation. It's art, after all. One thing is certain: the festival certainly lived up to the motto it had chosen for this year:

Aurora Prize Laureate to Donate \$1 Million Award to Help Rohingya Refugees

AURORA, from page 1

MERCY Malaysia will use its share of the funds to provide primary and maternal health care, and operational support to Rohingyas by collaborating with the Rakhine State Health Department in the Sittwe IDP camps and Kyauktan village.

MERCY Malaysia estimates that over 1,00,000 Rohingya people will benefit from this initiative.

Vartan Gregorian, Co-Founder of the Aurora Prize and Member of the Selection Committee said: "We remember the horrors and violence experienced by Armenians – especially women and children – during the Genocide, and we strongly believe that these humanitarian projects recommended by our latest laureate, Kyaw Hla Aung, will have a long-lasting and positive impact for the Rohingya people in Myanmar and beyond. These organizations have made and will continue to make significant contributions in advancing humanitarian causes. We are pleased to see the Aurora Prize aiding these outstanding organizations."

Community News

Panel on Christians in Middle East to Convene At Armenian Assembly Advocacy Conference

WASHINGTON – Given the ongoing developments in the Middle East, the Armenian Assembly of America announced a special panel on Christians persecuted in the region as one of the briefings at the National Advocacy Conference in Washington, DC on September 24.

Speakers on this panel, titled “Christians At-Risk in the Middle East” are National Council of Churches (NCC) President and General Secretary Jim Winkler, General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church Director Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, The Religious Freedom Institute (RFI) Executive Director Kent Hill, and Georgetown University Professor and Berkley Center Director Shaun Casey. The panel will be moderated by Armenian Church of America (Eastern Diocese) Diocesan Legate Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, former NCC President and member of President Barack Obama’s Advisory Committee on Faith Based Initiatives.



Archbishop Vicken Aykazian

“This timely panel on the realities of Christians and religious minorities in the Middle East is more important today than ever before. I have witnessed the conditions of the Christian communities in the region, and in the past year I have traveled many times to the region and heard directly from the people who are victimized on a daily basis,” stated Aykazian, the panel moderator. “Having worked with panelists on earlier occasions, I know that their firsthand knowledge will be beneficial for the National Advocacy Conference attendees to hear, especially members of the Armenian Diaspora. I encourage everyone to attend this briefing during the Advocacy Conference,” he added.

President and General Secretary Winkler has been a lifelong social justice advocate and held a deep passion for ecumenical and interreligious work. In 2013, he was elected as president and general secretary of the NCC, an ecumenical partnership of 38 Christian faith groups in the United States. Its member denominations, churches, conventions, and archdioceses include Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox, Evangelical, historic African-American, and Living Peace traditions. Together, they encompass more than 100,000 local congregations and 40 million Christians. Winkler is the public voice of the NCC and represents the Council as it addresses two major priorities: mass incarceration and interreligious relationships with a focus on peace.

Rev. Dr. Henry-Crowe has led the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church since the spring of 2014. The General Board of Church and Society is dedicated to the work of living faith, seeking justice, and pursuing peace. Through its advocacy, members communicate with policymakers and leaders around the world addressing social issues. Henry-Crowe has been repeatedly recognized for her work and commitment to social justice, and in 2000 was named Chaplain of the Year by the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry. She has focused on fostering interreligious dialogue and advocating inclusiveness of all beliefs.

Kent Hill joined the RFI after six years as Senior Vice President at World Vision, one of the largest faith-based relief and development organizations in the world. He also served for eight years as Assistant Administrator for the US Agency for International Development see PANEL, page 8



Der Dajad blessing Khangeldyan family home in 2017.

Knights of Vartan Donate Two Fuller Homes to Armenia in Name of Late Fr. Dajad Davidian

YEREVAN – The Knights of Vartan’s 100th Grand Convocation appropriated \$21,000 for two homes to be built by Fuller Center for Housing in Armenia for low income families in the name of the late Past Commander, Rev. Dajad Davidian.

The Knights and Daughters of Vartan have been partnering with the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia since 2008 by donating homes and encouraging the organization’s members to lead or join volunteer teams; since 2015 more than 12 homes were renovated or built.

Davidian was active in the Knights of Vartan, providing his leadership as commander and advising members for many years. After his move to Armenia, he was actively volunteering with different organizations, spreading love and teaching the Gospel. From the very beginning, Davidian served on the Advisory Committee of the Fuller Center Armenia. He blessed well over a dozen homes with Fuller Center, inspired local and international volunteers and stood side by side with them building homes. In addition he became a religious advisor to the staff and volunteers; most of all he was a true family member of the organization.

It is appropriate that in his name, he will continue to provide a better future for two more families in Armenia by having a good home in which to live. His spirit will be present with these people forever. Two families from the Aragatsotn rural communities have been selected to receive the homes. Both are young couples with two children each and they are living with their parents and extended families. There are nine and seven people in each family living under one roof. Needless to say these young families need a home of their own where the children can have a bedroom instead of sharing one with their parents.

This fall the families will continue building their homes which should be completed by early next year. They are hard-working people and they have support from their extended families and the local community. Fuller Center Armenia will continue to provide all of the construction materials and supervision of the projects.

The Fuller Center for Housing Armenia is working to eliminate poverty housing by providing long term, interest free loans and by assisting with volunteers helping low-income families to build and renovate simple, decent, affordable homes. For more information, visit www.fcharmenia.org.

For more information about the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, visit <http://kofv.org>.



Knights of Vartan with Khangeldyan family and Fuller Center President.

Bridge of Health Gala To Raise Funds to Help Children Battle Cancer

LOS ANGELES – Bridge of Health, a non-profit organization helping children conquer cancer in Armenia, will present its Guyn Gala on Sunday, September 23, at the Great Caesar Banquet Hall in Tujunga.

Guyn Gala marks their fourth annual charity gala hosted in honor of the children who defeated cancer, in remembrance of the children who lost their battle, and in recognition of the members and supporters of Bridge of Health. The fundraising event, hosted by Tatevik Ekejian, will highlight the children Bridge of Health has provided aid to thus far and announce the future projects yet to come.

The nonprofit organization’s goal is to bring color to the stories of children fighting every day for a healthy future. “Children are extremely resilient, but we must facilitate their resilience with hopefulness, brightness, and vibrance. They have colorful lives, stories, and futures. It’s time we embrace that and show the world that the battle with cancer isn’t always a story of dark tragedy, but a story of strength and bravery,” explained President of Bridge of Health and Director of Medical, Surgical and Telemetry Units at Pacifica Hospital, Robert Agavardian.

Guyn Gala will feature an art exhibition, dinner ceremony, live entertainment, silent auction, and dance. Talented guitarist, Vahagni, is donating his time to put on a live performance. Exciting silent auction items include a “Zvartnots” pendant, which was handmade in Armenia and donated by Hye Legacy, as well as three-day pass tickets to ARPA Film Festival, and a DVD copy of Bared Maronian’s “Orphans of the Genocide” and “Women of 1915.”

Bridge of Health kindly encourages all guests to embody the colorful spirit of the event by leaving the black attire at home and dressing in colored gowns and suits.

“Bridge of Health is grateful beyond words for our community members, local businesses, and friends and families for contributing so generously to the success of our mission in the last 6 years. With their help, we have funded over 150 pediatric cancer patients’ chemotherapy, radiological imaging, blood transfusions and rehabilitation treatments,” said Arsine Torosyan, Executive Director of Public Relations at Bridge of Health.

Current sponsors include: West Coast University, The Great Caesar Banquet Hall, Wells Fargo Bank, and Skyline Home Loans.

For sponsorship inquiries, more information, or to purchase tickets, visit bridgeofhealth.org.

Bridge of Health is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to raising funds for the life-saving treatments necessary to defeat pediatric cancer patients. Bridge of Health’s journey began after the inspiring story of a small group of college students banding together to host a blow-out fundraising event for a two-year-old boy who traveled from Armenia to the United States in seek of chemotherapy treatments. Staying true to their roots, the organization continues to work directly with doctors, patients, and their families. All members are volunteers donating their time and resources for one mission: give every pediatric cancer patient in Armenia the tools needed to win their battle for good.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Determination Born of Childhood Hardship Pushed a Temp Worker to Chief Operating Officer of Top Investment firm

By Ronald D. White

LOS ANGELES (*Los Angeles Times*) – Jeannine G. Vanian, 51, is chief operating officer of Kayne Anderson Rudnick, a boutique investment advisory firm in Los Angeles that manages nearly \$24 billion in assets for institutional, broker-dealer and high-net-worth clients. The 29-year-old company has 90 employees.

In 2017, Kayne Anderson Rudnick was ranked first on Barron's Top 100 Independent Advisors list. The annual ranking is based on a survey of more than 3,500 advisors. Virtus Investment Partners, based in Hartford, Conn., is the firm's parent company.

Vanian was born to an Armenian family living in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Her father, Ghazar, who was an accountant, died when Vanian was just 11. Watching her mother, Hasmig, struggle to support three children formed a lifelong determination.

"I decided I was going to be an independent woman that could take care of herself and whoever else I needed to take care of, including, obviously, my mother," Vanian said.

The kind of long hours that Vanian would later devote to her career began early as she held various jobs while earning a degree in business and executive management at the American University in Cairo.

"I was working in the university administration office," Vanian said, "typing notes for teachers, organizing, filing, whatever needed to be done. It was not full time, but I was there as much as I could," while still studying and attending classes.

By the time she earned her degree, some family members had moved to the U.S. Vanian decided to join them and wound up temping for Allan M. Rudnick while he was working as portfolio manager and chief investment officer for

the Pilgrim Group. When he left to help start Kayne Anderson Rudnick, in 1984, he brought Vanian with him.

"I was there whenever needed," Vanian said. "I remember long hours, weekends, trying to help build a business. I was lucky to have a mentor, like Allan Rudnick, and the other two founders. They gave me the opportunity to try things out, to learn, to fail. Their positive encouragement was really important for me."

Since coming on as an assistant, Vanian has been a portfolio administrator, director of portfolio administration and managing director. She has been chief operating officer since October 2005. When she took on more leadership responsibilities, her bosses were encouraging.

Vanian said her superiors always said, "You can do this, you've got this. We know you can. We're confident in your abilities."

Secret Sauce

Vanian said she has always shown that "I'm very passionate about the firm, and really believe in what we do here. Having the attitude of, we'll do whatever it takes as a team, and really look at new opportunities as a new challenge, something to really learn from."

As chief operating officer, Vanian is responsible for "the operations department, trading, marketing, accounting, client services, human resources." She's part of a three-person executive team that reports to the parent company's chief executive.

"I think it's really powerful to have two partners," she said. "We can bounce ideas off each other and collaborate. Because no matter what issue or decision we're faced with, it's nice to have two other opinions or points of view."

"The key is really hiring the right people that fit our culture and believe in what we're doing. And then, it's about keeping that talent" and not losing them to competitors. Vanian said she chooses people who are "team-oriented, believe

in the mission and want to make a difference."

Vanian said it's important to have "an open-minded attitude. Be willing to listen to other viewpoints before you jump to conclusions. Be willing to change in your ways and evolve. And

come through here than many other firms in our industry primarily because when they go to the website, they see that there is a strong presence here. They are attracted to that."

Vanian and her husband, Craig, have been



Jeannine G. Vanian is chief operating officer for Kayne Anderson Rudnick, one of the nation's top independent financial advisor firms. (Maria Alejandra Cardona / Los Angeles Times)

be open to feedback."

Vanian has helped assemble a team unlike many in her industry. There are 22 languages represented by the company's 92 employees. "We're in finance, which is generally a male-dominated industry," Vanian said, "and 41 percent of our employees are women, and 53 percent of our managers are women."

"My hunch is that we might see more women

married for about 20 years, she said. They have three children, a twin boy and girl who are nearly 16 and another daughter, 14. "And let's not forget the dog," she quipped. Traveling is a favored family activity. "We have been to, I think, 42 countries. The kids have been to between 20 and 25 countries. Exploring different cultures as much as we practically can is something that we love to do."



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Panel on Christians in Middle East to Convene at Armenian Assembly Advocacy Conference

PANEL, from page 7

(USAID), responsible for US foreign assistance to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, especially worldwide USAID health programs. An expert on democracy, international development policy, and religious freedom issues, he has extensive experience with multiple US government departments and agencies, assistance agencies from other countries, and hundreds of US and international NGOs, including faith-based organizations. Earlier in his career, Dr. Hill was President of D.C.'s Institute on Religion and Democracy. In 2010, as a Vice President at the John Templeton Foundation, Hill, along with Tom Farr, conceived Georgetown's Religious Freedom Project and secured funding to launch the project.

Casey is a senior fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs as well as a Professor in the School of Foreign Service. Located at Georgetown University, The Berkley Center is dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of religion, ethics, and public life. Through research, teaching, and service, the Center explores global challenges to democracy and human rights; economic and social development; international diplomacy; and interreli-



NCC President Jim Winkler, General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church Director Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, RFI Executive Director Kent Hill, and Berkley Center Director Shaun Casey

gious understanding. Casey was previously US Special Representative for Religion and Global Affairs and Director of the US Department of State's Office of Religion and Global Affairs. He has also held positions at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC, the Center for American Progress, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The Armenian Assembly has regularly testified about the need to protect Christian communities at risk and has worked with Congress on assistance to Christians in the Middle East, and has supported legislation such as House Resolution 390, the bipartisan Iraq and Syria Genocide Emergency Relief and Accountability Act of 2017 spearheaded by

Helsinki Commission Co-Chair Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Religious Minorities in the Middle East Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA).

