

Panel Addresses Disappearing Christian Population in Middle East

WASHINGTON — Armenian-American leaders and activists from across the country gathered earlier this fall in the nation's capital for the Armenian Assembly of America 2018 National Advocacy Conference and Gala in a unified effort to strengthen congressional support for

Winkler, General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church Director Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe, and The Religious Freedom Institute (RFI) Executive Director Kent Hill, and asked questions about what can be done on Capitol Hill to help this minority communi-

ty, forgotten minorities," Aykazian said.

RFI Executive Director Hill started the discussion by describing his experience traveling to Armenia while representing the US Government and US Agency for International Development (USAID), and expressed his admiration at seeing some of the oldest churches in Christian history.

He then continued with daunting facts about the current Christian population in the Middle East, and shared with the audience findings and statistics that he see POPULATIONS, page 20



The Religious Freedom Institute Executive Director Kent Hill at the Armenian Assembly's 2018 National Advocacy Conference

Primate Extolls 'Higher Vision' Uniting All Faithful at Interfaith Memorial

NEW YORK — In the wake of the massacre at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh on October 27, prominent New York religious leaders gathered for an interfaith prayer service at Manhattan's venerable Park East Synagogue on Wednesday, October 31.

The Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan, joined Roman Catholic Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Demetrios, and others at the invitation of Rabbi Arthur Schneier, senior rabbi of the synagogue see INTERFAITH, page 20



Diocesan Primate Fr. Daniel Findikyan addresses New York faith leaders at Manhattan's historic Park East Synagogue, for victims of the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting.

United States-Armenia relations and to raise concerns in the House and Senate. As part of its Advocacy Conference, the Assembly organized a panel of experts sharing their insights of the realities of the persecuted Christians in the Middle East.

The conference attendees heard from National Council of Churches (NCC) President and General Secretary Jim

ty. The panel was 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.

"I think this is an excellent contribution to this assembly to know about the suffering of Christians in the Middle East — the

Two Decades of Armenian Studies in Germany

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach and Dr. André Höhn

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

HALLE-WITTENBERG, Germany — It is a unique institution in the country, the only center specializing in Armenian studies, Armenology. When the Mesrop Arbeitsstelle für Armenische Studien (Mesrop Center for Armenian Studies) at the Martin Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg observed its 20th anniversary on October 18-19, it celebrated the special role it has played in bringing knowledge of

the Armenian language, literature, culture and history to not only academic circles but also the broader public. Much has been achieved, and the potential for development is even greater.

Since the Bundestag (Parliament) passed a resolution in June 2016 recognizing the Armenian genocide, interest in Armenia has expanded immensely. For many Germans that political act opened the door to discovery of a hitherto unknown people and their culture. Several new studies, especially of the history of the genocide, have appeared and been well received.

see GERMANY, from page 4



Armenian Foreign Minister Meets with ADL Supreme Council Representative

YEREVAN — On November 2, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan met with Armenian Democratic Liberal Party Supreme Council representative Edmond Y. Azadian in the former's office. The latest political developments in the region were discussed, particularly in the light of the recent visits of representatives of the American government. At left, Edmond Y. Azadian, left, is with Zohrab Mnatsakanyan.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran Sanctions by US Worry Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia Karen Nazaryan told reporters in the Parliament on November 6 that "The issue of international sanctions against Iran is quite a sensitive topic for Armenia. We have always provided full support to the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action which was signed between Iran and the respective partner states. Continuation of traditional, mutually beneficial and friendly relations with our neighbor country is very important for us. In the relations with its partner states Armenia has always been guided with the principle to develop these ties based on the bilateral political-economic interests. We are not conducting our cooperation with Iran at the expense of our partnership with the US," he said.

Nazaryan said Armenia follows the ongoing developments in Iran as it is a vital issue for the country. He informed that they are in constant contact with Iranian partners, as well as with other partner-states engaged in the process.

Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Anna Naghdalyan added that Armenia is currently carrying out a comprehensive studies on the consequences that the US sanctions on Iran can have on the country.

"We are closely following the developments in this direction and we are in constant contact with all parties involved in this process. We are clearly presenting our issues and concerns. The traditionally friendly relations with Iran are of vital significance for Armenia. Currently a comprehensive expert study is underway on the consequences on Armenia of the sanctions on Iran," she said.

No POWs in Armenia or Artsakh

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — There are no prisoners of war (POW) in Armenia and Artsakh at this moment, Armenia's caretaker Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan told reporters on November 6 ahead of parliamentary committee debates of the 2019 state budget.

Tonoyan was addressing a Russian media report that claimed that Azerbaijan has offered to carry out an exchange of prisoners.

"There is no official talk in terms of exchange of prisoners. I've got this information from the media. If prisoners of war were to exist in Armenia or Artsakh they would be exchanged, but at this phase there are no prisoners of war," Tonoyan said.

He emphasized that the arrested and imprisoned prisoners in Artsakh are convicted for committing crimes, and they cannot be considered prisoners of war.

Tonoyan said that the operative connection functions between the two sides and in the event of violations they immediately notify for respective actions to be carried out.

INSIDE

Constellation Of Memories

Page 14

INDEX

Arts and Living	12
Armenia	2
Community News	5
Editorial	18
International	3,4



ARMENIA

News From Armenia

Illegal Burials at Talin Church

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A historic-cultural monument under state protection has been illegally used as a burial site from 1994 to 2017, according to the state.

The Culture Ministry had contacted the general prosecutor's department of state interest protection to study the reports on illegal burials in the area of the Katoghike Church — a historic-cultural site under state preservation — in the town of Talin in Aragatsotn Province.

The general prosecution said that the illegal burials have damaged the integrity of the historic monument.

A criminal investigation has been launched on damaging historic-cultural monuments.

Artsakh Soldier Killed

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Soldier Aristakes Azatyan, 18, a member of the Artsakh armed forces, received a fatal gunshot wound on November 6, the Artsakh Defense Ministry announced.

An investigation is underway to clarify the details of the incident.

Artsakh's defense ministry offered its condolences to the family, relatives and co-servicemen of the soldier.

Prime Minister Wife Visits Family of Boy Taken by Azeri Forces

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The wife of Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Anna Hakobyan, visited the family of Karen Ghazaryan, who has been captured by Azerbaijan, on November 6. The family lives in Tavush Province.

Hakobyan's spokesperson Arpine Ghazaryan said the goal was to meet Ghazaryan's parents, to get information about the health of his father Armen Ghazaryan, as well as answer their questions.

Hakobyan noted that Human Rights Defender of Armenia Arman Tatoyan recently applied to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights over Ghazaryan's case. Hakobyan said she hoped that the international institutions, particularly ICRC will act promptly.

"The lawyers told us that Karen Ghazaryan's case at the ECHR is in a stage that the explanations of the Azerbaijani side are expected. The lawyers assure us that our position is very firm, at least from the point that Karen Ghazaryan is neither a diversionist nor a terrorist. Karen has serious health problems and proofs have been presented to the ECHR," Hakobyan said.

Police Chief Vows Crack Down on Vote Buying

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Police Chief Valery Osipyan has vowed to wage war against vote buying during the upcoming early parliamentary elections.

At a briefing on November 6, Osipyan warned those who will bribe voters will be punished.

"Those who will practice it will be strictly punished regardless of their party membership and irrespective of who they are," said Osipyan, adding that the Armenian police are fully prepared for the general elections.

"It does not matter for us if the elections are held under a new or old electoral code. What is important for us is that everyone is equal before the law," Armenia's police chief underscored.

Snap parliamentary elections in Armenia will be held on December 9.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who came to power in May after leading peaceful demonstrations, forced the dissolution of the National Assembly earlier this month.

The parliament still dominated by loyalists of former president Serzh Sargsyan twice failed to elect a new prime minister after Pashinyan's tactical resignation in October.

Weightlifting Gold Medal Winner Yuri Vardanyan Dies

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) — Yuri Vardanyan, a legendary Armenian weightlifter who won a gold medal at the 1980 Olympic Games, has died in the United States at the age of 62, Armenia's Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs confirmed on Friday, November 2.

In a November 2 statement, Armenia's acting Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Gabriel Ghazarian said Vardanyan died of a "long serious illness."

Vardanyan, who also won a number of world, European and national titles and set 43 weightlifting records during his sporting career, was the world's first weightlifter to achieve a 400-kilogram total in the 82.5-kg weight category.

After ending his weightlifting career, Vardanyan moved to the United States in 1992 and settled in Los Angeles.

In 1994, he was inducted into the



Yuri Vardanyan

International Weightlifting Federation Hall of Fame.

In 2009, Vardanyan returned to Armenia where he served as an advisor to the Armenian president until 2013. Vardanyan then briefly served as Armenia's minister of sports and youth affairs before being appointed the



Yuri Vardanyan in competition

country's ambassador to Georgia in 2014. He left his ambassadorial position in 2017.

Despite his controversial diplomatic career, to this day Vardanyan is hailed as a hero in Armenia for his deeds in the sport of weightlifting. A stamp honoring Vardanyan was printed in Armenia in 2010.

"A man who made thousands of fans honor him with standing ovations, a man whom numerous young athletes wished to emulate and whose athletic achievements were a matter of pride for the Armenian people has died," Armenia's acting Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Ghazarian said in a message on the legendary weightlifter's death.

"He [Vardanyan] is an athlete who will, for many years to come, serve as an example to weightlifters. His death is an irreparable loss for the Armenian sport," the official added, expressing his condolences to the family and friends of Vardanyan. 16:40, 2 November, 2018 President Armen Sarkissian sent a letter of condolence to his family, as did

Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

"Yuri Vardanyan was an example for many in the Armenian sport world. With his Olympic and world records he proved that what is impossible is just a challenge which can be overcome, that what is impossible can become possible," Sarkissian wrote. "I extend my sincere condolences to Vardanyan's family, relatives and share their grief and sadness."

Former President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan has extended condolences to the family. "It was with great sorrow that I learnt about the passing of legendary athlete, USSR, Europe and World weightlifting champion, Olympic champion, public figure and statesman Yuri Vardanyan," Sargsyan said.

"The sports heights achieved by Yuri Vardanyan have been a source of admiration and inspiration for all Armenians. Following his example, numerous Armenian young people made a decision to be dedicated to [professional] sports. I am happy that I had the chance to personally know Yuri and closely cooperate with him," he said.

Former President's Son-in-Law Recalled as Vatican Ambassador

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Mikayel Minasyan, the son-in-law of former President Serzh Sargsyan, has been recalled from his ambassadorial posts in the Vatican, Portugal and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta following a decree issued by Armenian President Armen Sarkissian this week.

According to an official report, the president's November 1 decree was "based on the prime minister's recommendation."

Minasyan was appointed Armenia's ambassador to the Vatican in 2013. He served as first deputy chief of the presidential staff in 2008-2011. Political analysts increasingly regarded him as Sargsyan's political and public relations strategist during that period.

During Minasyan's stint as Armenia's ambassador to the Holy See the Pope conducted a mass in the Vatican on the Armenian Genocide Centennial in 2015. The following year Pope Francis paid a visit to Armenia where he reaffirmed his recognition of the 1915 Armenian massacres in Ottoman Turkey as genocide.

During his years of work in public office Minasyan, 41, mostly kept low profile, but he is also thought to have controlled several private TV stations as well as a number of online news services.

Minasyan's diplomatic career appeared to be in limbo after the resignation of his father-in-law Sargsyan as prime minister in April 2018.

Sargsyan stepped down after sustained street protests led by then outspoken opposition lawmaker Nikol Pashinyan, who condemned Sargsyan's election to the post after serving two consecutive five-year terms as president and amending the constitution to

remain in the top state post as the head of the government.

Pashinyan, who was Sargsyan's main rival during Armenia's political crisis last spring, went on to become the country's next prime minister.

The health minister in the Pashinyan government in July sacked Minasyan's father, Ara Minasyan, from the position of executive director of a leading

Yerevan hospital.

Incidentally, investigators in Yerevan said on Friday that fraud charges have been brought against Ara Minasyan, whose whereabouts at this moment are not known to the Armenian authorities.

According to the Investigative Committee, Ara Minasyan was put on the wanted list and the court was asked to issue an arrest warrant for him.

Armenia May Lose CSTO Leadership Post

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — An Armenian Foreign Ministry official on Monday, November 5 neither confirmed nor denied that Yerevan may lose a rotating leadership post in a Russian-led defense grouping of several post-Soviet nations.

Last Friday, Yuri Khachaturov was relieved of his duties as secretary-general of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which includes Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

Khachaturov occupied that post since May 2017 as part of a rotating process in the multinational organization. But he was recalled by official Yerevan in July amid charges of overthrowing the country's constitutional order brought against him as part of a criminal investigation into a 2008 post-election crackdown. Khachaturov served as a deputy defense minister at that time.

The same charges were brought against former President Robert Kocharyan, who was accused of ordering the use of the army for the violent

repression of the opposition-led protests, in which eight demonstrators and two police officers were killed.

The new candidate for the post is likely to be discussed at a CSTO summit to be held in Astana, Kazakhstan, on November 8.

Citing its diplomatic sources in three CSTO-member countries the Russian Kommersant daily reported on Sunday that a Belarus representative may become the new secretary-general of the organization.

The newspaper suggested that the candidate is Stanislav Zas, who currently serves as the state secretary of the Belarus's Security Council.

Asked on Monday whether Zas's candidacy is indeed being discussed, Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Anna Naghdalian said: "The issue of the new CSTO secretary-general is at the stage of consultations. These discussions have some confidential character and are not conducted in the public domain. Respecting this principle, we cannot provide any additional information not to harm these discussions."



ARMENIA

Armenian Envoy to Germany Denies Alleged Ties to Ethnic Mafia

BERLIN (RFE/RL) — Armenia's ambassador to Germany Ashot Smbatyan on November 5 categorically denied any ties to local Armenian criminal groups after an investigation conducted by two leading German media made the allegation, citing classified police reports.

According to a joint investigation carried out by *Der Spiegel* and the MDR TV and Radio Company, the Federal Criminal Police Office, together with the land police departments, has been conducting a classified operation to search for and detain representatives of the Armenian mafia. The Federal Intelligence Service and Europol have helped the criminal investigation officers of Germany in the investigation.

However, the Federal Criminal Police Office recommended that investigators not accept the assistance of the diplomatic mission of Armenia in Germany, since the investigators do not rule out links between so-called "thieves in law" and representatives of the state structures of Armenia.

The authors of the investigative report also note that as a result of the large-scale operation codenamed FATIL (Fight Against Thieves in Law) that involved a number of special services, the law-enforcement authorities established that Armenian mafia groups have developed "deep roots" and created a "strong network" in Germany, but the suspects could not be detained due to insufficient evidence.

The existence of the Armenian mafia in Germany began to be discussed in 2014 after a shootout between two criminal clans in July 2014 in the city of Erfurt, Thuringia, that left two ethnic Armenian men wounded. However, due to lack of evidence, the results of the investigations have not yet led to accusations and criminal cases.

The German law-enforcement authorities initiated 14 criminal proceedings

against more than four dozen people, with charges including money laundering.

The Erfurt shootout was followed by an attack on a restaurant owned by an ethnic Armenian.

According to media publications, the names of well-known Armenian boxers, Arthur Abraham and Karo Murat, who live in Germany, were also circulated in the investigation.

However, the law enforcement authorities did not succeed in finding solid evidence against them and other suspects.

A strictly confidential report drawn up at the end of the investigation, nevertheless, stated that "in Germany there is, indeed, an Armenian mafia which, along with other criminal groups in the Russian-Eurasian region, possesses substantial financial resources, threatening the rule of law in the country."

The leading German media outlets note that last March Armenian Ambassador to Germany Smbatyan met with the chief of the Thuringia District Police Office and offered official Yerevan's assistance in detecting Armenian criminal groups. Germany's Federal Criminal Police Office, however, advised colleagues in a secret report against cooperating with Armenian authorities, citing "possible fusion" between Armenian authorities and mafia groups, according to *Der Spiegel*.

According to the media, in particular, the law-enforcement authorities in Germany suspected that the ambassador, who was appointed in 2015 by the decree of the then Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian, had links

with criminal groups, but no evidence supporting these suspicions was found.

Earlier, in 2008, when Smbatyan was an embassy official, the Federal Intelligence Service suspected him of international smuggling, but no evidence was found in that case either, and the investigation was suspended.

Smbatyan, who last week was appointed also to the post of Armenia's ambas-



Ashot Smbatyan

sador to Liechtenstein, combining these new duties with his current diplomatic post, categorically denies the latest allegations, describing them as absurd.

The German Public Television and Radio Company has produced an extensive film about the investigation and its revelations.

In response to a request from RFE/RL's Armenian Service, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on November 5 said it was in touch with the German authorities to clarify the credibility of the reports published by the media.

"Taking into account the delicate nature of the issue and its potential impact on the work of our diplomatic mission, at this point we do not find it appropriate to give an additional comment. We will provide additional information based on the results," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Anna Naghdalyan said.

Karen Khachanov Stuns Tennis Top Seed Novak Djokovic to Win Paris Masters Title

PARIS (AP) — Karen Khachanov upset a tired-looking Novak Djokovic 7-5, 6-4 to win the Paris Masters title and deprive Djokovic of the chance on Sunday, November 4, to match Rafael Nadal's record of 33 Masters titles.

Djokovic, a record four-time champion at the indoor event, looked out of energy

"I didn't unfortunately. But I don't want to talk about that," he said. "I want to talk about how well (Khachanov) played all week and absolutely deserved to win today."

Asked again whether it was also a case of emotional and mental fatigue, after such an intense tussle with Federer, Djokovic repeated his praise for Khachanov.

"Karen played really well and he deserved to win," Djokovic said. "All the credit to him."

Although Djokovic broke in the fourth game to move 3-1 up and then led 30-0 on serve, the unseeded Khachanov broke him straight back and the momentum abruptly shifted away from Djokovic.

"I made a couple of unforced errors and just played a bad game," Djokovic said.

"Unfortunately, I just didn't have that little extra."

Djokovic struggled to handle Khachanov's brutal two-handed, cross-court backhands from the baseline, which often landed near his ankles, and dropped his serve again to trail 2-1 in the

second set. He had to save three more break points in the seventh game to hold for 4-3 down.

"He was playing big from the back of the court, flat backhands and forehand. He can really hurt you," Djokovic said. "His serve is really, really strong and precise."

He secured victory on his first match point when Djokovic chopped a backhand return wide. The imposing Russian thrust both his arms in the air and, moments later, knelt down to kiss the court.

The 22-year-old Khachanov, ranked 18th, is the first Russian to win here since Nikolay Davydenko in 2006. Marat Safin won it three times before that.

Khachanov added this title to the Kremlin Cup in Moscow last month for his third title of the year and fourth overall.

He has won all of his four finals.

"We're going to see a lot of him in the future," Djokovic said.

According to Wikipedia, Khachanov started playing tennis aged 3. His father, Abgar, played volleyball at a very high level before studying medicine, while his mother, Natalia, also studied medicine.

After he turned 15 he moved to Split, Croatia, where he trained under Vedran Martić, Goran Ivanisević's former coach. Later, he moved to Barcelona and was coached by Galo Blanco.



Russia's Karen Khachanov reacts during the men's singles final tennis match against Serbia's Novak Djokovic, on day seven of the ATP World Tour Masters 1000 - Rolex Paris Masters (Getty Images)

after an epic three-hour semifinal win against Roger Federer on Saturday.

After also being taken to three sets by Marin Cilic in Friday's quarterfinals, Djokovic's semifinal finished at around 8 p.m. He felt he was unable to recover sufficiently from that draining encounter.

International News

Belgian Parliamentarian Visits Artsakh

STEPANAKERT, Artsakh (Public Radio of Armenia) — Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh Republic) Masis Mayilyan received on October 30 a delegation headed by Member of the Belgian Federal Parliament Jean Jacques Flahaux.

The Foreign Minister briefed the guests on Artsakh's foreign policy priorities, in particular, the activities aimed at the international recognition of the Republic of Artsakh and expansion of international cooperation, as well as the current stage of the Azerbaijan-Karabakh conflict settlement process.

Masis Mayilyan stressed the role of parliamentary diplomacy in involving the Republic in international processes and raising the awareness about Artsakh abroad. In this context, the Minister noted the importance of the Friendship Group and the Friendship Circle with Artsakh established in Belgium's Flemish Parliament and in Brussels' Walloon Parliament, which gives an opportunity to expand the frameworks of international cooperation of Artsakh.

The two also exchanged views on a range of issues related to the strengthening and development of cooperation with Belgium.

Representatives of the European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy, headed by the Federation's President, Kaspar Karampetyan, were present at the meeting.

Armenian Ambassador Presents Credentials to Harald V of Norway

OSLO (Armenpress) — Armenia's Ambassador to Norway Alexander Arzumanyan presented his credentials to King Harald V of Norway on October 25, the Foreign Ministry said.