The National Advocacy Conference itinerary includes a welcome reception, panel discussions, training, meetings on Capitol Hill, and concludes with a special evening Gala.

Dr. Ümit Kurt to Give Three Public Lectures at Fresno State

FRESNO – “A Rescuer, an Enigma, and a Génocidaire: Cemal Pasha” will be the topic of Dr. Ümit Kurt's presentation on Friday, September 21, at 7.30 p.m., in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, Room 191 on the Fresno State campus. The presentation is part of the Fall Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program. A welcoming hors d'oeuvres reception will be held from 6:30-7:30 p.m. immediately preceding the lecture in the University Business Center Gallery.

Kurt was appointed the 15th Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies for the Fall 2018 semester.

Known for his rigid policies towards Arab

nationalists and Zionists during his posting in Greater Syria, Cemal Pasha and his role in the Armenian Genocide has always remained an issue of contention. There are important accounts of Cemal's activity, particularly during the First World War, which have found him to have had no active role in the deportation and extermination of Armenians – here differing from the other two pillars of the CUP, Enver and Talaat.

On the contrary, they argue that he extended a helping hand to Armenians in so far as his authority and power would allow, and that he even faced off against members of the central government in Istanbul and the CUP head office to do so. This lecture will question that

argument, examining the politics of Cemal Pasha during the war, while concentrating on his approach to the Armenian matter. Kurt will also explore Cemal's own responsibility for the Genocide, in so far context and contingencies played a role in this crime.

Kurt received his PhD from Clark University in 2016. He received his MA in European Studies from Sabanci University in 2008 and undergraduate degree in Political Science from Middle East Technical University in 2006. He was part of the Faculty of Arts and Science in Sabanci University, from 2012 to 2014.

He is currently working as a Polonsky Fellow at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute.

Kurt is the author of *The Great, Hopeless Turkish Race: Fundamentals of Turkish Nationalism in the Turkish Homeland, 1911-1916* (Istanbul: İletisim Publishing House, 2012) and the author, with Taner Akçam, of *The Spirit of the Laws: The Plunder of Wealth*



Dr. Ümit Kurt

in the Armenian Genocide (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015). The book is translated by Aram Arkun.

The lecture is free and open to the public.

OBITUARY

Chahe 'Charlie' Berberian Consummate Haberdasher

SOMERVILLE, Mass. – Chahe “Charlie” Berberian, 84, of Somerville, died at the Miriam Boyd Parlin Hospice Residence in Wayland, on August 25.

He was born in Beirut, Lebanon on March 18, 1934, and immigrated to the United States in 1966.

After attending university in Beirut, Chahe enjoyed a lifelong career in the clothing business and worked for J. Press in Harvard Square for 31 years.

Chahe loved classical music, spending time with his grandchildren, telling stories, and taking care of his customers as a consummate haberdasher.

He was a loving father to Gabrielle Berberian and son-in-law Robert Donaldson of Lincoln, and devoted grandfather to Samantha and Ryan.

He was preceded in death by his father, renowned Armenian composer, Hampartzoum Berberian; his mother, Serpouhi (Takvorian) and his brothers, Hratch; and Vahe. In addition to his daughter and her family, he is survived by his sister Nayiri Berberian of Watertown.

Services were held at Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge on Friday,



August 31. Arrangements were made by the Giragosian Funeral Home, Watertown.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

University of Louisville Launches a Franchise-Management Program – Here’s Why

By Chris Larson

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (*Louisville Business First*) – The University of Louisville College of Business recently launched an online franchise-management program, and school leaders say it’s the first example of U of L’s new strategy to bolster its online education offerings.

Todd Mooradian, dean of U of L’s business school, said in a recent interview that the nine-credit-hour, graduate-level certificate program is the business school’s first effort that seeks to separate the school’s online MBA program from the crowd by offering “niche” education.

Students can take the certificate program on its own or stack the certificate with U of L’s online MBA program. The program will provide skills and knowhow sought by several companies, including Louisville-based Yum Brands Inc.

“We aren’t going to be the right MBA or certificate for everyone,” Mooradian said. “But if you want to be in franchise management, we are going to be the right MBA for you.”

The franchise-management program fulfills the elective credit requirement for the business school’s MBA program, allowing new students to specialize their MBA experience.

The business school will continue to develop “modular,” non-degree certificates that can add to or lead to degrees from the school, Mooradian said.

Kristen Lucas, assistant dean of program innovation and strategic initiatives, said in an interview that the business school tapped Louisville’s concentration of franchise-management talent to design and create the

content for the certificate.

The business school is working with several franchisees and franchisors to add corporate fellows to the program’s instructional staff. Also, the business school is creating an interview series with leaders at companies such as Yum Brands and other multi-site franchisees for students to study in the program.

Faculty includes industry experts such as Kathleen Gosser, the director of learning and organizational development for KFC Corp.

“I think it’s the first instance of [the College of Business building] off of what makes Louisville Louisville to give us strength in the online market,” Mooradian said.

Topics covered by the program will include team management, franchise law, human resources management, finance and strategic planning. The certificate can be completed in just over six months, according to a news release.

Lucas said that although the offering is a very specific, there is significant potential for growth and demand in the franchise-management certificate. There were about 745,000 franchise operations in the U.S. in 2017, according to a report from the International Franchise Association, a private franchise advocacy group.

Mooradian said the business school began developing the program soon after he joined U of L about 18 months ago.

The College of Business is enrolling students for the new program and will begin classes in January. Because the class is online only, there is no limit to the number of students who can enroll.

The certificate is offered at \$714 per credit hour, or \$6,426.

Local Women Receive Idaho Hometown Heroes Awards

TWIN FALLS, Idaho (*Twin Falls Times News*) – Liyah Babayan of Twin Falls and Peggy Elliott Goldwyn of Sun Valley have been chosen as Idaho Hometown Heroes by the JRM Foundation for Humanity. They will receive medals at the eighth annual Idaho Hometown Hero Awards Expo Celebration



Liyah Babayan

at 6 p.m. September 8 at the Stephens Performing Arts Center, 1002 Sam Nixon Drive, Pocatello. The event is free and open to the public.

As a refugee from Azerbaijan, Babayan was forced out of her home during the country’s ethnic killings. As a minority in her adoptive city of Twin Falls, she has dedicated her life to bridging humanity, justice and compassion between neighboring groups. Babayan hosts her “Street Dinner” parties to gather school supplies and clothing for child refugees and raises awareness and resources to address chronic PTSD in refugees – especially children.

Goldwyn provides advice and mentorship to young women seeking knowledge about becoming productive members of society. She is the founder of the Family of Woman Film Festival based in Sun Valley. Goldwyn uses film making as a platform to raise awareness of social issues regarding women and children around the world, while simultaneously creating opportunities for other film makers who stand up for women’s rights.

Established in 2011, Idaho’s Hometown Hero Medal pays tribute to those who show unique characteristics, achievements and remarkable commitment to creating better, safer communities across the state of Idaho.

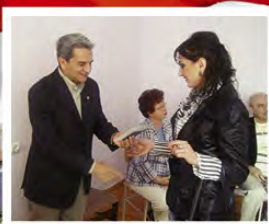


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GALAS Soorj Sessions to Provide Safe Spaces for LGBTQ Armenians, Families and Friends

GLENDALE – The Gay and Lesbian Armenian Society (GALAS) will host its third Soorj Session, a roundtable conversation between LGBTQ Armenians, their parents, families and friends to explore understanding and acceptance of LGBTQ identities and individuals. The gathering will take place in Glendale on Saturday, September 8, from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

It’s customary for Armenians to socialize by sitting down and sharing a cup of coffee (soorj). Through Soorj Sessions, GALAS aims to provide a safe space for parents, guardians and other family members who need help to harness support and reduce the stigmas around LGBTQ identities within the Armenian community.

The first Soorj Session, held in April 2018, was met with great enthusiasm with more than 25 attendees, including parents, family members and friends of LGBTQ Armenians, members of the LGBTQ Armenian community from the greater Los Angeles area, mental health and social work professionals, and GALAS Board members. Due to the overwhelming demand, Soorj Sessions are now a regular GALAS initiative and are held every other month. To protect the privacy of the attendees, the location and additional information about each Soorj Session are only provided to those who RSVP and confirm participation.

In its 20th year, GALAS is committed to expanding and further developing robust outreach and education programming to bring visibility to LGBTQ Armenian voices and create resources and safe spaces for LGBTQ Armenian youth, as well as their families and allies. Soorj Sessions are one of the initiatives that GALAS has planned for its 20th year. Additional programs include outreach and informative presentations on LGBTQ experiences for Armenian students and teachers, as well as the creation of a scholarship fund for college students of Armenian descent who have demonstrated LGBTQ activism.

GALAS encourages family and friends of LGBTQ individual to take part in its Soorj Sessions. The organization is always looking for parents and loved ones of LGBTQ individuals to speak at these gatherings in an effort to provide others with support and hope. For additional information on the next Soorj Session on Saturday, September 8, e-mail info@galasila.org or visit GALAS’ Facebook page at @GALASLosAngeles.



COMMUNITY NEWS

AUA Hosts Benefit Reception in San Francisco Bay Area

By Taleen Babayan

PIEDMONT, Calif. – The diaspora and the homeland were connected through the journey of an American University of Armenia (AUA) student and her scholarship sponsors during an emotional evening centering around the university's efforts at the home of Bill Cumberlich and Sara Kachadoorian Cumberlich in the San Francisco Bay Area, on Thursday, August 16.

Born and raised in the rural region of Syunik in southern Armenia, senior Lilia Mamikonyan (CS '19) shared her reflections on how AUA impacted her life and expressed her gratitude to her sponsors, Ara and Laura Dirtadian, who were present at the event. A rising senior studying computer science, Mamikonyan has already

"The country has been awakened," wrote Mamikonyan in a letter dated April 23. "In my mind, what is most important is that people become more loving, more patriotic and more determined to make our country the Armenia of our dreams and I am sure it will happen because the Armenian youth is so powerful."

She said that after the celebrations, on the morning of April 24, hundreds of people gathered on the streets of Yerevan and "for the first time ever the Armenian Genocide Commemoration day became a new beginning for our nation."

Host Sara Kachadoorian Cumberlich saw this transformation first-hand when she recently visited Armenia with her father and was impressed with the intellectual student body and the technologically advanced campus at AUA.

"I have visited many universities over the last



Top row (l-r) Dr. Larry Pitts, Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian, Nelly Der Kiureghian; Second row (l-r) Anna Cumberlich, Sara Kachadoorian Cumberlich and Bill Cumberlich.



Bill Cumberlich, Sara Kachadoorian Cumberlich, Gaiane Khachatryan, Aline Barsoumian, Nelly Der Kiureghian, Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian and Dr. Larry Pitts

secured a job in Armenia following graduation, and thanked the couple for helping her achieve her dreams. Mamikonyan was the first recipient of the scholarship the Dirtadian's established in honor of their grandparents, Elia Kahvedjian and Arakel Dirtadian, both of whom were Armenian Genocide survivors.

"I cannot imagine where I would be now without you and your family's support and motivation," said Mamikonyan. "You both inspired me to pursue my goals three years ago and I hope one day I will be able to give back."

In turn, the Dirtadians highlighted the



Ara Dirtadian, Lilia Mamikonyan and Laura Dirtadian

rewarding journey they embarked on as scholarship donors, particularly the personal relationship they developed with Mamikonyan. They encouraged others to join them in that journey and invest in the education of the youth in Armenia.

"Given AUA's programs and its link to the diaspora, I see that the university is going to set up its students for success," said Laura Dirtadian. "Even though Lilia is graduating, we will continue to support scholarships in honor of our grandfathers and hope to continue to build this amazing network of women in computer science."

She conveyed the deep bond she developed with Mamikonyan over the last few years and their relationship inspired her and her hope in the future of Armenia. Dirtadian shared an excerpt from a letter Mamikonyan sent her during the Velvet Revolution and how it exemplified the positive spirit and optimism moving forward.

six years as we have two children in college, and one set to go to university next year," said Kachadoorian Cumberlich. "I feel like I can have a good sense of what excellent higher learning looks like in the United States and the UK, and AUA is on par with many, if not all these institutions."

She praised AUA and its visionary outlook, and introduced guests to President Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian, who provided updates on the University and its future. Highlighting the momentous changes occurring in Armenia, he expressed student civic engagement in the movement and AUA alumni who have assumed leadership roles in the new government, serving as ministers and deputy ministers.

"AUA is the best investment the Diaspora has made in Armenia," said Dr. Der Kiureghian. "The university, its students and its faculty play a vital role in building the leaders of Armenia."

He thanked the Board of Trustees members in attendance as well as the Development Team, who worked diligently to initiate and launch two major AUA initiatives, including the 100 Pillars of AUA program and the "Yes, Armenian Women Can!" campaign.