Arzumanyan is stationed in Denmark and concurrently serves as ambassador to Norway.

After the credentials ceremony the Armenian Ambassador and the Norwegian King had a private meeting.

Harald V of Norway spoke highly about the history of the Armenian people and the centuries-old Armenian-Norwegian friendship, noting that back in early 14th century King Haakon V of Norway had met with a delegation from the Kingdom of Cilicia to discuss possible military cooperation.

Harald V also mentioned Norwegian scientist, explorer and diplomat Fridtjof Nansen's dedicated work for the protection of the rights of Armenian refugees and orphans.

Erdogan Slams US for Imposing Sanctions on Iran

ISTANBUL (Anadolu) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has slammed the US sanctions on Iran, the Turkish state-run Anadolu news agency reported.

"We don't find the sanctions to be a right thing, because we believe that [the sanctions] are directed at disrupting the global balance. In addition, they [sanctions] are against the law and diplomacy. We don't want to live in an imperialist world," Erdogan told reporters on November 6.

The US unleashed its "toughest ever" sanctions against Iran on Monday, as the Trump administration reinstated all sanctions removed under the 2015 nuclear deal, targeting both Iran and states that trade with it.

They will hit oil exports, shipping and banks — all core parts of the economy.

Thousands of Iranians chanting "Death to America" rallied on Sunday, rejecting calls for talks.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has vowed to sell his country's oil and break the sanctions.

The military was also quoted as saying it would hold air defense drills on Monday and Tuesday to prove the country's capabilities.

The demonstrations took place on the 39th anniversary of the occupation of the US embassy in Tehran.



INTERNATIONAL

Two Decades of Armenian Studies in Germany

GERMANY, from page 1

But there is more to Armenia and Armenians than the genocide.

Halle is the right place to host the Mesrop center; the city boasts a long tradition of oriental studies, reaching back to 1694, especially studies of the Christian Orient. Another reason is the connection of the university to German reformer Martin Luther. Its director, Prof. Armenuhi Drost-Abarjan, has noted that the center's namesake "was a counterpart to Martin



Prof. Drost-Abarjan, left, with Gohar Khachatryan-Sargsyan

Luther, ... Luther plays the same role for our national literature as Mesrop Mashtots played for Armenian literature." Mesrop's groundbreaking translation of the Bible into Armenian was an inspiration to Luther, who explicitly acknowledged him as his forerunner when he undertook the translation of the Bible into the German vernacular.

Three Causes for Celebration

On October 18, in Halle an der Saale it was not one but three anniversaries that merited a festive toast: the cultural agreement between the Federal Republic of Germany (represented by the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt) and the Republic of Armenia was signed in 1998; the Mesrop Center for Armenian Studies at the Martin Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg also reached its 20th birthday; and, the Yerevan State University and the Halle University looked back on a decade of partnership.

The auditorium in the historic Löwengebäude – the lions' building, so-called for the sculpted reclining kings of the jungle who guard the entrance – in the university square was brightly lit on the evening of October 18 and everything had been prepared for a dignified ceremony. Drost-Abarjan welcomed the numerous guests warmly, musical strains sounded from members of the Halle University Academic Orchestra and the round of congratulations opened. Prof. Tietje, the university's rector, stressed the historical significance of Armenia and the need for objective scientific study of the region. He pointed to the so-called small subjects, the university's responsibility to them and the importance of the Mesrop Center for the Caucasus region in the context of European politics.

Dr. Ude, State Secretary of the Federal State Ministry for Economics, Science and Digitalization, summarized the activities of the Mesrop Center to date as well as its engagement for cultural mediation, and, speaking in the name of the ministry, expressed deep gratitude to Prof. Drost-Abarjan. He also voiced appreciation for the activity of Prof. Dr. Goltz, the first Director of the institute, whose achievements were to be acknowledged with utmost respect repeatedly throughout the course of the evening. His Excellency Ashot Smbatyan, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia in Germany, called for injecting more vitality into the abstract relations between Armenia and Germany, and emphasized the central role Armenian studies play for Mesrop as well as the elevated status the Center enjoys in research on Armenia as a Christian nation. Dr. Arayik Harutyunyan, Minister of Science and Education, R.A., coined a fitting honorary title for Mesrop – he dubbed it the "second Armenian embassy" – and reported on the institution's efforts to strengthen Armenian studies in Germany and, with the help of special scholarships, to promote a vigorous student exchange program.

The loudest applause of the evening then came, when Prof. Drost-Abarjan, visibly moved, received the "Gold Medal" from the Armenian Ministry of Science, an award which stands as a tangible symbol honoring her indefatigable intellectual work, for which she deserves most heartfelt thanks. Dr. Gunnar Schellenberger, State Secretary of the Minister President's Office and of the Ministry for Culture of Saxony-Anhalt, followed, and spiced his greetings with amusing accounts of his personal experience during his visit to Armenia ten years ago. Dr. Vahan Ter-Ghevondyan, Director of the Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute Matenadaran, Yerevan, spoke in conclusion about the close relations between the Mesrop Center and various Armenian scientific institutions. He noted the project for a Dictionary of Middle Armenian, and recalled the German scholars who made contributions to Armenian culture.

Aims and Challenges

Prof. Theo van Lint, Calouste Gulbenkian Professor of Armenian Studies from Oxford University, delivered the Laudatio. He elaborated on the landmark cultural agreement signed in 1998 between Germany and Armenia and quoted the aims of the center then defined as follows: "strengthening Armenian studies in Germany in research and teaching, establishing an official professorial chair at the Halle University, scientific counseling and coordination of German-Armenian scientific and cultural projects as well as institutional partnerships, providing competent expertise to museums, libraries, archives, as well as to financial support institutions in both countries."

Over the last two decades, the center has accomplished a great deal, including several international agreements that van Lint praised: in addition to the partnership with the Yerevan State University, he mentioned the cooperation agreement established in 2010 with the Valery Brusov University for Languages and Social Sciences, which has been elevated to a full partnership this year. Also this year the Martin Luther University and the Matenadaran signed an agreement, while de facto cooperation is ongoing between the Evangelical College for Church Music in Halle and the Komitas Conservatory in Yerevan.

Further achievements include the rich contributions made by the center through its scientific publications, its educational trips to Armenia and six outstanding exhibitions it organized, all with accompanying catalogues. Two remarkable publications van Lint singled out were the Middle Armenian Dictionary and a project for translation of Sharakans or hymns.

The list is indeed impressive. Yet, van Lint singled out one of the official aims of the center which has not yet been realized: the establishment of an official professorial chair for Armenian studies. Speaking from his vantage point as current holder of the only chair for Armenian studies in Great Britain, "and as holder of these all-too-few chairs overall," van Lint said he could sense "the holes in our research, holes which can be filled only by area specialists whose broad knowledge is combined with a rich orientation in the interdisciplinary sphere." For this, a proper professorial chair is "indispensable." He said he "would like to go to bat here for a chair dedicated to the Armenian language, philology, history and culture, so that specialists can be educated who will be able to assume the enormous task of making Armenian culture in the broadest sense accessible to those interested," whether they be diplomats, politicians or the general public. In this connection, van Lint also made the highly relevant point that in an era of "globalization," where "area studies," like "Asian studies," "Caucasus studies," etc. abound, it is imperative to make sure that "competence in the individual language and cultures not be lost or watered down."

The revolutionary developments in Armenia have created a new situation in which these and many other challenges can be met. Voskanyan from the American University of Armenia developed this theme in his keynote address, "Armenia in 2018: Realities and Perspectives," which provided the transition from the evening's relaxed and festive mood to the spirit of scientific research that would dominate the following day's agenda. As the speaker related his eye-witness account of the "Velvet Revolution," images of the historic events took shape in the mind of every listener.

Voskanyan described and analyzed single scenes, presented the social mechanisms at work, as well as the political and social structures shaping the revolution, and located them in their historical context, and in this way identified the grounds for such radical change in the country. Voskanyan offered a glimpse of Armenia's future political course in light of various expectations and hopes, while never losing sight of the possible dangers.

A Scholarship Can Change a Life

How better to portray the hopes for the future than to share the experience of a young student of that generation preparing to contribute to the new Armenia? Gohar Khachatryan-Sargsyan is the first alumna of a special scholarship program for students from Armenia, which is offered in the context of the agreement between Saxony-Anhalt and Armenia. In her moving "thank-you" speech, she recalled the difficulties the country endured after independence and the Karabakh war, particularly the toll taken on education. When she found out she was the recipient of the first scholarship to study in Germany (1999-2000), she considered it nothing short of a miracle. "From the first day in Halle," she said, "I felt as though I were in wonderland." Everything she encountered seemed magical, the lectures were lively and her professors were eager to help. "I was finally satisfied with my studies, and I learned how to study, something I consider very important." In addition to classroom work, she was able to take part in excursions and museum visits. One of them turned out to be decisive. In the Dresden Picture Gallery when she saw Raphael's "Sistine Madonna," she "was struck as if by lightening." Although she had seen reproductions of Raphael's works as a child, she had never imagined what the impact of the original would be. "Then I understood," she said, "that I wanted to be an artist, not an art historian, because only an artist can produce something that moving even today."

The young scholar (who is the daughter of a famous artist) emphasized the value of friendships she made during that year as well. She has begun artistic collaboration with one such new friend, the writer Daniela Danz, and the two are going to work



Prof. Theo van Lint

on a literary film project, sponsored by the Goethe Institute in Gyumri, which will deal with the Armenian poet Sajat Nova. As a gesture of gratitude, she concluded by presenting the Martin Luther University with a painting of hers, titled "The Grandmother," a portrait of "an elderly and wise Armenian woman."

After the audience had returned to silence, a concert of German-Armenian music filled the air. Participants listened with rapt attention to the performance by singer Anahit Abgarjans (a sister of Drost-Abarjan), Duduk player Araik Bartikians and organist Helene von Rechenbergs, who, in addition to a work by Johann Sebastian Bach, offered Armenian spiritual songs, hymns and folk songs. The wonderful music captivated the souls of those present, transporting them to distant fields, and filling them with optimism in the future. The evening ended with a reception, with fine cuisine and engaged discussions, all in anticipation of the working sessions planned for the second day.

Scholars in Dialogue

On October 19, educators and researchers from both countries engaged in a full day of scientific discussion and exchange. The conference panels illustrated the nature, vast range and high quality of the intellectual collaboration that has grown over the past two decades in Halle. Under the direction of Drost-Abarjan, the first session heard presentations by Cornelia Horn (Halle) on "Armenian Studies in Germany," Vahan Ter-Ghevondian (Yerevan) on "Non-Armenian Documents of Matenadaran" and Annegret Plantke-Lüning (Jena) on "The Role of German Scholars in Research on Armenia's Material Cultural Heritage."

In the afternoon session, chaired by Professor van Lint, Hacik Gazer (Erlangen-Nürnberg) spoke on "Germany as an Educational Center for Armenian Students in the 19th/20th Century," Axel Meissner (Halle) on "Dr. Johannes Lepsius and the First Magazine of the German-Armenian Society Mesrop (1914)" and Ashot Galstyan (Yerevan) on "Armenian-German Relations in the First World War and 100 Years of the First Armenian Republic (1918-2018)." Professor Gazer led the final session, which heard papers by Franziska Knoll (Halle) on "The Highlands of Syunik – Petroglyphs and Summer Pastures over Millennia, by Meliné Pehlivanian (Berlin) on "Armenian Press History as Reflected in the State Library in Berlin" and by Thomas Buchholz (Halle) on "Komitas's Compositional Work from the Perspective of His Music Studies in Germany."

In her concluding remarks, Drost-Abarjan cast her gaze to the future and the perspectives for Armenian studies in Germany.

The festivities and scholarly exchange in the historical setting had provided ample food for thought regarding precisely the future perspectives for this unique center of learning. Dr. André Höhn, a lecturer at the university, paused to reflect on a Greek script that decorates the ceiling of the university hall, a saying about life, which is all too brief, and art, which is eternal. Rendering the notion in a brighter light, he expressed his hope that the Mesrop Center would be granted both a long life and lasting impact.

(Muriel Mirak-Weissbach thanks Dr. André Höhn for having made his report on the two-day proceedings available for publication in this article. Höhn is a Lecturer at the seminar on the Christian Orient and Byzantium, of the Department of Oriental Studies, Mesrop Center.)

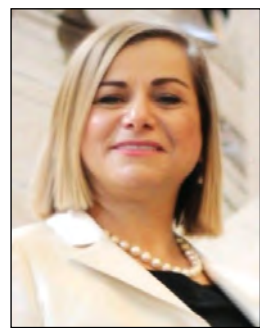
Community News

New Paths Hosts Book Launch and Conversation with Emma Arakelyan

MEDFORD, Mass. — New Paths Bridging Armenian Women will host on Friday, November 16, a book launch and conversation for Emma Arakelyan, author of *The Business Caring Formula*, at Tufts University, Alumni Lounge, 40 Talbot Ave., 7-9 p.m.

Mistress of Ceremonies will be Kristin Asadourian, founder of KA Coaching. Guest speaker and writer of the book's Foreword, Robert J. Gates, Partner Technical Architect at Microsoft from New York City, will introduce the author. The event is free and open to the public with light refreshments provided by Prelude Bakery of Newton, after program.

Arakelyan is managing director of Open Mind Productions, CEO and co-founder of Orion Worldwide Innovations and an adjunct professor at New York University. The book addresses leadership and how to navigate, succeed and make an impact in the world of international business. According to Arakelyan, *The Business Caring Formula* is written for college students, managers,



Emma Arakelyan

CEOs, entrepreneurs and individuals who are in leadership positions in the private and public sectors, providing them with the formula to succeed during any stage of life. Arakelyan shares practical advice and challenges you to take steps on your own to "care" being mindful of coworkers, family, friends and the community you live in.

Readers are quickly engaged with thought-provoking questions and prompts: know who you are, know your preferences and your leadership style, learn with care about others, to dream is a daring vision of a future state, challenge the status quo by making exceptions to the rules which aren't working and making exceptions for progress.

Her approach is grounded to improve operational efficiency and to actualize more innovative business processes. Throughout her career she has been committed to identify, mentor and promote professionals at all levels.

The implementation of caring is eloquently summarized by Gates: *"The Business Caring Formula* is a call to action by Emma Arakelyan confronts the biggest problem eroding our potential everyday: the lack of care in the way we conduct business and interact with each other. As a successful, senior-level executive in various industries, Emma is esteemed around the world for her business acumen and an unparalleled ability to inspire everyone around her to affect progress. She is a testament to true leadership built around a simple principle: propelling progress through the simple application of caring."

Arakelyan operates her LLC Open Mind Productions across three cornerstones: author, board advisor to business and non-profits and an Adjunct Professor at New York University's School of Professional Studies. She earned her master's degree in political economy from the University of Economics, Armenia and a Bachelor of Science in economics from Armenia State University of Economics. She lives in New York City with her family.

New Paths-Bridging Armenian Women, based in Massachusetts, is an online women's networking group on social media with members worldwide. Providing educational resources, inspirational themed success stories and fosters an inclusive environment for women of Armenian heritage, supporting each other in our daily lives, empowering each other in our professional lives and together, creating a positive impact in our communities. For more information about the event and NPBW or to RSVP, email newpathsinfo@gmail.com.



Dr. Nazareth E. Darakjian, AMAA President and Honoree Joyce Philibosian Stein

AMAA Celebrates Centennial Anniversary at Biltmore Millennium in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES — The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) held its Los Angeles Centennial Banquet on October 20. The event was the concluding banquet and largest function of eight worldwide observances that marked 100 years of commitment and generosity to the AMAA. Board members, members of the clergy and supporters of the organization came together at this joyful event held at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles, a classic meeting place which opened its doors for the first time in 1923, just five years after the AMAA was founded.

By Phyllis Hamo

The very first of the centennial observances took place in October, 2017, in Teaneck, NJ. The final banquet at the Biltmore capped off more than a year of these world-wide Millennium celebrations. Celebratory banquets were also held in Sydney, Detroit, Montreal, Toronto, Beirut, Paris, and Yerevan.

The Los Angeles event paid tribute to the Stephen Philibosian and Conte Foundations, the Gerald and Patricia Turpanjian - TF Educational Foundation and the Sheen Family Trust. In addition to the honorees, their families and friends, as well as leaders and sustainers of the Armenian Missionary Association of America, the crowd enthusiastically celebrated a century of "faith, love, and service" when more than 500 celebrants gathered in the Biltmore's elegant Crystal Ballroom.

Guests traveled long distances, some as far away as Armenia, Australia, France, Lebanon and Syria. Many representatives journeyed to Los Angeles to celebrate a century of successful mission programs and the establishment of churches, camps, and schools founded and supported by the AMAA in 24 countries. The AMAA has set a fundraising goal of \$20 million dollars for the Centennial and raised 60 percent of the goal.

Master of ceremonies for the program was Los Angeles Banquet was presidential speechwriter Ken Khachigian, who introduced both the current president of the AMAA, Dr. Nazareth E. Darakjian, and the AMAA's Executive Director/CEO Zaven Khanjian.

Retiring West Coast Director Levon Filian was thanked for his many years of service.

An AMAA Centennial video depicted the founding of the AMAA, its world-wide operations, ministries and projects.

Darakjian recognized Dr. Albert Phillips, founder of the AMAA Medical Mission to Armenia, established 10 years ago, describing him as the "Albert Schweitzer of Armenia."

Following the Dinner, a video presentation by Tina Segel gave historic information regarding Honorees, Stephen Philibosian Foundation, the Conte Foundation, the Gerald and Patricia Turpanjian - TF Educational Foundation and the Sheen Family Trust.

see CENTENNIAL, page 6



Banquet MC Ken Khachigian

NAASR/Gulbenkian Program on Armenia's Velvet Revolution Attracts Broad Audience

WASHINGTON — From the frontlines of Armenia's Velvet Revolution to demonstrations back in 1988, a panel of experts spoke to a packed audience of students, professionals, former ambassadors, and the general public at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs, in Washington, D.C., on the October 28, at "Armenia's Velvet Revolution After Six Months: Beyond the Headlines." The program was sponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues, the George Washington Armenian Students Association, and the Arlene Saryan Alexander and Judith Saryan Washington, DC Forum.

The panelists offered thought-provoking presentations whose personal insight and professional expertise were evident throughout the afternoon.

After an introduction from the co-chairs of the George Washington Armenian Students Association Celine Der Boghosian and Kyra Chamberlain, NAASR's Executive Director Sarah Ignatius welcomed the diverse crowd of more than 100 people to the program and described NAASR's leadership in Armenian Studies since its founding in 1955.

"NAASR has a universal appeal," she said. "Whether you are 100 percent Armenian or some fractional percentage, or not Armenian at all, you are welcome at NAASR, whose work advancing Armenian Studies brings some of the best thinkers, like the expert panelists today, to the public." She also welcomed everyone to attend the grand opening of NAASR's new headquarters building in Belmont, set for October 4-6, 2019, once construction is complete.

Rachel Nadjarian, a seasoned entrepreneurial management, development, and communications professional, based in Washington, DC, kicked off the panel as moderator. At this pivotal point for Armenia and the snap elections set for December, she asked the audience to keep in mind a few themes and reminded attendees of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's words upon his resignation: "The power is in your hands. Vote as you wish."

Ruzanna Grigoryan, originally from Armenia and currently a fellow of the Armenian Room Fellowship Program in the Philosophy Department of the University of Pittsburgh, and specializing in Immanuel Kant's political philosophy, offered a highly focused presentation of events and protests in Armenia since independence in 1991, leading to the peaceful revolution and resignation of Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan. She highlighted many local demonstrations that created a new culture of resistance and non-violent, decentralized direct action. As an activist herself, she said this was the first time she had taken the opportunity to give a talk about revolution and described the recent mayoral election in Yerevan as "the first fair and democratic election since 1991."

see PANEL, page 20



From left, Judith Saryan, Sarah Ignatius, Ruzanna Grigoryan and Rachel Nadjarian



COMMUNITY NEWS

AMAA Celebrates Centennial Anniversary at Biltmore Millennium in LA

CENTENNIAL, from page 5

Kenneth Kevorkian introduced Joe and Joyce Philibosian Stein and recognized their decades of generosity and service to the



Levon Filian, the AMAA West Coast Executive Director

AMAA and its mission, following the path of Stephen Philibosian, father of Joyce and her sister, Louise, who established the very first AMAA endowment, created in his name. Sirpuhe Philibosian Conte and her husband John Conte also became lifelong benefactors of the AMAA.

Elizabeth Agbajian introduced Gerald and Patricia Turpanjian. "This unique couple," she announced, "is modest, sincere, and caring. They have raised an exemplary family of four: Lori, Gary, Deanne and Paul, who are

here with their children to honor their mother and father."