Dr. Lawrence Pitts, chair of the AUA Board of Trustees and former provost of the University of California system, which AUA shares a strong affiliation with, elaborated on the high quality



Mr. & Mrs. Bill Cumberlich, Sara Kachadoorian Cumberlich & Dr. Larry Pitts

education students receive at the University, which upholds its promise of offering a need-blind admissions process to attract top applicants from around the country.

"The founders of AUA, both within and outside Armenia, intended for the University to be transformative for higher education in the country," said Pitts. "AUA has achieved this to a substantial degree by raising the bar for a quality university education, to the benefit of their students and of Armenia."

A special appearance was made by an AUA supporter Sedrak Sargissian, who spoke about AUA's partnership with Mentor Graphics (a Siemens Business), a US-based multinational corporation for electrical engineering and electronics, underscoring the importance of corporate collaborations with the University. As

Director of Engineering, he also highlighted the fact that their local office in Armenia, established in 2008, hires AUA graduates. To date, the company employs 150 professionals, mainly engineers with a strong female proportion.

The evening concluded with a piano performance by Sargissian, as well as the presentation of gifts from Dr. Der Kiureghian and his wife, Nelly, to the Cumberlichs, thanking them for inviting AUA's supporters into their home.

"My husband and I are thrilled to support AUA and students like Lilia," said Kachadoorian Cumberlich. "Education is the cornerstone of a prosperous and independent Armenia."

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Turkish Divestment Bill Adopted by California State Legislature

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — On August 31, the California State Assembly adopted AB 1597, the Divestment from Turkish Bonds Act, sending the bill to the Governor's desk. The State Assembly action follows passage of the legislation by the California State Senate on August 29 by a vote of 36-0 with 4 abstentions, reported the Armenian Assembly of America (Assembly).

"I am humbled and grateful for my colleagues in the Legislature for joining with me to fight for justice for the 1.5 million Armenian souls who perished in the (Armenian) Genocide," stated California State Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian (D-46), the author of the bill.

"The Armenian Assembly salutes California State Assemblymember Nazarian for his foresight in introducing this pivotal piece of legislation, and for his leadership throughout the past two years in shepherding the bill in both legislative chambers. We also thank California State Senators and AB 1597 co-authors, Scott Wilk (R-21) and Anthony Portantino (D-25), for their advocacy of this bill throughout the Senate committee process and on the State Senate floor," stated Armenian Assembly Western Region Director Mihran Toumajan.

Armenian Assembly Western Region Director Mihran Toumajan and Armenian Assembly activists from California's Central Valley, Deacon Daniel Aydenian and Helvina Grikoryan, were in the State Capitol on August 27 to educate State Senators on the economic and moral merits of the bill, prior to this week's Senate floor vote. The Armenian Assembly delegation was pleased to hold a meeting with CA State Senate Minority Leader, Patricia Bates (R-36), a long-time friend of Armenian Americans in California's Orange County, on the significance of bipartisan support for AB 1597. In June 2018, Toumajan delivered testimony in favor of AB 1597 during a hearing before Members of the California State Senate Standing Committee on Public Employment and Retirement (CalPERS), prior to that com-



From left, Deacon Daniel Aydenian, State Sen. Anthony Portantino, Helvina Grikoryan and Mihran Toumajan

mittee's favorable 4-0 vote.

Authored by Nazarian, AB 1597 requires the California Public Employee Retirement System (CalPERS) and California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) to liquidate all investments issued, owned, controlled, or managed by the government of Turkey, and, as amended by the State Senate, "upon passage of a federal law imposing sanctions on Turkey for failure to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide." According to current data, CalPERS has investment holdings in bonds directly issued by the Republic of Turkey in excess of \$700 million, while CalSTRS has similar holdings in Turkish government-issued bonds

amounting to approximately \$70 million.

Earlier this month, while referring to the impact of the potential bicameral passage of AB 1597, Nazarian stated: "California is sending a clear message to Turkey to stop their deceitful campaign of genocide denial."

The Armenian Assembly has consistently supported divestment legislation and recalls its swift approval by the State Assembly's Public Employees, Retirement, and Social Security Committee in April 2017, as well as its overwhelming approval (67-0) on the floor of the California State Assembly in June 2017.

If signed by Governor Jerry Brown, the bill will continue California's storied history of

divesting from countries that violate human rights. Garnering the gratitude of civil rights champion Nelson Mandela, then-Governor George Deukmejian spearheaded the California State Legislature's successful efforts in divesting from South Africa for the latter's horrific apartheid policy, while also inspiring the Regents of the University of California to follow suit. Subsequent efforts at divestment by the California State Legislature include divesting from Sudan for committing genocide in Darfur, as well as divesting from Iran for committing human rights violations and for its state sponsorship of international terrorism.



From left, Deacon Daniel Aydenian, State Sen. Jeff Stone, Helvina Grikoryan and Mihran Toumajan



Armenian Assembly activist Helvina Grikoryan, CA State Senate Minority Leader Patricia Bates (R-36), Armenian Assembly Western Region Director Mihran Toumajan, and Armenian Assembly activist Deacon Daniel Aydenian

UC Irvine Chemistry Professor and Wife Donate \$100,000 toward Armenian Studies

IRVINE, Calif. — Ara Apkarian, University of California at Irvine (UCI) Distinguished Professor of chemistry, and his wife, Alice, recently bestowed a second \$100,000 gift on the School of Humanities. The Naneh Award for Graduate Research in Armenian Studies is named in honor of their daughter.

Ara Apkarian and his wife, Alice, a retired Saddleback College chemistry professor, recently funded a \$100,000 endowment, the Naneh Award for Graduate Research in Armenian Studies. Named in honor of their daughter, a postdoctoral researcher at Western Michigan University, this is the second significant gift the couple has bestowed on the School of Humanities.

The first, also for \$100,000, helped establish the Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies.

"Graduate students in the sciences invariably receive full financial support throughout their careers, which allows them to focus on their studies," Ara Apkarian said. "But graduate support in Armenian studies? That's a much tougher sell. We have to do it."



Prof. Ara Apkarian and his wife, Alice

Arts & Living

Universal Pictures Re-Releases Remastered 'Schindler's List' for 25th Anniversary

LOS ANGELES – To commemorate the 25th anniversary release of Steven Spielberg's masterpiece "Schindler's List," one of the most significant endeavors in the history of cinema, Universal Pictures will re-release the film with picture and sound digitally remastered – including in 4K, Dolby Cinema and Dolby Atmos – for a limited theatrical engagement on December 7, 2018, in theaters across the United States and Canada.

On the heels of last year's re-release of James Cameron's "Titanic" in HDR, this event marks one of the very few times that a film of this magnitude and scope has been remastered in 4K, Dolby Cinema and Atmos. It provides a stunning experience on the big screen, to match the power of the film and its significant themes. This December, audiences can share the experience of a story we must never forget.

Winner of seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Director, this incredible true story follows the enigmatic Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson), who saved the lives of more than 1,100 Jews during the Holocaust.

It is the triumph of one man who made a difference and the drama of those who survived one of the darkest chapters in human history because of what he did. Meticulously restored



Steven Zaillian

from the original film negative in pristine high definition and supervised by Spielberg, "Schindler's List" is a powerful story whose lessons of courage and faith continue to inspire generations.

The film also earned Oscars for composer John Williams, screenwriter Steven Zaillian and director of photography Janusz Kaminiski, as well as art directors Allan Starski and Ewa Braun, editor Michael Kahn and producers Spielberg, Gerald R. Molen and Branko Lustig.

"It is difficult to believe that it's been 25 years since 'Schindler's List' first arrived in theaters," said Spielberg. "The true stories of the magnitude and tragedy of the Holocaust are ones that must never be forgotten, and the film's lessons about the critical importance of countering hatred continue to reverberate today. I am honored that audiences will be able to experience the journey once again on the big screen."

"We are proud to bring the remastered Schindler's List, one of the most important movies of the 20th century, to a new generation of filmgoers," said Ron Meyer, vice chairman of NBCUniversal. "The lesson that one person – during one of the darkest chapters in humankind's history – can make a difference is as relevant now as ever before."

In advance of the re-release, free educational screenings of the film – coordinated by USC Shoah Foundation – will be available for high-school educators and their students in selected

see RE-MASTERED, page 14



Giorgia Ohanesian Nardin

Giorgia Nardin 'I Felt A Really Powerful Connection with the Country'

YEREVAN – More than a quarter century ago, a young American-Armenian woman from Los Angeles visited Venice for the first time. The very first day she arrived in this romantic city, while on a motor boat, a gondolier greeted her from his gondola inviting the beautiful tourist to ride. By the end of the day the handsome Venetian already offered his heart and soul to her. Thus, Marie Ohanesian and Roberto Nardin formed a family, having two daughters – Giorgia and Rebecca.

I spoke with Giorgia Ohanesian Nardin – a young charming artist, an independent choreographer and performer. She trained at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance in Leeds (UK), and graduated in 2010. Her first project as a choreographer took place in collaboration with artists Francesca Foscari and Marco D'Agostin. The trio met at the Accademia Mobile by Emio Greco|PC, held during the OperaEstate Festival

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Veneto in 2010, and together they created Spic & Span, a piece which won Special Mention in Premio Scenario 2011. Since 2012, Giorgia has been collaborating as a performer with BaroktheGreat in the works Indigenous and Attacco del Clone. Her first solo, "Dolly," was a finalist at the GD'A Prize 2012, received Special Mention from the DNA|Romaeuropa Festival, was selected by the national Rete Anticorpi XL, presented at the Vetrina della Giovane Danza d'Autore and invited to the Italian Showcase as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2013.

Nardin has been selected to take part in numerous European projects, some of which are ChoreoRoam Europe 2012, developed by CSC/Centro per la Scena Contemporanea Bassano del Grappa (Vicenza), The Place (London), Dansateliers (Rotterdam), Paso a 2/Certamen Coreografico (Madrid), Dance Week Festival (Zagreb), B Project 2013, developed by Jheronimus Bosch 500 Foundation ('s-Hertogenbosch), CSC/Centro per la Scena Contemporanea, Dance Umbrella (London), D.ID Dance Identity (Pinkafeld), La Briquerie-Centre de développement chorégraphique du Val de Marne (Paris), Dansateliers (Rotterdam) Performing Gender, developed by Comitato Provinciale Arcigay Il Cassero/Gender Bender Festival (Bologna), Nederlandsedansdagen/Dutch Dance Festival (Maastricht), Domino Association (Zagreb) and Paso a 2 Certamen Coreográfico (Madrid) and Communicating Dance, developed by CSC/Centro per la Scena Contemporanea, Le Pacifique Centre de Développement Choréographique (Grenoble), Dance Ireland (Dublin), Dansateliers, Hrvatski Institut Za Pokret I Ples (Zagreb) and K3 Tanzplan (Hamburg). All Dressed up with Nowhere to Go, her first piece for two performers, is the winner of Premio Prospettiva Danza 2013, selected to be presented as part of NID Platform 2014 and has been touring both nationally and internationally.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: Dear Giorgia, I saw your choreographies, they are quite impressive. I detect a firm base of dance education, combined with a strong sense of different styles and methods of the performing arts. Who and what are your main inspirations?

Giorgia Nardin: I find that I receive the majority of my inspiration from my colleagues, from artists that I know, some of whom are my close friends, and are working in the field now. I think the most inspirational thing for me is to feel part of something, and to share this with my peers. Then of course I have artists I look up to and that inspire me because of their work, their method or what they stand

see NARDIN, page 13

Armenian National Academic Opera, Orchestra Perform Two Major Productions in September

DUBAI, UAE – Dubai Opera announced recently that the Armenian National Academic Theatre Opera and Orchestra is set to bring two opera favorites, "Carmen" and "The Magic Flute" to the Dubai Opera stage in September.

The first of the productions, "Carmen," directed by Naire Stepanyan, was performed over three consecutive nights on September 6, 7 and 8.

"Carmen" tells the tragic tale of Don José, who falls hopelessly in love with femme fatale, Carmen. José loses Carmen's love to the matador, Escamillo, only to end in José killing her in a jealous rage. The Opening night Star studded cast included Karine Babadjanian as Carmen and Hovanes Ayvazyan as Don Jose, Meri Movsessyan as Michaela and Gevork Hagopyan as the strapping Toreodor, Escamillo, along with other great soloists and the renowned chorus of the Armenian National Opera House.

Written by French composer Georges Bizet, "Carmen" premiered in Paris in 1875 after suffering negative reviews. Disconsolately, Bizet died during the preliminary performances, never to know that "Carmen" would rightly become one of the most loved and popular operas of all time.

Audiences at Dubai Opera can expect spectacular costumes designed by Cristine



Scene from "Carmen"

Avetisian and awe-inspiring set designs by Avetis Barseghian to augment the truly brilliant performance of "Carmen," which will be performed in French with English surtitles. "Carmen" will be conducted by American conductor Christopher Ocacek.

The second production, "The Magic Flute," by one of the most celebrated composers of all time, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, will debut the following week, also for three consecutive nights on September 13, 14 and 15.

"The Magic Flute" is a tale which illustrates the resplendent power of love, art and music, transporting audiences into a wonderful fantastical realm. The opera tells the story of Tamino, a young hero, sent on a quest by the Queen of Night to rescue her daughter, Pamina, from the wicked wizard, Sarastro. Full of beautiful melodies and enchanting characters, Mozart's beloved and final opera will be performed in German with English surtitles.