Gerald and Patricia Turpanjian and their TF (Turpanjian Family) Educational Foundation were honored, not only for their support of the AMAA, but also for the American University of Armenia, the Armenian General Benevolent Union, Haigazian University, the Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School, Camp Hankavan, AMAA Child and Orphan Care, Syrian Relief and the Armenian Evangelical Central High School, attended by alumnus Gerald Turpanjian.

Dr. H. Steven Aharonian recognized Dr. Jack Sheen and his late father John H. Sheen who established the Sheen Trust with the AMAA providing support to education, relief in Armenia and Lebanon, evangelism, and aid to churches and missions. Through the legacy of the John H. Sheen Trust, thousands of children attending AMAA's Sheen-Shoghig Camp in Hankavan, Armenia get spiritual and physical nourishment.

The banquet's invocation was offered by Rev. Berdj D j a m b a z i a n , Minister to the A r m e n i a n Evangelical Union of North America; the benediction by Rev. Vahan Tootikian, executive director of the A r m e n i a n



Banquet Co-Chairs, from left, Tina Segel, Lori Muncherian, Helga Sarkis and Arsine Phillips



AMAA Centennial Celebratory Banquet at Biltmore Millennium in Los Angeles



Zaven Khanjian, AMAA Executive Director with Honorees Patricia and Gerald Turpanjian

Evangelical World Council. The American and Armenian national anthems and music were led by Greg Hosharian.

Guests received a 114-page commemorative booklet containing the history of the AMAA written by Rev. John Khanjian PhD, and descriptions of its worldwide missions. It also included congratulatory letters from around the world.

In his closing remarks, Khanjian, summed up the year-long effort "The only sense and justification in our year-old celebration and the \$20-million capital campaign is in the vision of embracing the future in the Homeland, the Middle East, Europe, the Americas and everywhere the grace of God takes us."

Information for giving may be obtained by contacting Magda Poulos mpoulos@amaa.org.

St James Men's Club Dinner Meeting to Feature Immigration Lawyer Gregory Vartanian

WATERTOWN —On Monday, December 3, the St. James Armenian Church Men's Club dinner meeting at the St. James Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center in Watertown will feature Gregory Vartanian, Esq., a Boston based immigration attorney.

Vartanian has 19 years of experience as a practitioner of immigration law. He is currently the Managing Partner of Vartanian & Vartanian, LLP, a full-service immigration practice. There he has concentrated in various employment based immigration issues as well as all other areas of immigration law and real estate related matters. Since 2013 he has been the Founder and Director of the New England Regional Center for Economic Development, Inc. a USCIS approved Eb5 Regional Center.

Vartanian is a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association as well as a member of the Council of Armenian Executives. In his presentation, "Current Hot Immigration Topics," he will provide an overview of US immigration laws and regulations. He will also discuss cases of Armenians and non-Armenians in various parts of the world seeking asylum and those just wanting to immigrate to the US to be with family, to work, to go to school, or to marry. He will also present his opinions on issues with the US immigration system, the Presidential proclamation affecting Muslim countries, and how to interpret what one hears and reads in the news on the subject.

The social hour and mezza, which will take place at the Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center - Keljik Hall, 465 Mt. Auburn St., will begin at 6:15 p.m. and the dinner at 7 p.m.

Ladies are invited.



Gregory Vartanian

ARMENIAN WOMEN'S WELFARE ASSOCIATION



Position Available: Full-time Executive Director

The Armenian Women's Welfare Association, Inc. (AWWA) is a Boston area non-profit women's service organization, founded in 1905, with the mission to improve the quality of life for members of the Armenian community whether it be through aid, relief or education. The AWWA currently supports the Armenian Nursing and Rehabilitation Center (ANRC) - an 83-bed non-profit skilled nursing facility and the Hanganak Elderly Clinic - providing medical and social support to 200 elders, mostly women, in Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabagh, Armenia. These initiatives are well-managed by professional staff, provide excellent service, and are financially stable.

AWWA now plans to launch significant new programming and seeks to hire a dynamic, skilled and dedicated person to lead this new era. S/he will fulfill all the responsibilities of a non-profit Executive Director with emphasis on Program Development, Supporting Human Capital, PR/Communications/Marketing, and Fundraising.

Interested candidates will find full job posting at www.AWWA.us and should submit a resume with cover letter by 5:00 pm on Tuesday, November 27, 2018 to: AWWA.ExecDir@gmail.com



COMMUNITY NEWS

Northern NJ Community Foundation Awards Grant for Genocide Education

HACKENSACK, N.J. — The Northern New Jersey Community Foundation (NNJCF) announces the award of a \$2,000 grant from the NNJCF's Andrea Tilbian Halejian Memorial Fund to the Center for Peace, Justice and Reconciliation (PJR) at Bergen Community College in Paramus. The NNJCF, a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization based in Hackensack, concentrates on education, public health, civic engagement, arts, philanthropy, and the environment.

The fund remembers Wyckoff resident Andrea Tilbian Halejian and contributes to qualified charitable organizations she supported. Andrea Tilbian Halejian, her family and many of their friends cared for Armenian efforts on local, national and international levels. Previous grant recipients include the Fund for Armenian Relief and the Armenian General Benevolent Union.

“As a person of Armenian ancestry, Andrea Tilbian Halejian was committed to Armenian Genocide awareness and education. The program for high school students offered by the Center for Peace, Justice & Reconciliation at Bergen Community College gives participants the opportunity to learn about identity and genocide, in alignment with Andrea's dedication to her heritage,” said Christine Badach, a member of the fund's advisory committee.

Working with local and global communities, PJR develops skills in conflict resolution and ethical decision making to promote social justice and global citizenship. A key part of its mission is a focus on the Armenian Genocide, the first one in the 20th century. The grant will support daylong seminars on identity and genocide for area high school students.

During its 20th anniversary year, the Northern New Jersey Community Foundation continues to serve the community and asks, “What can we do together that we can't do alone?”. The NNJCF offers a comprehensive menu of philanthropic opportunities. Donor-advised funds, tax-saving annuities, and trust options provide donors with flexible, efficient, and tax-effective ways to ensure their charitable giving has maximum impact.

“The Northern New Jersey Community Foundation helps donors connect with issues they care about. These committed, civic-minded donors and their charitable interests are vital to the region and our communities' health and well-being,” said Danielle De Laurentis, associate director of the Northern New Jersey Community Foundation.

For more information, visit www.nnjcf.org.



Nvair Beylerian, co-director of the Center for Peace, Justice and Reconciliation at Bergen Community College, received the Northern New Jersey Community Foundation's Andrea Tilbian Halejian Memorial Fund grant award from Dr. Eric Halejian, a member of the fund's advisory committee.

Hunter Mack to Speak at Trinity Men's Union Dinner and Meeting

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The Trinity Men's Union of Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston will host Hunter Mack, Assistant Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, as its guest speaker at their dinner and meeting on Monday, November 12. Mack's topic is “The Role of Combustion in an Evolving Energy Landscape.” He will explain the differences between all the alternative sources of energy available today and show how combustion will still need to play a role in the future.

The rise in renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, has greatly impacted how electricity is generated. However, more than 80 percent of energy comes from traditional processes that rely on combustion to convert fuels into energy. How combustion is used and where fuels are found will play a major role in meeting future energy demands, reducing harmful emissions, and enabling next-generation transportation concepts.



Hunter Mack

Mack's research focuses on combustion, bio-fuels, and energy efficiency. Prior to joining the University of Massachusetts Lowell, he was a project scientist and lecturer at the University of California at Berkeley, a senior engineer at solar concentrator start-up Banyan Energy, and a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Combustion Analysis Laboratory at UC Berkeley. He received his MS (2005) and PhD (2007) from UC Berkeley with an emphasis on multi-component fuels in Homogenous Charge Compression Ignition (HCCI) engines. He also holds a B.S. in mechanical engineering from Washington University (St. Louis MO) and a B.A. in physics from Hendrix College (Conway, AK).

The dinner/meeting will be held in Johnson Hall of Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St. All are welcome to attend. The social hour begins at 6 p.m., and dinner at 7 p.m. RSVP is requested by November 11 by emailing tmuhtaac@gmail.com.

NAJARIAN LECTURE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AT FANEUIL HALL



Untangling the web of injustice

Wednesday, November 14, 2018 at 7:30pm

(Doors open at 6:45pm)

Historic Faneuil Hall, Boston

Free and open to the public. Reception follows at The Bostonian Hotel

Performance:

Karen Yamaguchi and Brett Fairchild, Berklee College of Music sophomores, will perform their original piece, WAKE UP, an acoustic performance with vocals.

Introduced by Gretchen Shae Moore who has created a course on mass incarceration that she teaches at Berklee.

Speakers:



Cherise Fanno Burdeen

Chief Executive Officer, Pretrial Justice Institute



Marc A. Levin

Vice President of Criminal Justice, Texas Public Policy Foundation



Moderator:

Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian

President, Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association
Founding Member, Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce

THE NAJARIAN LECTURE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, A PUBLIC PROGRAM OF ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK ON THE GREENWAY, IS ENDOWED BY K. GEORGE AND CAROLANN S. NAJARIAN, M.D. IN HONOR OF DR. NAJARIAN'S FATHER, MR. AVEDIS ALBERT ABRAHAMIAN AS “HE TAUGHT SO MANY ABOUT THE NEED TO PAY ATTENTION, SPOT INJUSTICE AND SPEAK OUT WHEREVER AND WHENEVER IT OCCURS”.



COMMUNITY NEWS

From Mundane Details to Great Revelations

By Taleen Babayan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

LOS ANGELES — One simple — yet key — question set into motion 30 years of research: how many Armenians were actually massacred during the Armenian Genocide?

This question was posed to Dr. Sarkis Karayan in 1971, when he was serving as chief of the American University of Beirut's Maternal and Child Health Center, by Dr. Stanley Kerr, chairman of the Department of Biochemistry at AUB. Close friends and esteemed colleagues, Kerr was working on his soon-to-be published book *Lions of Marash*, which focused on the eyewitness accounts of the American Near East Relief's efforts during the Armenian Genocide. Kerr knew that Karayan was not only Armenian, but possessed the passion for history and research that would lead him to the accurate findings.

He was right.

Karayan made this quest one of his life's missions and after countless hours of research and decades of dedication, *Armenians in Ottoman Turkey, 1914: A Geographic and Demographic Gazetteer*, was recently released by the Gomidas Institute, an independent and academic institution based in London.

Although Karayan passed away earlier this year, the significant efforts of the Gomidas Institute, the Armenian Film Foundation (AFF) and Dr. Silva Karayan, his widow, ensured that this thorough and first-of-its-kind volume would see the light of day. The book's publication was marked by multiple symbolic events throughout the Diaspora, from a discussion in London to a special ceremony at the University of Southern

Armenian Church of America in Burbank.

The events, co-sponsored by the Armenian Film Foundation, Fresno State Armenian Studies Program and the AGBU Yervant Babayan Institute of Pedagogy for Research and Development, further explored Karayan's research and its ramifications not only for the Armenian community but for academia and society as a whole.

While there were many estimates about how many Armenians perished during the Armenian Genocide, Dr. Karayan's systematic and detail-oriented approach dug into archival records and peeled back layers of history, shooting straight to the core. He researched how many Armenians factually existed in these historic Armenian villages and towns before deducing the actual number killed. By utilizing his fluency in both Ottoman and Modern Turkish, Eastern and Western Armenian, Classical Armenian, French and German, he compiled a comprehensive list of 4,600 towns and villages that were home to Armenians in pre-genocide Turkey through researching books, maps and a myriad of sources in various languages.

The results of this book, which lists both old Armenian and new Turkish names, geographical coordinates, maps and sources, place over 2.4 million Ottoman Armenians in these towns and villages. He cites them all, one by one, profiling the demographics of each, a tedious approach that required a search for names of villages that had changed during the Turkification process in the

aftermath of the Armenian Genocide. These villages and cities vanished overnight when the government wiped their maps clean of Armenians in 1959 but for the first time ever,



Karayan resurrects these ancestral lands for the entire world to learn the breadth and depth of the Armenian presence in the Ottoman Empire.

Honoring the publication of the book and Karayan's memory, a notable commemoration was held at the USC Shoah Foundation, where the original manuscripts of Karayan's research are housed, thanks to a donation by his wife. This was followed by a discussion featuring historian Ara Sarafian, executive director of the Gomidas Institute, hosted by Abril Bookstore in Glendale on Tuesday, October 23.

Dr. Carla Garapedian, a member of the Board of Directors of the Armenian Film Foundation and a film producer and director, welcomed guests and traced the connection of Karayan's book to the founder of AFF, Dr. Michael Hagopian, who used this study to locate historic Armenian cities and towns in modern day Turkey while documenting Armenian Genocide testimonies.

During his talk, Sarafian pointed out that this book is not only a resource for Armenians but for Turks and Kurds as well, who also have questions about their history. Sarafian noted that at the book's launch in London on October 17, one third of the audience was Turkish.

"Dr. Karayan puts Armenia back on the map in Turkey," said Sarafian, who highlighted a

period in the 1970s and 1980s when Turkish and American scholars "downgraded" the Armenian presence in the region.

"This book is a critique of denialist history," said Sarafian. "Dr. Karayan engages in this denialist debate and opens up a new genre of historical evidence, making his thesis certifiable and breaking down the number of Armenians who perished from 1915-1923."

Sarafian said that due to the Turkification process after the Genocide, Armenians were written out of historiography and that Karayan "challenges the Turkish government's monopoly of their revised history."

Emphasizing that Karayan's book reverses denialist claims, Sarafian said it's up to the current generation to challenge revisionists and partake in historical debates in order to present the Armenian voice and perspective.

He noted the importance of learning how to use this resource well in order to "reclaim the Armenian identity and ancestral lands and to raise healthy questions in Turkish society."

"This is a political weapon and it's a form of resistance," said Sarafian who stated that donations of this book should be made to every municipality in Turkey as well as to human rights organizations, "who will ask the right questions when exploring where the Armenians in these towns and villages went."

Karayan's book also "builds bridges" and engages debate with the Turks, according to Sarafian, because they don't have the knowledge but want to learn about their own histories.

"This work has opened up new possibilities," said Sarafian, emphasizing the importance of using knowledge as a weapon. "Dr. Karayan encapsulates the memory of lost villages and creates an opportunity for contact, human dialogue and interactions."

Born to Armenian Genocide survivors in Aleppo, Syria, Karayan was raised in Beirut, Lebanon, where he graduated from the American University of Beirut Medical School and was appointed Chief of AUB's Maternal and Child Health Center. During the Lebanese Civil War, he moved with his wife and daughter, Zella, to the United States in 1976 where he was the recipient of a Fellowship in Developmental Disabilities at New York Medical College. He then joined the University of Massachusetts Medical School as clinical faculty in pediatrics and developmental disabilities before moving to California where he was appointed Chief of Service at Camarillo State Hospital's Developmental Disabilities Center. Although his profession was that of a medical doctor, his devotion to uncovering the number of Armenians who were massacred during the Armenian Genocide was fueled by his own families experiences in Aintab, which he uses as a case study in his book.

A special panel discussion was organized on Friday, October 26 at the Western Diocese in



Dr. Silva Karayan and Wolf Gruner (Center for Advanced Genocide Research)

California (USC) Shoah Foundation in Los Angeles to Abril Books in Glendale to a talk at Fresno State and concluded with a panel discussion at the Western Diocese of the

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Burbank, under the auspices of His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, featuring Ara Sarafian, Dr. Garabed Moumdjian, Crispin Brooks and Dr. Garbis Der Yeghiayan.

In her welcoming remarks, Garapedian said that the evening “marked a beginning and an end.”

“It’s a beginning of this study’s debut as a book and the beginning of a discussion in both the academic and public domain,” said Garapedian, who praised Dr. Silva Karayan’s “steadfast” efforts that led everyone to this day. “Without her dedication to this publication, I can say without hesitation we would not be here tonight.”

In memory of her beloved father, Zella Karayan Karagozian shared insights about his passion for medicine, history, music and research.

“My father’s book is the product of decades of research, his passion to ensure that information and facts about Armenians, especially the Armenian Genocide, are documented accurately and his hope and desire that Armenia’s towns and villages, past and present, are not erased from the map,” said Karayan Karakozian who then introduced the musical interlude of the program as a tribute to Dr. Karayan’s love of classical music and opera.

Piano pieces by Arno Babajanian and Aram Khatchaturian were played by Nanor Der Bedrossian and tenor Suren Mkrtchyan performed compositions by R. Amirkhanyan and a classic



Panelists, from left, Crispin Brooks, Ara Sarafian, Dr. Garbis Der Yeghiayan and Dr. Garabed Moumdjian

and Turks worked together in their denialist enterprise.

Brooks, curator of the USC Shoah Foundation’s Visual History Archive, said the work is “invaluable.” Home to the Armenian Film Foundation’s *Armenian Genocide* testimonies since 2010, Brooks has been working on filmed interviews of survivor testimonies.

“Geography is a challenge when trying to uncover the places survivors talk about since the towns and villages have been renamed,” said Brooks. “We use a systematic approach with multiple sources to find the existence of the place and where it is.”

Brooks said the foundation is now utilizing Dr. Karayan’s book as one of its main sources to verify the existence of names of towns and cities.

“These places don’t appear on a modern map but since we also work in the electronic medium, we are able to place them back there because of this work,” he said.

An independent researcher and historian, Dr. Garabed Moumdjian was familiar with Karayan’s research and the articles he had published in newspapers about his findings. Moumdjian referred to the book as a “national treasure” that creates an opportunity to discuss various important points, including the issue of Islamized Armenians.

Moumdjian noted that the numbers were long debated, with Turks saying 1-1.2 million Armenians existed in historic Armenia, while the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople had recorded 2.2 million.

“In this book you will see 2.2 million is accounted for,” said Dr. Moumdjian, noting that Dr. Karayan reaches the same number as the Patriarchate. “There is a gap in the numbers, we say 1.5 million died, therein exists the Islamized Armenians, who stayed behind in those days but to us are lost and counted as dead.”

He highlighted that Islamized Armenian are now resurfacing and it’s up to the current generation to “continue the debate and find these answers.”

Moumdjian also expressed the importance of Armenian as an academic language, arguing that there aren’t enough specialists in the Armenian language and that it’s time to reconnect with the Armenian intellectual tradition.

Dr. Garbis Der Yeghiayan, president of the Los Angeles-based Mashdots College, referred to the book as a “game changer” and as an answer to the denialists, historians and members of the Turkish government “who are trying to rewrite history.”



From left: Dr. Wolf Gruner (USC Center for Advanced Genocide Research), Dr. Carla Garapedian (Armenian Film Foundation), Dr. Silva Karayan, Jerry Papazian (Armenian Film Foundation)

Italian piece by Rodolfo Falvo and Enzo Fusco.

Opening up the discussion, Sarafian called *Armenians in Ottoman Turkey, 1914: A Geographic and Demographic Gazetteer* an “exemplary scholarship” that “undermines the efforts of the Turkish state.”

“This is the first of its kind in the English language to uncover the genealogy demographics,” said Sarafian, who noted that Americans



Film producer and director Dr. Carla Garapedian, member of the Board of Directors of the Armenian Film Foundation, delivering welcoming remarks

“We owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Karayan for his monumental research,” said Der Yeghiayan, who leads pilgrimages to Cilicia, Cappadocia and Western Armenia. “I have traveled to the region more than 25 times and I wish I had this publication in my hands in order to find all the villages.”

Crediting Karayan’s passion as a “truth seeker,” Der Yeghiayan said the book is “unprecedented and unmatched” because it redefines the Armenian map.

“He has resurrected the Armenian consciousness and Armenian roots and when I visit our ancestral land next summer I will carry this book with me and Dr. Karayan will serve as our guide,” said Der Yeghiayan.

“If there is any reconciliation, Dr. Karayan will be the godfather of that reconciliation between Armenians and Turks,” concluded Der Yeghiayan.

He expressed profound gratitude to the Babayan and Karayan families, the Gomidas Institute, and the Armenian Film Foundation for seeing through the publication of this book, “that will be so valuable for our generation but for many generations to come.”

Closing remarks were made by Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, who thanked Dr. Silva Karayan for being “the architect” of this publication which brings “the Armenian Genocide under a new light for us.”

Derderian noted the panel discussion was an “educational session” for the audience and reaffirmed the importance of educating the present and future generations to learn about the depth of history of the Armenian Genocide in order to be “informed of the historical facts.” He encouraged schools to remain open on April 24 and to be commemorated not only as a day of remembrance but also as a day of learning.

“The late Dr. Karayan certainly lived a meaningful life and left us with an invaluable legacy,” said Archbishop Derderian. “We will cherish this book as a treasure as it will open new doors to better understand what happened in the history of Armenians and in the history of humanity.”