"Words are not enough to describe the enthusiasm we all feel as we prepare for our performances of 'Carmen' and 'The Magic Flute'." see CARMEN, page 13



ARTS & LIVING

I Felt a Really Powerful Connection with the Country

NARDIN, from page 12

for, like Marina Abramovic, Jerome Bel, Vanessa Beecroft or even David Foster Wallace (even though he was a writer I feel his work has a lot to do with the body and performance), but obviously I have not met any of them personally! Also, sadly Foster Wallace died, so there will never be a chance of meeting him. He would have been the one for whom I would have had the most questions.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: Now many choreographers use nudity as tool in their performances, often abusing it. It was impressive to see nudity in your performances without any sexuality.

Giorgia Nardin: Working with nudity was something that came quite naturally and that was important to me, for different reasons, both in "All Dressed up with Nowhere to Go" and "Celebration." In the second one Olivia Jacquet, the performer, is fully tattooed, and we were working specifically on her modified body, so it was quite apparent that it was necessary for her to be naked. In "All Dressed up..." we used it as a tool at first, the performers did an extraordinary job in embodying nudity as a state, without commenting on it, by not adding anything but actually subtracting, their habits, their attitudes, their egos, they exposed themselves to fragility and vulnerability without escaping it and I think this is why it never becomes sexual or provocative.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: Can we call your choreographic works as gender-oriented?

Giorgia Nardin: I do not know if I would mark them as gender-oriented, because even though I am busy with this topic humanly and artistically I do not think my work specifically deals only with it. "Celebration" is a commission for a beautiful EU project called Performing Gender, in which I (along with other 15 artists) was asked to create a durational performance on the theme of gender, sexuality, sexual orientation and identity. So of course gender was a very big part of my research for this piece, but I believe that the work ended up being about many other things as well. At the same time, if I look at the work I have done up until this point I do recognize that I seem to be dealing with gender quite a lot; from "Dolly" to "All dressed up" to "Celebration," it is there, in different ways, more or less evidently, I guess. So, I would not refuse

this but at the same I am not yet completely comfortable with it, for some reason.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: I know the romantic story of your parents' meeting, told by your mom in her novel *Beneath the Lion's Wings*, published this year by Waterline Publishing. Do not you think this is might be nice material for choreography?

Giorgia Nardin: Yes, theirs is the ultimate romantic story, and I think my mom has done a beautiful job in loosely basing her novel, which she is working on getting traditionally published, on it. I think my parent's relationship and love for each other is very much part of my and my sister's upbringing and experience. It is in me so, somehow, it must be in my work...But yes, it could be a nice source for material.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: In 2014 you came to Armenia. How did that happened?

Giorgia Nardin: I was invited to come to Yerevan thanks to my manager Valeria Castellaneta, who is also a member of PlanTS, a cultural association based in Trieste. She began collaboration with the Institute for Contemporary Art in Yerevan and the first part of the project consisted in bringing an Italian artist to Yerevan. I was interested in working with a group of young people that do not necessarily have experience in the field of performance, I wanted to challenge myself by working in a context that I do not know and that is very different from the European one.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: From time to time contemporary dance instructors come to Yerevan and run trainings with professionals and amateurs. You spent two weeks in Armenia and worked with a special focused group. What did they learn specially from you?

Giorgia Nardin: I think the best thing would be to ask them! What I can say is that I did not come here wanting to train a group of people. I was interested in developing my research. What I did was share some elements of my practice with them, both physically and conceptually, in a very simple way. We talked about the importance of duration, of allowing things to happen over a length of time; we looked at what "state" and "presence" mean, and how to deal with these elements in a performative context. For me it was very important to go back to these principles, slow everything down and focus on fewer things. The group helped me a lot in this, so hopefully it was a mutual experience.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: Did you have any chance to get acquainted with the contempo-

rary dance scene in Armenia?

Giorgia Nardin: I had the chance to meet a few members of the dance scene but I did not see any work live, which is a shame. But we did have several conversations about the dance scene in Armenia, in which people expressed their viewpoints and explained to me how they feel the scene is, or is not, developing.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: How do you see the development of contemporary dance in Armenia? Do we need to "import" various types of dance techniques?

Giorgia Nardin: Honestly, I do not have the answer to this question. I do not know if there is a "preferable" direction to improve the development of contemporary dance in Armenia. I think there are some elements that will always define a country artistically, and I do not know enough about Armenian art to say which ones they are. I also have no idea if importing is a good term. Of course, I come from a context in which geographically it is much easier for countries to contaminate each other artistically, and I believe that contamination is generally important for the development of the arts. But it is different from importing or becoming a surrogate of another experience.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: How do you describe your experience in Armenia – as a professional, as a human being and as a person with Armenian roots?

Giorgia Nardin: On the occasion of my traveling to Armenia my mother wrote on her Facebook page: "Just put my daughter Giorgia Nardin on a plane to Yerevan to bring a bit of Contemporary Dance to Armenia. It makes my heart feel good to think what my dear grandparents would have thought about their great-granddaughter making a cultural contribution to their homeland close to 100 years after war and genocide forced them to leave." Again, I feel close to Armenia in many ways, whilst not feeling part of it at the same time. What I was impressed by was people's will to do things, to learn and to make the most of an experience. This was very refreshing for me. I needed to be part of this sensation. It was important to work here because (beside the fact that I really enjoyed the group) it did not make me feel like a tourist. I think I got a clear insight into the culture and the life people lead here, even though I am sure I have only scratched the surface. This is also thanks to all the people that were so welcoming and actively participated in helping us create something small, but important.

Artsvi Bakhchinyan: Do you have some fam-

ily memories from your maternal ancestors?

Giorgia Nardin: More than family memories I can say that I have a beautiful feeling about being here. Even though it is my first time in this country I feel there is an attachment, something special I cannot name, I am sure it has to do with my family's origins. I feel it very strongly. It sounds a bit New Age, but it is true. I never met my great grandparents, who were the first generation of Armenians of the diaspora. What I know about them comes partly from the stories my mom and my grandmother used to tell me and partly is the result of my imagination, or a collage of parts of these family stories that staid with me. I imagine my great-grandfather, Rouben Kashishian, to have been an elegant, quiet man, maybe intimidating sometimes, but this must have all been part of his charm, somehow. And my great-grandmother, Marie, I imagine her being petite, very simple and also very elegant, her beauty residing in her shyness. Again, I never met them, I do not speak Armenian and I live in Italy, far away from the Armenian side of my family (they are all living in the States). Nonetheless, while being in Armenia, I felt a really powerful connection with the country. Not in a "New Age" or spiritual way – it is very simple but also it is something I cannot really explain. It came as a surprise to me, a strong sensation of belonging somewhere but also being completely removed from it, almost like being part of something you do not really know.

This sensation became really clear to me when I went to visit the Genocide memorial, which is a very emotional site in itself, but for me it was even stronger as I had the luck to witness something extremely beautiful: there was a woman, I imagine she was the caretaker of the memorial (she carried with her brooms and things to gather leaves and dust) that had a bunch of flowers in her arms. She had been placing them one by one all around the central brazier of the memorial. She was doing this extremely slowly, putting all of the flowers facing the brazier and dividing them by color, so accurately. I watched her do it for I do not even know how long. I know it might sound simple or even banal, but for me it was a very moving image. There was so much heaviness and care in what she was doing, and I felt so lucky to have witnessed it, but most of all, what she was doing made me experience the feeling I had been having since I arrived in a much stronger way. I felt part of her ritual and what it stands for, in that moment.

Armenian National Academic Opera, Orchestra Perform Two Major Productions in September

CARMEN, from page 12

Flute' on the prestigious stage of the Dubai Opera," said Constantine Orbelian, artistic and general director of the Yerevan Opera House. "Together with our renowned soloists, and our wonderful musicians, chorus, and designers, I am absolutely delighted to be representing my eternal homeland, Armenia, in Dubai, through the universal language of opera. And I am all the more gratified as our performances at the Dubai Opera will be a celebration of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United Arab Emirates and the Republic of Armenia."

"Today, I am as ever proud of the marvelous talents and professionalism of each and every member of the Yerevan Opera House, and I feel so very honored for the privilege of leading such an iconic institution," Orbelian continued. "Finally, I would like to convey my very special thanks and gratitude to Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Culture, Youth, and Social Development of the UAE, for his invaluable support in helping organize and facilitate our concerts in Dubai. It will be our distinct joy to present the artistry of Armenian opera to the appreciative audiences of this great city."

Audiences will be thrilled by the beautiful, intricately detailed costumes designed by world famous designer Alberto Spazzi, and magnificent set design by internationally renowned

Italian opera Director Paolo Miccichè, who also serves as the director of The Armenian National Academic Theatre Opera and Orchestra's rendition of "The Magic Flute". The superb cast will include award winning tenor Liparit Avetisyan,



Scene from "Carmen"

International prize winner Julietta Aleksanyan, soprano Alina Pekhlivanian along with soloists of the Armenian opera company.

Jasper Hope, Chief Executive at Dubai Opera, commented: "In Bizet's 'Carmen' and Mozart's Magic Flute, Dubai audiences can enjoy two of the greatest operas ever written this September. 'Carmen' is synonymous with passion and fiery tempers whilst 'The Magic Flute' offers audiences utterly beautiful music set around a comic fairy tale - two wonderful autumn treats for everyone to enjoy".

For more information and ticket purchase, visit www.dubaiopera.com

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20

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Universal Pictures Re-Releases Remastered 'Schindler's List' for 25th Anniversary

RE-MASTERED, from page 12

AMC, Regal, Cinemark, Marcus Theatres, Cineplex, Harkins and National Amusements locations in major markets in North America on Tuesday, December 4, and Wednesday, December 5.

"As curators of the world's largest collection of firsthand accounts about the consequences of hatred, USC Shoah Foundation is uniquely positioned to educate and inspire humanity to counter hate through empathy and action," said Spielberg, who established the Shoah Foundation after his experiences filming "Schindler's List." "Those who engage with this eyewitness testimony make deeply meaningful connections, develop critical thinking and empathy, and learn to reflect on the choices they can make to counter hatred."

The top-20 markets that will host the special "Schindler's List" school screenings include those in Phoenix, AZ; Los Angeles, CA; Sacramento, CA; San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, CA; Denver, CO; Miami-Ft. Lauderdale, FL; Orlando, FL; Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL; Chicago, IL; Boston, MA; Cleveland, OH; New York City, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX; Washington, DC; Atlanta, GA; Houston, TX; Detroit, MI; Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN; and Seattle, WA. Additional markets will be announced soon.

Additional elements of the launch include the new trailer, released August 29, as well as a forthcoming re-release of the iconic film score by five-time Academy Award-winning composer John Williams – on the soundtrack from La-La Land Records – which will include never-before-heard material. To further commemorate this historic film, the remastered version of "Schindler's List" will be re-released in theatres internationally across select territories in early 2019. The remastered film will also be available in 4K HDR, Dolby Vision and Atmos on home-entertainment platforms subsequent to theatrical release.

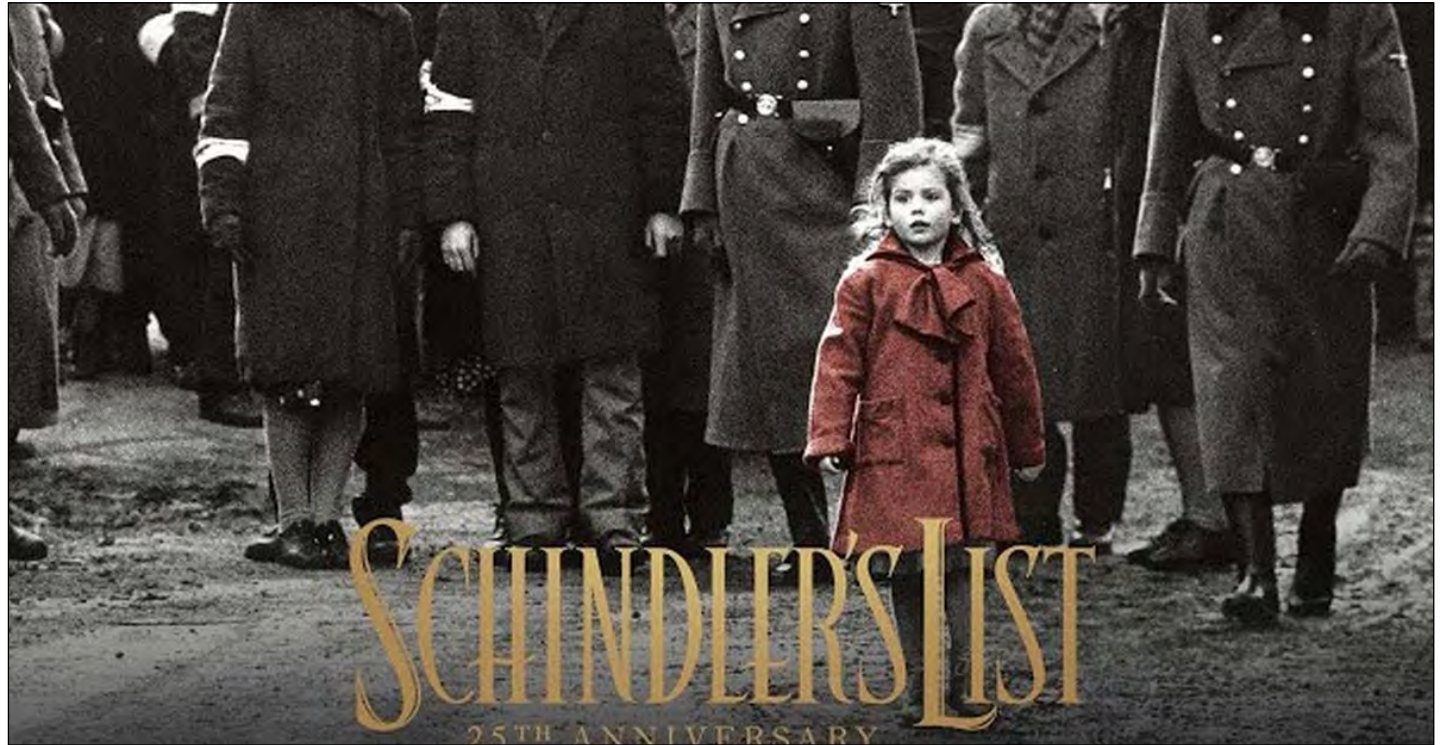
USC Shoah Foundation – under its Stronger Than Hate initiative – will work with partner organizations to provide classroom-ready resources through its award-winning educational website IWitness to accompany the theatrical and home entertainment releases of the film.