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TOP: SENATOR ED MARKEY (D-MA)
BOTTOM: ARMENIAN PRESIDENT ARMEN SARKISSIAN

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COMMUNITY NEWS

TCA Greater New York Celebrates Art of Simon Samsonian

ENGLEWOOD CLIFFS, NJ. — On October 27 and 28, the Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA) of Greater New York hosted an art exhibition featuring the works of Simon Samsonian an Armenian cubist-impressionist painter.

The opening reception took place on October 27 and the exhibition opened to the public on October.

The committee organized a reception and program for this acclaimed artist. A selection of works curated by Samsonian's grandson, Alan Semerdjian, was shown at the reception, set up to resemble a gallery at the Tekeyan Center.

More than 100 guests attended the two-day event, among them Mher Margaryan, the ambassador for Armenia at the United Nations, second secretary Zoya Stepanyan, Simon Samsonian's daughter Hilda Semerdjian, Armenian philanthropists Sarkis and Ruth Bedevian, and longtime Tekeyan benefactor Artemis Nazarian and her daughter, Seta.

Hilda Hartounian, chair of TCA of Greater New York, opened the program and invited Margaryan to make brief remarks.

The ambassador praised the Tekeyan Chapter for being a cultural leader in the community and cultivating strong ties with the UN Mission for many years.

The program continued with a reading by poet George Wallace, the first poet laureate of Suffolk County, NY, and a friend of the Samsonian family. Wallace read a poem by Vahan Tekeyan to commemorate the 140th anniversary of Tekeyan's birth.

Hartounian also invited Simon Samsonian's brother-in-law, Nubar Kupelian, to share a few words about the artist in Armenian. Kupelian has been the Armenian language Secretary for the previous Primate Khajag Barsamian and his predecessor for the past 48 years.

He spoke about Samsonian's orphaned childhood, then his life in Egypt when he became an accomplished painter.

Samsonian was separated from his parents in the Armenian Genocide of 1915, and was never able to see them again. As a young boy in the orphanages of Greece and Egypt, his talents in painting and sculpting didn't go unnoticed. He was given a scholarship to attend the



Author and editor Nubar Kupelian, the Armenian Language Secretary to the Primate, spoke about the artist's orphaned childhood, his family and his talent.



From left, Hilda Semerdjian, Samsonian's daughter, Seta Nazarian, Artemis Nazarian, Alan Semerdjian and Nerses Semerdjian



Simon Samsonian's grandson Alan Semerdjian meets Ambassador Mher Margaryan to the Art Exhibition.

Leonardo Da Vinci School of Art in Alexandria, Egypt. He excelled as a student there and later became a teacher at the school. His works are seen and admired around the world in museums, galleries, and private collections.

The guests enjoyed a lavish reception and mingled among the beautiful artwork. The program attracted guests from several generations, including budding painter Nanar Bouldukian, 5, who said she loved Samsonian's painting titled "Compositions."

Samsonian's works are on display in various museum collections, including the National Art Gallery in Yerevan, Armenia, the Museum of Modern Art, Cairo, Egypt, the Musée Arménien de France, the collection of the Mekhitarist Fathers' Monastic Order, Vienna, Austria and the Hecksher Museum of Art in Huntington, NY.

Hagop Vartivarian concluded the program by speaking about the connection between the Tekeyan Cultural Association and Simon Samsonian. He mentioned how Samsonian met Vahan Tekeyan just prior to coming to the United States, and conversed about how much he read and admired his poetry. The poet Tekeyan encouraged Samsonian to meet with the Tekeyan circle in New York. There, Samsonian campaigned for and started a new committee — whose chair he became — featuring new-



Cellist Arno Hajjar



From left, Ruth Bedevian, Hilda Hartounian and Artemis Nazarian



Young guest Nanar Bouldukian attended the program.



From left, Marie Zokyan, Nadya Boyadjian, Hagop Vartivarian, UN Ambassador Mher Margaryan, Hilda Hartounian, Barkev Kalayjian, Second Secretary to UN Mission Zoya Stepanyan and Vartan Ilanjan

comers from the Diaspora as members. Since then, Vartivarian stated, "Tekeyan strives to invite new members to the organization to add diversity, thus creating new ideas, concepts, and projects to promote our Armenian heritage."

Samsonian died in 2003 at the age of 81.

One of the program's highlights was the impressive performance of 11-year-old cellist Arno Hajjar, son of Dr. Roger Hajjar and Teni Apelian. The guests were blown away by the young performer's rendition of Robert Schumann's The Two Grenadiers. He is a student of cellist Ani Kalayjian, who is the daughter of Barkev Kalayjian, treasurer of the TCA chapter. Hajjar has previously joined Ani Kalayjian and the Elizabeth Morrow Orchestra Ensemble in opening for Yo-Yo Ma and Itzhak Perlman.

Alan Semerdjian thanked the Tekeyan Greater NY committee and Hartounian for organizing this event. On behalf of the family, he donated a Samsonian painting to the Tekeyan Center.

"A lovely cultural gathering centered around the prolific artistic work of Simon Samsonian, an Egyptian-born painter of Armenian heritage, said Linda Tarzian, a TCA supporter.

In 2019, TCA Greater New York will celebrate its 50th Golden Anniversary. The committee has a clear-cut mission to continue to promote the Armenian heritage, language, and identity through cultural and educational programs including lectures, concerts, book presentations, and art exhibits.



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Arts & Living

A Dreamer's World:

'Endza' Babakhanyan Paintings Tour 4 Cities

By Monique Svazlian
Special to the Mirror-Spectator

GLENDALÉ – “Dreamer’s World,” the new art exhibit by Armenian artist “Endza” Gevorg Babakhanyan, opened at the Roslin Art Gallery on October 25. This was the first stop on a four-city tour of the exhibit which will also show in Pasadena, Calif. (November 2-4), Las Vegas, Nevada (November 10-11) and Scottsdale, Arizona (November 16-18) in the coming weeks.

Babakhanyan was born in 1968 in Armenia and graduated from the Fine Arts University in Yerevan. From 1992 to 1995, he studied at the Armenian Theological Seminary in Jerusalem and was ordained a priest in 1995, after which he served as a priest in Haifa and Tel Aviv between 2000 and 2005. In 2003, he graduated from the Jerusalem Art Studio and in 2008 graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice, Italy.

In 2010, he became the art director of the Machanents Theater, Cross of Armenian



Gevorg Babakhanyan in front of several of his paintings at the Roslin Art Gallery

Unity, NGO in Echmiadzin, Armenia. He has held numerous group and solo exhibitions in Armenia, Belarus, Canada, France, Germany, Jordan, Israel, Italy, Malta, Palestine, Russia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and the United States.

The exhibit in Glendale features various types of work from the artist, including abstract pieces from various time periods of his life, art inspired by his time in Venice, colorful and vibrant paintings of animals and nature, as well as various scenes of Artsakh where the artist currently works and resides.

The evening was hosted by Ararat Foundation, with part of the proceeds from sales going toward the renovation and construction of the New Shahumyan Children and Youth Cultural Center in Karvajar, Artsakh.

see ENDZA, page 16



Harout Soghomonian

Sold Out TCA Comedy Night Launches TCA Metro LA Chapter

PASADENA, Calif. – A sold-out crowd laughed out loud all night during An Evening of Comedy, hosted by the Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles chapter on Saturday, October 27 at The Rococo Room.

The event marked the kick-off for the new chapter that seeks to uphold the Armenian culture through arts and educational programming and activities.

Headlining the night’s comedy line-up was Harout Soghomonian, along with performers Maro Ajemian and Narine Avakian. All three drew on the nuances of daily life while connecting with audiences and eliciting laughter.

“Organizing an event like this requires devotion and determination and I saw that first-hand in the dynamic committee members,” said Soghomonian. “Keep gathering young crowds for future events and you will always be successful.”

see COMEDY, page 13



Maro Ajemian

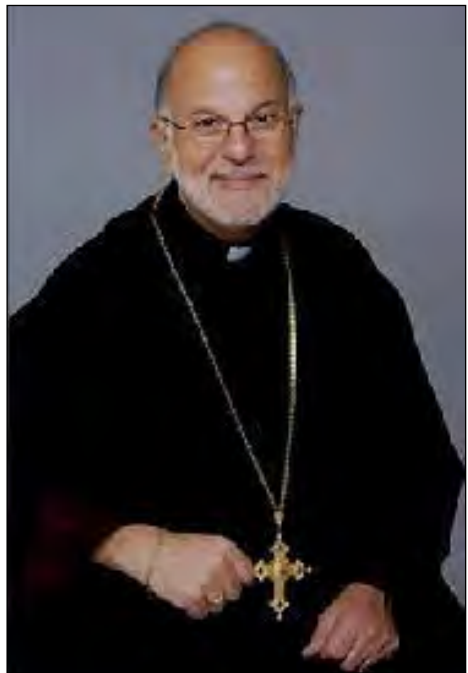
The Mystical Art of St. Vartan Cathedral

By Florence Avakian

NEW YORK – “I was here when the cathedral was born, and I witnessed the cornerstone blessing and the raising of the girders of St. Vartan Cathedral in New York,” said speaker Rev. Garabed Kochakian. He was introducing the topic of his lecture, titled “Holy Building, Holy Place: The Breath of Faith and Worship in St. Vartan Cathedral.”

The presentation on October 11 which elucidated the meaning of the architecture and art of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, took place in the cathedral sanctuary, and was hosted by the Eastern Diocese’s Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center. Its director, Dr. Christopher Sheklian, has oriented the center’s fall lecture season around different aspects of St. Vartan Cathedral, to honor its 50th anniversary.

Kochakian a long-serving priest of the Diocese, who once served as Diocesan Chancellor – is an art historian specializing in Armenian devotional art and architecture. The



Rev. Garabed Kochakian

author of books and essays on the iconography of the Armenian Church, Kochakian offered an eye-opening discourse on the meaning and symbolism of the cathedral’s artistic features.

To begin the evening, he joined with Diocesan Vicar the Very Rev. Simeon Odabashian, Cathedral Vicar the Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan, and several deacons in prayers for “The Rite of Entrance into the Holy Temple.”

Kochakian began his exploration with a simple question: “What is the church?”

His answer: “It is the sign, symbol, icon of the image of heaven. It’s like a ship which carries us to eternity to meet God. It is a place of hopes, aspirations – as well as an area to protect.”