USC Shoah Foundation will partner with other educational organizations to scale the reach and impact of the "Schindler's List" re-release, utilizing their IWitness website as a central platform for educators to find resources. Partners include: Facing History and Ourselves, which will publish a new digital "Schindler's List" Study Guide and offer related in-person and online professional learning opportunities; Echoes & Reflections, an education resource partnership with the ADL and Yad Vashem that offers teachers a variety of ways to examine critical themes of the Holocaust; and Discovery Education, the leading provider of digital content and professional development for K-12 classrooms – with services that are available in approximately half of US classrooms, 50 percent of all primary schools in the UK, and more than 50 countries around the globe.

USC Shoah Foundation builds and deploys groundbreaking, testimony-based programs, using its Visual History Archive of more than 55,000 eyewitness testimonies to educate young people about the consequences of hatred, while giving actionable tools to teachers to combat hateful ideologies.

To learn more about USC Shoah Foundation, Stronger Than Hate, free educational screenings in your area, and educational programs and partnerships around the re-release of the film, visit sfi.usc.edu/schindlerslist.

USC Shoah Foundation–The Institute for Visual History and Educations develops empathy, understanding and respect through testimony, using its Visual History Archive of more than 55,000 video testimonies, award-winning IWitness education program, and Center for Advanced Genocide Research. USC Shoah Foundation's interactive programming, research, and materials are accessed in museums and universities, cited by government leaders and NGOs, and taught in classrooms around the world. Now in its third decade, USC Shoah Foundation reaches millions of people each year on six continents from its home at the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern California.



Stronger Than Hate is an umbrella platform of USC Shoah Foundation that serves as a broad, proactive, actionable response to the rising crises of hatred. It reaches educators, students, policy makers, influencers, and the pub-

lic at large via schools, universities, communities, and boardrooms, both virtually and in person, and around the world. Stronger Than Hate focuses resources and leverages partnerships to strengthen and unify people against

hate. USC Shoah Foundation, as a global leader in testimony-driven, transformational learning, is uniquely positioned to impact an essential and growing audience in their struggle to become Stronger Than Hate.

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian Dalian

Garbanzo Bean and Vegetable Soup

INGREDIENTS

- 2 16 oz. cans reduced sodium garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained
- 2-3 tablespoons olive oil or unsalted butter
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 medium onion, chopped (white, brown or yellow)
- 2 stalks celery (and top greens), chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 medium baking potato or sweet potato, peeled and diced
- 1 medium red or green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1/2 pound spinach, rinsed, stems removed, and chopped*
- 8 cups reduced sodium chicken, beef broth or vegetarian broth (to taste)
- 1 8 oz. can reduced sodium tomato sauce or tomato juice
- 1 14.5 oz. can stewed or crushed tomatoes or 1 cup fresh diced tomatoes
- 1/4 cup fine bulgur
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon dried crushed mint
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt, black pepper, dash of allspice
- Crushed red pepper flakes, cumin, smoked paprika, basil, oregano or Aleppo pepper (to taste)
- Olive oil
- Chopped fresh mint, basil or parsley as garnish

PREPARATION

In a large Dutch oven or pot, sauté garlic, onions, celery, carrots, potatoes, and peppers in olive oil or butter for 8 to 10 minutes, tossing. Add garbanzo beans, broth, tomato sauce or juice, tomatoes, bulgur, lemon juice, and tomato paste, stir and bring to a full boil; add spinach, mint, bay leaf and spices and stir to combine. Reduce heat, cover, and cook for 45-55 minutes or until tender. Stir soup occasionally and add more broth or spices as needed. Remove bay leaf. Mash beans and potatoes if a thicker consistency is desired. Ladle soup into bowls and garnish with choice of mint, basil or parsley. Drizzle with olive oil and serve with pita bread, garlic bread or bread sticks.

**Suggestions: Spinach may be pan-fried in olive oil and garlic and added to this soup. Garnish with Armenian or Greek yogurt or sour cream. Or you can add 1/4 cup chopped dried dates or apricots to this recipe, if desired.

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





ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

FLORIDA

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

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 9 — Trinity Family Festival, 12-5 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Sunday. Delicious Armenian food — shish, losh, and chicken kebab — paklava, khadaif, and more with take-out available. Armenian music for your listening and dancing pleasure featuring the Greg Krikorian Ensemble with Greg Krikorian, oud and vocals; George Righellis and Kevin Magarian, guitar and vocals; Mark Der Mugrditchian, clarinet; Charles Dermenjian, dumbeg; and Steve Surabian, tambourine. Lots of activities for children including the Moonwalk. Blessing of the Madagh at 4 p.m., followed by raffle drawing for cash prizes. For further information, log onto www.htaac.org/calendar/event/575/, contact the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632, or email office@htaac.org.

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

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

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

SEPTEMBER 16 — Sunday afternoon at the Park for Families. Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway. 2-4 p.m. Cindy Fitzgibbon, WCVB-TV5, emcee. 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-mail office@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 Nevert 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 Righellis. Sponsored by the Armenian Churches of Worcester County: Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church, Armenian Church of Our Saviour, Armenian Church of the Martyrs, Soorp Asdvadzadzin Armenian Apostolic Church. Doors Open at 7.30 p.m. For tickets, reservations or information contact Jay Kapur (508) 740-4464, Eva Kopoyan (508) 757-6195, Magdy Faltaous (508) 278-3805 or Donna Barsamian (508) 769-3279. Donation \$35 in advance, \$45 at the door. Deluxe Mezze, coffee and dessert, with cash bar.

SEPTEMBER 30 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church Welcomes Susan Osman, Television and Radio Anchor/Host including almost 20 years with the BBC, Author and Screenwriter; 12:15 p.m., in the Charles and Nevert Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle Street, 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, call the Church at 617.354.0632, or e-mail 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 20 — Hye Kef 5: Onnik Dinkjian Performs at DoubleTree by Hilton in Andover, MA, with Ara Dinkjian and local ensemble, for Armenian Friends of America, 7 pm to midnight. All proceeds benefit the Armenian churches of the Merrimack Valley. For tickets: John Arzigian – 603-560-3826; Lucy Sirmaian – 978-683-9121; Peter Gulezian – 978-375-1616; Sharke Der Apkarian –

978-808-0598; Kathy Geyer 978-475-8309.

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

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

NOVEMBER 14 — Najarian Lecture on Human Rights at Historic Faneuil Hall, Boston. Wednesday. Doors open at 6.45. 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

continued on next page



ARTS & LIVING

CALENDAR

NEW JERSEY

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

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.

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 Dokmecian, 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 11 — Public Discussion, "At The White House With President Reagan and the Current Affairs in The White House Today." Guest Speaker, Aram Bakshian, speech writer for Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Director of presidential speech writing for Ronald Reagan. 7 p.m. St. Mary Armenian Church Cultural Hall. Free entrance, reception. Organized by Knights and Daughters of Vartan.

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 Manogian 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.

Program with Filmmaker Bared Maronian Sheds Light on Heroic Story of Armenian Women

FILMMAKER, from page 1

Organizing committee chair, Nicole Babikian Hajjar, said: "Through this collaborative effort, we also hope to raise awareness about Bared Maronian's important work and upcoming projects in partnership with Cultural Impact Foundation, a non-profit organization that commissions and supports unique cultural projects that can improve our understanding of historical events by revealing acts of human kindness and heroism in the face of adversity."

The AWWA's JoAnn Janjigian said, "It is wonderful that these two Armenian women's organizations can collaborate and work together on an event that highlights Bared Maronian, his films, and his reflections on current political changes in Armenia. Both AWWA and AIWA have a large pool of talented professional women. Working together broadens our understanding and promotes friendships. And more importantly, we are supporting initiatives in Armenia that benefit greatly by our fundraising."

When asked if more such collaborative projects would be forthcoming, she replied, "I certainly hope so. We all benefit by these collaborations."

In addition to the elderly clinic, the AWWA runs the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Jamaica Plain, MA.

Maronian agreed about the importance of the mission of the event. "The event is a fundraiser for Armenian women's organizations that do very important work. When they contacted me I was very happy, especially because of my work on 'Women of 1915.'"

The film is doing very well internationally, Maronian noted, adding that an abbreviated version of it will be shown on the PBS show "To the Contrary," most probably in December.

In addition, it will be shown on television screens in South America through a deal on which he is working now.

Maronian has made several documentaries, including "Orphans of the Genocide," "Komitas Hayrig" and "Wall of Genocide." However, "Women of 1915" has become his most popular work. The film is about not only the plight of the Armenian women who were raped and killed, but also Armenian heroines and many non-Armenian women, including missionaries, who came to the rescue of the Armenian nation.

Asked why the film was so popular, Maronian

said. "The most important reason is the fact that beside being an Armenian story, it is a human story. It is a film about women's empowerment." Focus groups, he said, including non-Armenians, were all moved by the story. The women who survived, he said, created the Armenian Diaspora. The men were all either dead, on death marches or had left the country at that time, therefore the care and nurture of families rested squarely on the shoulders of the women who fed, raised and educated their children in those circumstances.

"That's why it resonates. It is a universal story," he said. "That is my forte, going after stories which are of Armenian origin but connect on an international level."

Among the women who survived was Victoria Artinian, the grandmother of Steve Jobs, the co-founder of Apple. "If this lady had not survived, would Steve Jobs have been the same? Steve Jobs loved Armenian food and was raised as an Armenian. He visited Turkey in 2007 and got into an argument about [the veracity of] the Genocide with the tour guide," Maronian explained. Jobs had been adopted by Artinian's daughter, Clara Hagopian, and her husband, Paul Jobs.

Maronian is starting the Cultural Impact Foundation, to help him fund future films. At the top of the list of those projects is a documentary titled "Titanic Love," about which he will speak at the Lexington event.

In short, the documentary is about two Armenians who were on the doomed ship. One had survived the Hamidian massacres in Turkey and was thrilled to finally board the "unsinkable ship." Maronian has interviewed their descendants and how they reconnected over the generations. The story has many twists and turns worthy of a work of fiction, all with the dual stories of the ship and families intertwined.

While work on the film has been completed, Maronian said that he has not decided on a release date yet.

In addition to the stories of the previous generation, Maronian found himself in the midst of the stunning Velvet Revolution in Armenia this spring. In April, Maronian had been invited to show "Women of 1915" at the Armenian General Benevolent Union Center in Yerevan, at the height of the protests. As a result, he got some interesting footage and stunning photographs from the revolution. "I documented what I saw,

some tense moments and happy moments followed."

All of those will also be part of a documentary on the bloodless revolution led by youth in Armenia.

"It was the youth that moved this forward," he said. "They were extremely polite. The young men and women did not respond in violence. They hugged them [the police.] The most amazing thing was that they succeeded."

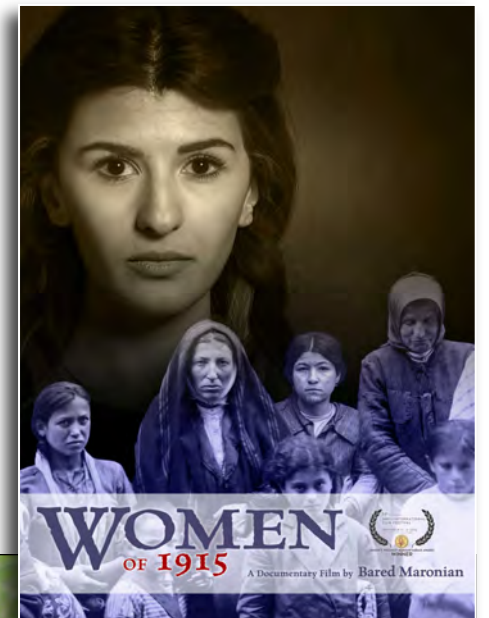
Maronian, who was born in Beirut and now resides in the US, has won four Regional Emmy Awards and was a 2016 Armin T. Wegner Humanitarian Award Laureate. He has a bachelor's degree in political science from the Haigazian University and is a graduate of the Broadcast Career Institute of Palm Beach, Fla. His production credits include national, region-



A Bared Maronian picture from Armenia's Velvet Revolution

al and local television programming for the American PBS network spanning over 20 years.

In 2006, Maronian founded the Armenoid Team, primarily producing thematically Armenian documentary films for international distribution. His films, including "Orphans of the Genocide" have reached millions of households and been translated into several languages. "Orphans of the Genocide" was also screened in universities, col-



leges, school systems, museums, libraries, and communities in the United States, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Great Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Lebanon, Egypt, and elsewhere.

To learn more about the organizations, visit aiwainternational.org and awwa.us.

Tickets are \$75 (\$25 for students with IDs). For tickets, email lightscamerastories@gmail.com or visit aiwainternational.org/lightscamerastories.



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Genocide Is on World Agenda Once Again

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Once again, the human conscience is bleeding when actions to stop a genocide become hostage to political expediency. Genocide, particularly in modern times, has become a convenient method or tool to expel or exterminate indigenous people to usurp their land, properties and wealth and it is exercised when political conditions are ripe for that kind of crime.

We need to remember that the Armenian Genocide took place during World War I and the Jewish Holocaust during World War II. Cambodia, Rwanda, the Balkans and Darfur all had their particular hallmarks and political circumstances to make mass murder continue unhindered.

Today, mankind is facing another genocide, this time around in Myanmar, and again political expediency is in action to halt the crime in its tracks.

The hearts of Hillary Clinton, Susan Rice and Samantha Power were bleeding in view of the dictatorial treatment of the Libyan people by the regime of Muammar Gadhafi, and they worked to topple him, destroying the most egalitarian regime in the Middle East. Yet today the US State Department is hesitating to define the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people as a genocide, allowing the Myanmar military to continue its grisly campaign and bring it to completion.

On September 3, the United Nations released a report on its findings on the atrocities carried out by the Myanmar military against the country's Rohingya minority. Those atrocities include the mass executions of villagers, the public rapes of women, the burning of entire villages to the ground and deporting the survivors to neighboring Bangladesh.

During recent months, 720,000 Rohingyas have been deported to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, to join 200,000 of their kin who had been deported there earlier.

The atrocities described in the UN report read very much like a page from the Armenian Genocide. The report recommended that the senior military officials be prosecuted for acts of genocide and other war crimes. The US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, concurred with the report, adding that the State Department's own fact-finding report was "consistent" with the UN findings. The ambassador stopped short of describing the atrocities as genocide, because she is cognizant that she would be stepping in another territory, that of the legal definition of the term. Later on, the State Department's

spokesperson, Heather Nauret, cautioned against rushing into the use of the term genocide, saying: "To the average person, of course, these things are incredibly horrific, and it seems like we should just slap a label on something. Well, they are complex, legal designations that have legal meanings and weight in courts around the world."

That is why President Recep Tayyip Erdogan succumbs to tantrums every time a head of state defines the Armenian experience as "genocide" and that is why German Chancellor Angela Merkel avoided the term in Armenia, despite the fact that her government had adopted a resolution about the Armenian Genocide. Indeed, the term is a charged one with consequences leading to restitution and punishment.

There is also a confluence in the UN report and the US State Department findings on the term "premeditation." The UN Genocide Convention has assigned a special significance in prosecuting the genocide when the element of premeditation is present, similar to individual cases of a crime.

Therefore, any historian who questions the premeditation of the Armenian Genocide in the face of overwhelming documentation, is contributing to the denialists' cause.

All genocide perpetrators seem to use the same textbook not only in the execution of the crimes, but in preparing the atmosphere and the excuses to justify committing those crimes.

The scene for today's atrocities was set a long time ago. The discrimination against the Rohingya Muslims was legalized in 1982 when the military government in Myanmar (then Burma) enacted a law which identified eight different ethnic groups entitled to citizenship, but excluding the Rohingya, which until then had been treated as equals. Then, in 2012, persecution of the Rohingyas began in earnest following the rape of a Buddhist woman. At that time, violence forced 140,000 Rohingyas into internal displacement camps.

Once they were denied citizenship, it was easy to label them as Bengali refugees who had settled in Myanmar rather than people who had lived in the country for generations. And when persecution led to self-defense, demagoguery emerged and served as the excuse that the military was trying to quell an Islamic insurgency. The self-defense group created among the Rohingyas was called the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA).

The Ottoman government used a relocation policy against the Armenians to reduce their population proportions vis-à-vis the Turks or Muslims in general, since they had aligned the Kurds to support them as fellow Muslims. Then, when out of desperation, the Armenians had to resort to acts of self-defense which played into the hands of the authorities, who would say they have to fight terrorism.

Today, the Kurds constitute almost 25 percent of the population in Turkey and their ethnic identity is under constant attack. And as the PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) fights for Kurdish human rights, they are labeled as terrorists and Europe and the US conveniently adopt the same policy against Kurdish rights.

The same scenario is unfolding in Myanmar. Besides one million deported refugees, about 392 villages are partially or totally razed in the northern Rakhine state. A total of 37,700 buildings are damaged. About 70 percent of the homes have been burned.

Despite the agreement worked out with Bangladesh, not a single Rohingya family has returned to Myanmar where the military government refuses to put in place security measures.

The UN report calls for six military officials to face trials for perpetrating genocide in Myanmar. It also condemns the country's leader Aung San Suu Kyi for failing to stop the atrocities. For a long time, when she was under house arrest, she won the world's sympathy as an icon of democracy, so much so that she received the Nobel Peace Prize. But today, she has remained silent about the elimination of a large chunk of the country's population or even supported the actions of the military junta against the "terrorists." Her case is very much like another ruler in Asia, Rachmawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of President

Sukarno, who was deposed by General Suharto, perpetrator of the genocide of one million ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. Once she became president, she joined the military to persecute the ethnic minorities in the Aceh region and East Timor.

The military junta denies committing genocide and stands in defiance. To carry further that arrogance, the government this week jailed two journalists working for Reuters, Kyaw Soe Oo and Wa Lone, charging them with treason and betraying military

secrets. In reality, they were documenting the systematic killings of Rohingyas by the military units.

This incident is exactly reminiscent of Erdogan jailing Turkish journalists who had documented Turkey's secret arming of terrorist groups in Syria.

It was a courageous act by the UN to investigate the Rohingya case and come out with a clear message about holding the military leaders accountable. Yet, how to implement the recommendations remains challenging, first because it needs a vote at the UN Security Council, where veto-wielding China and Russia have been resisting any pressure on the Myanmar government. Even if a unanimous vote is taken, implementation remains questionable, as Myanmar is not a member of the International Criminal Court.

Genocide in any country against any ethnic group resonates in the hearts and minds of all Armenians and many have raised their voices and tried to help the victims. Fortunately, this time around, a meaningful outlet has been found to voice the sentiments of the Armenians. Indeed, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative has announced that three international organizations – Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) and MERCY Malaysia – will share the \$1 million grant of Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity given to 2018 Aurora Prize Laureate Kyaw Hla Aung, to help 375,000 Rohingya refugees.

The co-founder of the Aurora Prize, Dr. Vartan Gregorian, commented on the occasion: "We remember the horrors and violence experienced by Armenians, especially women and children, during the Genocide and we strongly believe that these humanitarian projects recommended by our latest laureate Kyaw Hla Aung will have a long-lasting positive impact for the Rohingya people in Myanmar and beyond."

It could not have been said any better.



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COMMENTARY

The Beauty and Brutality of New York City's Skyline

By Garo Gumusyan

NEW YORK (*Crain's New York Business*) – MGM brought us such cinematic classics as “Doctor Zhivago” and “The Wizard of Oz.” It’s also the studio behind the recent bombs “Death Wish” and “Overboard.” Yet MGM begins all its films, regardless of quality, with its legendary lion roaring beneath the pretentious phrase “Arts Gratia Artis,” or “art for art’s sake.” Publicist Howard Dietz, in true Hollywood fashion, dreamt it up to give MGM’s popcorn flicks an altruistic veneer. But Tinseltown’s raison d’être is really art for commerce’s sake. The same holds true in New York—except here it’s real estate that reigns supreme. Manhattan’s skyline is an outdoor museum boasting the world’s greatest collection of modern architecture. But this unparalleled, glorious skyscape is just the fortuitous byproduct of a whole lot of shady scheming and dreaming. Frank Lloyd Wright once called the skyline “a great monument, I think, to the power of money and greed.” The price we pay for living in the capital of culture is putting up with the real estate scene’s egomaniacal movers and shakers. In New York, the phrase that pays is “ars gratia verus praedium”—art for real estate’s sake.



Garo Gumusyan (Photo: Buck Ennis)

Consider a tale of two buildings, both rich: the Jean Nouvel-designed 53 W. 53rd Street and the Gordon Bunschaft-designed 9 W. 57 Street. These two buildings are at the top of any “greatest modern buildings in New York” list. They’re from different eras, with 9W57 dating to the 1970s and 53W53 going up now. But both buildings feature brash and self-confident designs worthy of a city famous for tough-talk-

ing strivers. Or, as John Lennon sang in 1974, they’re “Noo Yawkers, with a Noo Yawk walk and a Noo Yawk talk.”

Many Manhattan towers take the easy way out by using the ubiquitous “wedding cake” design to comply with New York’s byzantine setback regulations. But Nouvel and Bunschaft made 53W53 and 9W57 unique by using gentle curves that embrace, rather

than repel, such requirements.

Height is rarely accompanied by grace; picture Patrick Ewing or Kristaps Porzingis lumbering up the court. But 53W53 and 9W57, in achieving both great height and great beauty, transcend their ordinary functions with their form.

And unlike the treasures at the Met and MoMA kept behind exorbitant admission fees, 53W53 and 9W57 are works of art that we can experience just by looking up.

But at what cost? 53W53 is only being built because MoMA made the cold and calculated decision to demolish its neighbor, the charming American Folk Arts Museum building. MoMA then sold the property to a consortium that includes the Pontiac Land Group, Goldman Sachs, and Gerald Hines’ firm.

And what is 53W53’s selling point? In a building where a lowly east-facing one-bedroom goes for \$3.6 million, potential buyers are being enticed by promises of special access to MoMA. Art and commerce, forever intertwined. It’s at 9W57 where we really see how art is at the mercy of money. The ground floor features the Sheldon Solow Art and Architecture Foundation. It’s where the real estate magnate stores masterpieces from bold-faced names like Jean-Michel Basquiat, Sandro Botticelli, Henri see SKYLINE, page 20

LETTERS

Facts, Not Emotions, Lead to Opposition to Diocese Plans for St. Vartan Complex

To the Editor:

As a native New Yorker, and one, who along with my family has been involved in St. Vartan Cathedral/ Diocese for decades in both volunteer work and philanthropy, I feel the need to write a response to Kevork Toroyan’s letter (August 25 issue). You can say that I have a vested interest and can’t be classified as a “Johnny come lately.”

To respond to Mr. Toroyan, I very much understand the mission of the church and so did the survivors of the genocide which is why they sacrificed for decades to raise money to build the Diocese/Cathedral not only as a symbol of survival but to perpetuate our faith. Mr. Toroyan states that “he is sure that if the old patrons were around, they were smart enough to either step up and support the church with their millions as they did in the past or make use of this valuable unutilized asset, or even both.” He is only half right as they would undoubtedly do the former but since I doubt that he ever had direct contact with them, his assumption that they would sign off on selling or leasing Diocesan property is just conjecture on his part and not based on fact or reality.

I can tell the readers that, without a doubt, my father, Edward Alexanian, along with Dadour Dadourian, Joseph Chorbajian, and Zareh Kapikian, all respected, self-sacrificing, committed members of the building committee, would be totally against the sale/lease of the Diocesan land. Unlike Mr. Toroyan, I know their offspring and they have spoken against the project on behalf of their fathers/grandfathers as opposed to Mr. Toroyan’s wishful thinking. It is also unrealistic and perhaps naive to assume that all of the families of the original donors as well as present day donors will continue to provide funding to an organization that holds itself unaccountable to the community.

Mr. Toroyan is a respected member of our community, but misses the point as to why, despite the fact that we do have major benefactors today, the parishes and the Diocese are facing financial problems. So the question is why aren’t the masses donating the way that they used to. In the past, Armenians supported the church without question because it was, in large part, a way of life and perhaps the center of their lives. The generations after the survivors don’t take things for granted and question the status quo. If the Diocese has a windfall due to a sale or lease of land, there’s no guarantee that this will increase membership in our churches or that funds will be managed in

a more responsible way or that those in charge will be more farsighted unless there are changes in mindset.

A case in point: This land project was veiled in secrecy, without knowledge or input from the community, a remnant mindset from bygone days. You need a score card to detail the “flip flops” and misinformation. The Council has been asked repeatedly to convene a Town Hall meeting in order to facilitate a give and take of information, and perhaps new ideas as to how to monetize the Diocese, but instead has opted to invite a select few for a face to face after each Diocesan Council meeting thereby turning their backs on the majority of the community. I guess it’s easier to cajole a handful of people into agreeing with their “bad plan” rather than speaking with a larger cross section of the community.

Mr. Toroyan also doesn’t see the possibility of the threat posed by the sale of a 32-story high-rise looming over St. Vartan Cathedral and the plaza to Turks/Azeris or apartments rented by the aforementioned. To put it mildly, that scenario would be the final nail in our coffin.

Mr. Toroyan, an architectural engineer by profession involved in construction, (which might explain the mindset behind his support for the sale/lease of Diocesan land), alludes to my “playing on emotion.” I ask him to reread my letter and look at the facts that I presented including the fact that the Community Board is against the project which will seriously impact the project moving forward, the financial risks based on the deal as presented, as well as supply and demand of apartments, and the downturn in the housing market (see Garo Gumusyan’s commentary in the 8/25 issue.)

The Primate, Diocesan Council, Board of Trustees and Delegates are all elected to their positions just like the President and Congress. It’s part of their fiduciary duty to promote the will of the majority whether or not they agree with the community at large. The community has spoken loud and clear against the plan to sell/lease the Diocesan land.

They say that power is taken and not given. Those who are pushing the project have embraced that concept since they are moving forward despite massive pushback. It’s up to the responsible “powers that be” to embrace their fiduciary responsibility to respect and promote the will of the community, take back that power, and stop the project from moving forward.

Adrienne G. Alexanian
New York City

Diocesan Council Leaders Leave Much to Be Desired

To the Editor:

It appears “A Statement from the Diocesan Council Regarding the Diocesan Development Plan Proposal” (August 14, *Mirror-Spectator*) has sparked a timely discussion about the decades of poor leadership, management and communication skills of “career Diocesan Council members” in the Eastern Diocese.

Mr. James Kalustian, the poster child for a “career Diocesan Council member,” has served since 2001, both as a treasurer and currently as chairman. It is very clear that Mr. Kalustian has no intention of holding a Special Diocesan Assembly Session before the May 2019 Diocesan Assembly in Massachusetts, as requested by the Diocesan Delegates in their historic petition. The Diocesan Council is cleverly avoiding facing the Diocesan Delegates until next year at all costs under the pretext “there is no deal yet to discuss.” It is well known that Mr. Kalustian would be publicly asked to resign at a Special Diocesan Assembly Session. Further, Mr. Kalustian’s is up for reelection in 2021, at which time he’ll have served for two straight decades, without fear of term limits. It is the “career Diocesan Council members” like Mr. Kalustian, who reduce the chances of election to the Diocesan Council among the younger Diocesan Delegates, by never giving up their thrones.

At the Diocesan Assembly in May, Mr. Kalustian, a former member of the Supreme

Spiritual Council, advocated strongly for the sale of the land of the Diocesan Center “because we have no other choice.” Upon the embarrassment of realizing a month later that prominent benefactors of the Eastern Diocese and Holy Echmiadzin from the greater New York area, families such as Bedevian, Dadourian, Nazarian and Toufayan, were adamantly against the sale of the land of the Diocesan Center, he frantically shifted gears in an attempt to save face and lease the land of the Diocesan Center. His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, will arrive in New York the third week of September, at which time Mr. Kalustian will again attempt to minimize the fallout from the proposed sale.

Rather than bring in seasoned experts from New York City to carefully study and identify ways to monetize the land of the Diocesan Center before negotiations began, Mr. Kalustian prefers to shrug off well intentioned recommendations, often to the frustration of fellow Diocesan Council members, as well as members of the Diocesan Board of Trustees. Despite having no expertise in the real estate and construction market in New York City, Mr. Kalustian continues negotiating without a current appraisal. No matter how divisive the proposal is to the community or how damaging they are to relations with key benefactors of the Eastern Diocese and Holy Echmiadzin, Mr. Kalustian and some of his fellow Diocesan

Council members press on in their failed attempt to prove they are the modern day Haik Kavoukjian and Dadour Dadourian.

The developer negotiating against Mr. Kalustian and the Eastern Diocese has decades of experience in the New York City market. The imbalance in expertise is like sending someone with a second grade knowledge of Armenian to represent the Eastern Diocese at a Supreme Spiritual Council meeting at Holy Echmiadzin.

Like a corporate CEO to his shareholders, at what point will the chairman and former treasurer (2005-2011) realize that he must accept some of the responsibility for the flawed management and financial failures of the Eastern Diocese since 2001? It appears Mr. Kalustian is simply not the right fit for the Diocese at this critical juncture, when communication and transparency are paramount.

Having continuously taught Sunday School for over fifty years in the Eastern and Western Diocese, I suggest that the chairman of the Diocesan Council refer to the rhetorical illustration used by Khrimian Hayrig to describe the helplessness he felt at the Congress of Berlin. With Mr. Kalustian desperately trying to make a deal at any cost, we are again stuck sticking our paper ladle in the cauldron of harissa, while the developer has already arrived with his iron ladle.

Rebecca Bakalian Hachikian
Los Angeles



COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Congress Must Investigate US Loans To Secretive Azeri Silk Way Airlines

Last year, I wrote an article reporting that the Silk Way Airlines of Azerbaijan made 350 secret flights to transport hundreds of tons of weapons from Bulgaria to ISIS terrorists in Syria and other Middle Eastern countries between 2014 and 2017.

We now have a new surprising revelation that Silk Way received \$419.5 million of loans from the US Export-Import Bank (EXIM) to buy three 747-8 cargo planes from Boeing to continue its sinister operations.

The disclosure was made by a reporter for the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) by filing a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with the US government in 2016. It is noteworthy that Silk Way, “owned by a company with past ties to Azerbaijan’s Aliyev family, won some lucrative contracts from the US military,” according to FOIA documents.

In fact, “Silk Way was given contracts worth more than \$400 million with the US Defense Department’s Transportation Command for more than decade,” according to Devansh Mehta of OCCRP. Silk Way transported “ammunition and other non-lethal materials” to Afghanistan as of 2005. “In addition to its relationship with the US government, Silk Way Airlines has also worked as a subcontractor for the Canadian Department of National Defense, the German armed forces, and the French army,” Mehta revealed.

In April 2017, Silk Way increased its purchases from Boeing, signing a \$1 billion deal for 10 new 737 MAX passenger planes, according to reporter Mehta. However, it is not known how the new acquisition was financed. Last October, Silk Way

announced plans to buy two more 747-8 cargo planes.

Mehta disclosed that “the airline is owned by Silk Way Group, which, at least at one point, was closely associated with Azerbaijan’s ruling Aliyev family (which has used its planes for private trips) and has benefited from benevolent state deals. Information obtained through FOIA shows that Silk Way Airlines took steps to conceal its owners’ identity, perhaps to improve its chances of winning the valuable US loan guarantees and military contracts.”

Mehta added that “Azerbaijan ranks 122nd out of 180 countries in Transparency International’s corruption perception index, while President Ilham Aliyev’s family owns luxury properties around the world worth over \$140 million. The Panama Papers and other leaks have implicated the country’s first family as being involved in nearly all sectors of the Azerbaijani economy, from luxury hotels to mining to banking.”

According to the terms of the Export-Import Bank’s \$419.5 million loan to Silk Way, in case of default the loss would be repaid by the state-owned International Bank of Azerbaijan (IBA). The problem is that IBA has been “implicated in the Azerbaijani Laundromat, a massive scheme that pumped nearly \$3 billion out of the country through various shell companies,” Mehta wrote. Furthermore, IBA is not in a position to guarantee the Silk Way loan, as the IBA itself declared bankruptcy in 2015, unable to pay its \$3.3 billion debt!

Nate Schenkkan, project director of the Nations in Transit report at Freedom House, a US-based nonprofit that monitors democracy and human rights around the world, questioned the wisdom of EXIM Bank’s loan to Silk Way: “In Azerbaijan, where one family dominates economically and politically, and is then using state institutions to back its economic projects, there’s an obvious conflict of interest.”

Arzu Aliyeva, President Aliyev’s 21-year-old daughter in 2010, was one of the three owners of Silk Way Bank, the financial arm of Silk Way Holding. Since 2017, her name is no longer mentioned as an owner. “Silk Way Holding, also referred to as Silk Way Group (SW Group) on its website, is a conglomerate that has currently listed 11 companies in its portfolio, including the airline,” according to Mehta.

Silk Way Holding dominated Azerbaijan’s aviation sector after the state carrier AZAL airlines was privatized in a highly secretive manner without any bids and tenders. Mehta wrote that “a similar privatization of the telecom sector ended up with the [Aliyev] family earning about \$1 billion in

bribes in cash and share value, according to an earlier OCCRP story. The investigation also found that the money was funneled to the first family through various secret offshore companies. These companies have enabled the Aliyevs to control stakes in gold mines, telecommunications and construction businesses in Azerbaijan.”

According to a filing in 2006, Silk Way Airlines was owned by IHC (International Handling Company), an offshore entity based in the British Virgin Islands. In a 2017 filing, Silk Way Airlines stated that 40% of the company was owned by IHC, while 60% was owned by SW Holding, “effectively controlled” by Zaur Akhundov, an Azerbaijani citizen. Mehta stated that “IHC is linked to the Aliyev family through its director Jaouad Dbila who reportedly served as a proxy for the first family’s business interests in the past.”

In 2011, a Russian-born manager, Grigory Yurkov, was given power of attorney for both Silk Way Holding and IHC, according to Luxembourg’s official gazette. This appointment was used as a means to conceal the true owners of IHC.

Meanwhile, Zaur Akhundov had mysteriously become the 100-percent owner of the entire Silk Way Group in 2014. By that time, the firm and its many holdings were already worth billions of dollars, Mehta declared, based on the company’s loan guarantee application. Akhundov, 50, had held several official positions in Azerbaijan. “It is unclear how Akhundov became the owner of a billion-dollar conglomerate with more than 10 aircrafts, an insurance company, a construction company and an aircraft maintenance company, to name a few of the enterprises in the Silk Way Group,” Mehta wondered.

According to Schenkkan of Freedom House, “Azerbaijan can be described as a centralized, vertical pyramid where the benefits go to one family that collects rents throughout the economy. This includes all sorts of transactions, not only official state transactions that might involve taxes and public funds, but also things that involve what we normally consider the private sector: import-export, consumer goods, transport – any area of the economy, the family has a stake in it and receives a cut on what takes place.”

The US Congress should hold a hearing to investigate the appropriateness of EXIM Bank’s \$419.5-million loan guarantee to Silk Way Airlines, its arms shipments to terrorist groups in the Middle East, and its hidden ownership by the ruling Aliyev family. After all, why should Azerbaijan, a country with billions of petrodollars, be given a US loan?

Lebanon Is on a Tightrope, Balancing Saudi, Iranian and Western Interests

By Robert Fisk

Facing possible invasion from both Britain and Germany in 1940 and determined to remain neutral, the Irish government in Dublin asked one of its senior ministers to draft a memorandum on how to stay out of the Second World War. “Neutrality is a form of limited warfare,” was his eloquent but bleak response.

The Lebanese would agree. For seven years, they have been pleading and praying and parleying to stay out of the Syrian war nextdoor, to ignore Israel’s threats, Syria’s sisterly embrace, America’s warnings, Russia’s entreaties and Iran’s blandishments. I guess you have to be an especially gifted people to smile obligingly – ingratiatingly, simplistically, bravely, grovellingly, wearily – at all around you and get away with it.

“When Lebanon is without a government for a month, you know the Lebanese are to blame,” a friend announced to me over coffee in Beirut this week. “When Lebanon is without a government for three months, you know foreigners are involved.” Armies have clanked through Lebanon for thousands of years, of course, but its current suitors are arriving with almost daily frequency. The Lebanese are being embraced by the newly victorious Syria, threatened by Israel, warned by the Americans, cuddled by the Russians and vouchsafed eternal love by the Iranians who pay and arm the Lebanese Hezbollah militia. And all this with an \$80bn national debt, 1.5 million Syrian refugees, and electricity cuts – every day, without exception – since 1975.

It’s a lesson in how to be small, stay safe and live in fear. The caretaker cabinet of Saad Hariri – in effect, the pre-election Lebanese government and the next government rolled into one, each minister chosen under the country’s tiresome Muslim-Christian system of sectarianism – has adopted a policy of “dissociation” from regional conflicts. “Dissociation” is a version of neutrality, in which almost everyone from the Americans to the Iranians and the EU pretends that Lebanon is united in mutual love, and of far more use intact than destroyed in a rerun of the 1975-1990 civil war. The EU, of course, is lavishing money on the bankrupt Lebanese patient because it doesn’t want even more refugees pouring into Europe.

In fact Lebanon’s neutrality also protects it from itself. The Sunnis receive massive funding from the Saudis, who loathe

the Iranians, Hezbollah and the Lebanese Shias who support them. The Sunni Lebanese prime minister Saad Hariri loves the Saudis – or rather, has to love the Saudis, since they support his premiership and because he holds Saudi citizenship and the Saudis believe he will do their bidding. Readers may remember the gentlemanly kidnapping of Hariri in Riyadh last year and his ghostly reappearance before Saudi television to “resign” his Lebanese premiership until president Macron rescued him from the clutches of crown prince Mohammad bin Salman, and spirited him to Paris where he mysteriously resumed his Lebanese premiership. Hariri, being an eclectic passport holder, is also a French citizen.

The Lebanese Christians, as always, are divided – President Michel Aoun remains a pal of Assad, the rest fear another Syrian “intervention” in Lebanon – while Hezbollah says that if Israel strikes Iran, the war between Shia militias and Israel will restart in southern Lebanon. Israel regularly threatens Hezbollah – to Hezbollah’s delight – and Lebanon. Walid Jumblatt’s Druze still await the destruction of Assad. Try explaining all that to Donald Trump. After all, it’s only a year ago that the dotty US president praised Hariri for being “in the front line of the fight against Hezbollah” – haplessly unaware that poor old Hariri sits next to Hezbollah’s ministers in the Lebanese cabinet.

The Americans (and the Saudis) therefore maintain their constant and useless exhortation to Lebanon that the Shia Hezbollah must be disarmed/disbanded/merged with the Lebanese army – since they are armed by Iran (the font of all evil), the enemy of Israel (the font of all goodness) and the ally of Syria (whose leader the Americans still theoretically want to dethrone as the font of all chemical warfare) – while sending arms to the Lebanese army. Besides, no Lebanese soldier – least of all a Shia – is going to attack his Shia brothers and sisters in south Lebanon for the benefit of the Americans, Saudis or Israelis.

So American support keeps coming, up to a point; just two months ago, Lebanese army commander general Joseph Aoun was in Washington to discuss “counter-terrorism cooperation” – only months after his soldiers and Hezbollah (‘terrorists’, according to the US State Department) had together helped to drive Islamists out of the Eرسال pocket in north-eastern Lebanon. The Americans gave the Lebanese army four A-29 Super Tucano light-attack aircraft, powerful enough to shoot

up Isis, weak enough to be of no threat to Israel. US military aid to Lebanon stands at a slightly measly \$70m a year – compare it to \$47bn over 40 years to the Egyptian military, which cannot even suppress the current Isis uprising in Sinai. And US weapons will cease to arrive in Beirut, the Americans have made perfectly clear, the moment the Lebanese are tempted by Iranian offers.

The Iranians, with their crashing rial economy, have been offering Beirut even more cash – from where, exactly, we don’t know – than the Americans, along with guns, agricultural and industrial assistance. After Iran’s new military and defense agreements with Syria, and the “productive role” it will play in Syria’s post-war reconstruction – the words of Iranian defense minister Amir Hatami – not to mention the rebuilding of Syrian military installations, airbases, schools, hospitals (comparatively speaking, this list is of Marshall Plan proportions) there must surely be a merging of funds and fantasy. You wouldn’t think that Iran’s minister of economy had been dismissed this week. The Russians, needless to say, want their stake in the reconstruction of Syria – so do the Lebanese, one might add – but in Lebanon the Russians have a team offering to take tens of thousands of Syrian refugees home under guarantees of safety.

This is good news for President Aoun and his foreign minister Gebran Bassil (who happens to be Aoun’s son-in-law), who want to get rid of the Syrian refugee camps across Lebanon and help to restore “normalization” to Syria. But there were lots of objections from the Europeans and the UN, who’ll have to get involved and want to make sure the refugees don’t get slapped into prison the moment they cross the border and more than anything want to avoid the “normalization” of post-war Syria under Assad.

Corbyn leads debate into Parliament vote on Syria strikes: ‘The government is attempting to overturn a democratic advance’

The Syrians, meanwhile, want to resume their formerly “sisterly” relations with Lebanon and are impatient when the Lebanese – especially Hariri – resist. Syria, with massive power cuts of its own, is already offering electricity to Lebanon, and the Lebanese were delighted to hear that the Syrian government had just retaken control of the Syrian-Jordanian frontier post at Nassib. This would surely reopen the

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Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan shakes the hand of Garo Armen while Tony Shafrazi looks on.

Garos Armen, Tony Shafrazi Visit Prime Minister

YEREVAN — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on August 16 received businessman, founder and chairman of the Board of Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) Garo Armen and cultural figure Tony Shafrazi, who has collaborated with a number of world-known artists, including Andy Warhol, Jean Michel Basquiat.

During the meeting, Pashinyan was introduced to the activities of COAF and its upcoming programs, including education and culture. Garo Armen noted that they plan to create centers in the format SMART Innovative Educational Center in Debed community of Lori region to attract other schoolchildren and young people as well as high-quality specialists. The center will be taught the latest technologies, foreign languages, crafts, different branches of art, etc. Armen also touched upon the business plans for health and other spheres, and noted that different business circles of the Diaspora are also considering the possibilities of implementing investment projects in the homeland.

Pashinyan praised the activities of COAF and attached importance to the initiatives of Diaspora representatives to implement business projects in different directions and underlined that the Government creates the necessary conditions for business and profit. At the same time, Nikol Pashinyan offered Garo Armen to actively work with the relevant government departments of the Republic of Armenia to implement investment programs to promote them efficiently.

Shooting at US Embassy in Ankara Leads to Rare Moment Of US-Turkey Solidarity

By Kareem Fahim

ISTANBUL (*Washington Post*) — When gunmen opened fire on the US Embassy in Ankara just before sunrise Monday, August 20, they struck a fortified guard booth but caused no injuries or other harm.

The shooting in the Turkish capital, however, posed a different kind of danger: threatening to aggravate a bitter feud between Turkey and the United States that has raged for weeks.

The dispute centers on Turkey's refusal to release a detained American pastor and is the worst between the two NATO allies in decades. It has included tit-for-tat economic sanctions and recriminations between President Trump and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

On Monday, though, both sides appeared determined to prevent their feud from spiraling further. Turkish officials quickly condemned the shooting, with Ibrahim Kalin, a spokesman for Erdogan, writing on Twitter that the attack was “an open attempt to create chaos.” Foreign missions, he added, were “under the protection of the law.”

By Monday evening, Turkish authorities had announced the arrests of two suspects. A US Embassy statement praised the “fast and professional” action of the Turkish government and police as well as “their support and protection,” in a rare moment of solidarity between two countries whose vitriolic arguments have reverberated around the globe.

Tensions between the two sides escalated in early August, when the Trump administration sanctioned two top Turkish officials in retaliation for Ankara's refusal to release the American pastor Andrew Brunson. Turkey is prosecuting Brunson on terrorism-related charges that US officials have dismissed as ludicrous.

When Trump subsequently said he would double tariffs on Turkish steel, the announcement helped further weaken the faltering Turkish currency and raised fears that Turkey's economic troubles could spread to global markets.

Erdogan has reacted with defiance and directed public anger at the United States, accusing the Trump administration of interfering with Turkey's judiciary and waging economic warfare.

Turkish courts have repeatedly rejected appeals to free Brunson from house arrest. His next court hearing is scheduled for early October.

A statement by the Ankara governor on Monday said two suspects, Ahmet Celikten and Osman Gundas, had admitted to carrying out the embassy shooting, which occurred about 5:30 a.m. The statement provided no detail about the motive for the attack and said the investigation was continuing.

Celikten, born in 1979, was wanted by authorities over “his failure to fulfill insurance obligations,” the statement said. Gundas, born in 1980, had a history of petty crime, including charges for auto theft, it said.

The US Embassy is closed to the public for four days this week because of Eid al-Adha, a Muslim holiday.

Lebanon Is on a Tightrope, Balancing Saudi, Iranian and Western Interests

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only land transit passage for Lebanese exports to Jordan and the Gulf.

But there was a catch. Syria's ambassador to Beirut, Ali Abdul Karim Ali, made a suitably Baathist remark this week. “Enemies are now looking for ways to put their pride aside, so” — and here he was referring to Lebanon — “what about the brotherly country whose land borders are all with Syria, in addition to occupied Palestine?” For Palestine, read Israel. And, Ali added, “Syria of course needs Lebanon, but Lebanon needs it more.” Then came reports — unconfirmed but distressing for Hariri's pro-Saudi camp — that while returning refugees could cross the Nassib border post, it was not yet open to Lebanese lorries carrying the country's fruit and vegetable exports. “Blackmail,” roared Hariri. Even more galling for the Lebanese was a photograph showing Russian military police as well as Syrian troops at the Nassib border.

So if Lebanon needs Syria more than Syria needs Lebanon, I suppose that Lebanon needs America more than America needs Lebanon — but Iran needs Lebanon more than Lebanon needs Iran. And the Saudis need Lebanon, because they can use Hariri as the figurehead of Sunnism against the Shia Hezbollah/Syrian axis and thus damage Shia Iran. And the Lebanese, with their \$80bn debt — a result of the policies, ironically, of Hariri's murdered father Rafiq — need the Saudis. The Russians? Surely, with their fleet sailing the billows off the Syrian coastal city of Tartus, they need no one. Perhaps that Irish minister — Frank Aiken, veteran of the Irish war of independence and the Irish civil war — was right in 1940. Neutrality is a form of limited warfare.

(Robert Fisk is a columnist for the newspaper the *Independent*, where this column

The Beauty and Brutality of New York City's Skyline

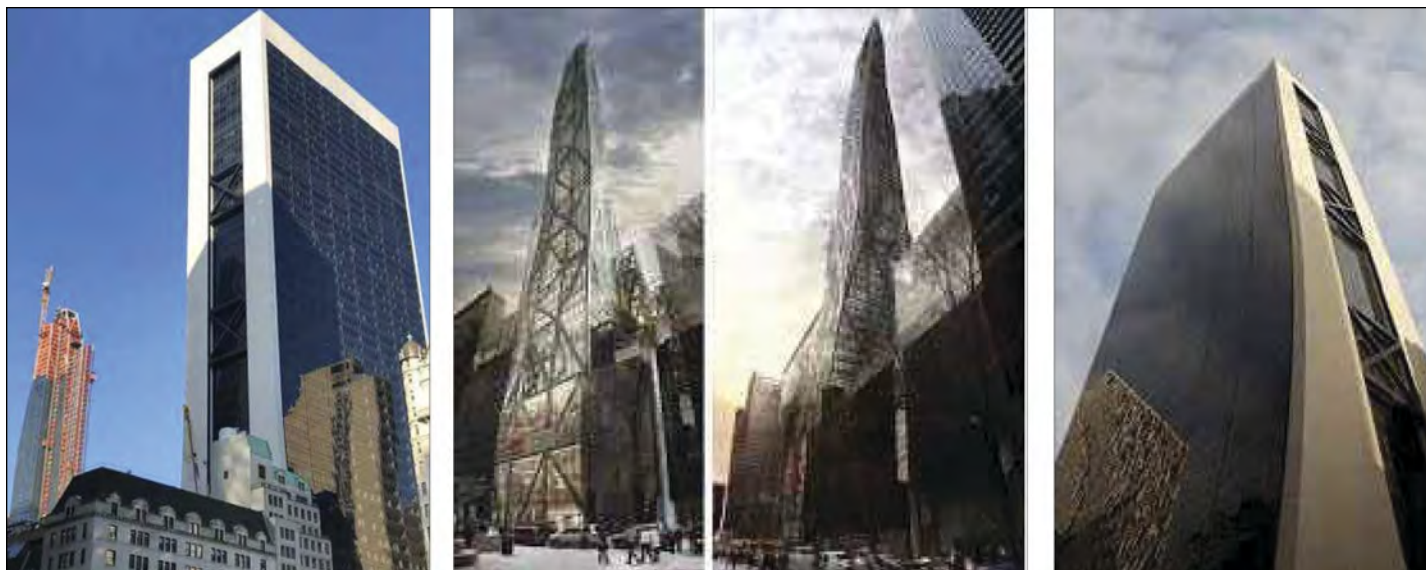
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Matisse, Joan Miró and Vincent van Gogh. But Solow is not Cosmo de' Medici, the great Florentine renaissance patron. Philippe de Montebello, currently at the Acquavella Galleries after a storied reign at the Met, diplomatically observed that Solow “is somebody

payer-subsidized vault. As *Nonprofit Quarterly* asks, “Are we looking at a charitable operation or a vanity purchase with a built-in tax break?” Solow's art heist is audacious. But, despite the outcry sparked by Anuta's article, Solow still has the last laugh.

fee needed. A simple stroll around Manhattan offers a more rewarding artistic experience than whatever Solow is shielding.

Solow's shenanigans are nothing new to a seasoned New Yorker. They have been a part of the city's real estate scene ever since Peter Minuit swindled his way into the island of



Photos of the building at 9 W. 57th Street at far left and far right framing renderings of the new building going up at 53 W. 53rd Street in the center

who buys things he reacts very strongly to, not in an academic way.”

More like a tax-avoidance way. As Crain's Joe Anuta reported, Solow tells the IRS that his museum's charitable—and thus tax-exempt—mission is to “display artwork for exhibition to the public.” Yet Solow does not welcome pedestrian New Yorkers into his tax-

But there is a slender silver lining to all of these shady schemes. It's that we get to live amidst the world's most diverse collection of modern architecture. From 9W57's swooping embrace to Hudson Yards' hulking giants, to the underwhelming and overhyped 1 World Trade Center, the good, the bad, and the ugly are all on display with no curator or entrance

Manhatta. We can't do much about New York's real estate robber barons. So the least we can ask is that they give us interesting buildings to look at. Or, as Christopher Hitchens—another Englishman in New York—put it, “the one unforgivable sin is to be boring.”

Garos Armen is a Manhattan-based architect at GGA Architecture.