The architecture of every church should tell a story, he continued. And with regard to St. Vartan Cathedral, “in this church, the architecture tells you about the people who built it. St. Vartan Cathedral is an open space, inviting everyone inside. There are no barriers, no separations.”

Describing the symbolic layout of the building, he spoke of a sense of “rhythm” built around the number eight, which “as a written figure symbolizes eternity, and as a quantity

see CATHEDRAL, page 13



ARTS & LIVING

Sold Out TCA Comedy Night Launches TCA Metro LA Chapter

COMEDY, from page 12

A wide range of generations attended the event, socializing with friends and learning more about the TCA Metro Los Angeles chapter as committee member Mihran Toumajan served as the evening's master of ceremonies and elaborated on the aim of the group. In

retary, Taleen Babayan, media, and members Maral Kojayan Beylerian, Hasmig Chilingirian Karayan, Talene Hachikian, Armen Toumajan and Arno Yeretizian.

"Congratulations to the TCA Metro LA committee for bringing a new generation of Armenians together," said Ajemian. "I hope everyone enjoyed the show as much as I enjoyed performing."

"We are grateful to Harout, Maro and Narine for making our inaugural event a memorable evening," said Bardakian. "We are thankful for the tremendous support we received and because of the positive feedback we are already planning our next comedy night."

The TCA Metro Los Angeles chapter has planned a full slate of events in the year ahead, including an educational discussion on Captain Jim Chankalian with Aram

Arkun, the executive director of the TCA as well as the assistant editor of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, on November 18 and a cultural event on February 9, 2019 featuring the



The audience at the TCA Evening of Comedy



Maro Ajemian, Harout Soghomonian and Narine Avakian

addition to Toumajan, the other members of the group are Carl Bardakian, chairman, Aleksan Giragosian, vice-chairman, Shahnour Hovsepien, treasurer, Armand Yerjianian, sec-

Element Band Trio.

"This event was a breath of fresh air for young professionals, leaders and community families hosted by a major cultural organization that is bridging the Armenian Diaspora

communities with one another," said committee member Hasmig Chilingirian Karayan. "We hope that TCA continues to lead the way in preserving our culture."

— Taleen Babayan

Boston Jazz Voices A Cappella Christmas Concert to Benefit ATP's Environmental Programs In Armenia

WINCHESTER, Mass. — The Armenia Tree Project (ATP) and a group of volunteer ambassadors are organizing a benefit concert on Sunday, December 2, with the a cappella group Boston Jazz Voices.

Boston Jazz Voices is an 18-voice a cappella ensemble devoted to vocal jazz. The original singers came together to perform the arrangements of Gene Puerling whose penchant for dense and unexpected harmonic progressions created a genre of singing that is emulated by all the best known jazz a cappella groups today. This past year, they were finalists in WGBH's "Sing that Thing" vocal competition.

"We've expanded our outreach in the local community with environmental education in the Armenian diaspora schools, recycling at church bazaars, and wine and cheese receptions in cities across the country. For Christmas, we decided to try something fun and host a benefit concert," explained director of development Hillel Korin. "Our team of volunteers had so much fun organizing the Kentucky Derby benefit event, they wanted to keep the momentum going."

The volunteer committee is led by Linda and Karnig Ostayan.

ATP is currently raising funds for its 2018 Annual Appeal, and donations all go toward tree planting, environmental education, and poverty reduction initiatives in Armenia.

The event will be held at the Jenks Center, 109 Skillings Road, Winchester, at 5 p.m. Refreshments, raffles and a silent auction will also take place. Tickets are available via www.armeniatree.org/acappella.



Boston Jazz Voices



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A 'Constellation' of Age and Memories in The Heart of Istanbul

By **Aram Arkun**

Mirror-Spectator Staff

BOSTON — When you enter an independent or assisted living home, you sometimes feel like you are entering a different realm, where time is slowed down or halted, and the past and present simultaneously exist. Somehow Bostonian filmmaker Shevaun Mizrahi captured this almost mystical feeling in her 82-minute documentary “Distant Constellations,” which is playing in New York, Boston and Chicago before a national release. Set in a retirement home in Istanbul, the film includes glimpses into the lives of a number of Armenian residents.

As the viewer slowly sinks into the film, he gradually pieces together where he finds himself. The colorful dialogue takes place in multiple languages, Turkish, Armenian, English and French, unified through the English subtitles, but none of the names of the characters are given, nor is the place identified directly.

Among the main Armenians depicted, Osep Minasoglu (Hovsep Minasyan, 1929-2013) is a famous photographer unable to take photos and constantly repeating phrases. Selma (a pseudonym) is an Armenian woman still living in fear, focused on her tragic family history and the destruction of her village in 1915. Like Osep, she passed away while the film was still

Filmmaker Mizrahi grew up in the United States but has close ties to Istanbul. She has an American mother who separated from her Turkish husband, so Shevaun would go to see her father and other relatives in Turkey during the summers. Consequently, she picked up some Turkish over the years. Her grandmother and other relatives there, being themselves part of a minority group there, spoke six or seven languages each, and her father grew up in the same area as the retirement home.

Mizrahi said that she always was really involved with photography from an early age. A mentor in high school helped her build up a portfolio, and her work was exhibited at the Smithsonian of American Art.

In college at the University of Pennsylvania, she double majored in cognitive neuroscience and English literature, which allowed her to incorporate many varied interests. She took

courses in philosophy, anthropology and psychology, and initially thought of going to medical school. She said, “I was motivated on that path to work with people on an intimate level, to be close with them and get involved with healing arts like medicine.” At the same time, she volunteered in hospitals and neuroscience labs, but after this period of exploration returned to art.

She went to graduate school at New York University to study film, and through the



Shevaun Mizrahi (courtesy of Grasshopper Film)



A scene from “Distant Constellations” with “Selma” (courtesy of Grasshopper Film)

When asked if she felt cinema was healing, she responded, “It definitely can be. When you watch films and make films, they interact with you on a molecular level.” Speaking about making “Distant Constellations,” she said, “In this process in particular, it did create a safe mode for me in front of subjects to go through some process together that was good for both of us. Some film productions can be very violent but this was certainly not true in this case.” She said that the time spent with the community in the home was enjoyable, fun and meaningful, yet there was no deeper significance than that.

Mizrahi declines to be identified as part of any school of filmmaking, but did mention her admiration for Pedro Costa, a Portuguese director. His film, “Colossal Youth” (2006), deals with somewhat similar themes to her movie and was made in a similar low-budget fashion. Costa takes his time in unspooling the story. Mizrahi liked that it is about how things happen, and about being present in the moment.

As a teenager, she liked the spirit of magical realism of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and has thought about how to build it visually through color and sound. In a sense, she said, her film-making approach is impressionistic.

She does not work in straightforward narrative in documentaries nor make political films.

shoot each time, working as a one-woman crew, when she was going to Turkey to visit her family. The film is constructed in such a way that it appears to take place over the course of several days but this is a cinematic illusion.

Mizrahi explained that in addition to the issue of financing, it was a complex project requiring much time because she had to build relationships and trust. She said she had to be thoughtful about how to prepare the film, as it dealt primarily with minority groups in present-day Turkey.

Around 2011, the construction work in the area surrounding the home picked up. Mizrahi said that previously, “it had been a rather quiet place on the top of a hill with a lot of older establishments. From inside the building you could look out and see the cityscape for miles.” But then the construction of high rises, hotels and nightclubs began on a large scale. She said, “The physical experience of walking there completely changed. There were such loud noises. It was dusty, and this very visceral shock between the experience of being outside where things were changing at a very fast pace and being inside, in a quiet chamber of memories, with the waiting and slowing down of time.”

Today there are huge skyscrapers surrounding the home on all sides, with their glass reflecting blue light onto the home. Mizrahi said, “The home is very much like a time capsule, like the last chapter of that generation. It is very unusual to find people with those stories now.”

This changed situation gave her the central tension of the film, with the contrast of these two environments. Mizrahi said, “Once I understood that, it was about building it up, building the pieces in a way that would allow this tension to vacillate in a very classical sense, like a plot with a good guy and a bad guy.” She had to resist the judgments of the new world outside, yet the hopes and dreams of the new generation, in this case, the construction workers, were not so different from those of the generation before.

Mizrahi accepts that this is not a straightforward film. She avoids showing things in a literal manner. For example, the staff of the home do not appear. The film, she said, is for her “an emotional journey through abstractions, stream of consciousness, the inner world of ideas and memories, and magical sounds and bright colors.”

In this retirement home, one-third or more of the residents are Armenians. There are Turks, Levantines, Spaniards, and members of other ethnic groups too. Most everyone, Mizrahi pointed out, was homeless or dealing with poverty. Some were taken off the street. Therefore, paradoxically, although they were quite educated and multilingual they actually had much less money than the construction workers seen outside, who appear to be poor people in the documentary. The retirement home is basically a philanthropic enterprise.

Mizrahi became friends with the residents, and with the construction workers outside, but because she was nonetheless an outsider, the film is, as she put it, an outsider’s inside view. She said that “the idea was to convey what it was to spend time with them,” not to tell them



A scene from “Distant Constellations” with Osep Minasoglu on the right (courtesy of Grasshopper Film)

being made, in 2012. Gaspar Beyleryan had been an Armenian priest but also had done a lot of metaphysical exploration. He is shown doing a hypnotism, and the film closes with the story he relates of a boy who drowns and dies, yet ends up living after all.

Of course there are many quirky non-Armenian characters too. The elderly Levantine pianist Roger Dumas, for example, ends up attempting to charm and proposition the filmmaker, at least 40 years younger than him.

Marcie Bloom Fellowship in Film became Edward Lachman’s assistant for two years. She also became fast friends with fellow students Deniz Buga and Shelly Grizim, who came on as producers for “Distant Constellation.” Grizim edited the movie with Mizrahi. They became a very small team working steadily over the past three years to carry the movie through distribution. Mizrahi said that as they did not get funding, they were basically engaged in “a labor of love.”

However, she said that her approach “in some ways helps you discuss political issues more honestly, particularly when there is no ideological agenda.”

Mizrahi had been visiting the Istanbul retirement home for two years and became quite familiar with the neighborhood as well as the residents and staff. She began shooting in 2011, but because she did not have special funding and had to work at different jobs, it took her six years to finish filming. She would



ARTS & LIVING

what to say with an agenda. At the most, there was some guiding in terms of topics.

Mizrahi said that all the characters were chosen because “they all lack bitterness – there is a kind of optimism and humor. That is the connecting element between them all.” They were the people to whom she was naturally drawn, and, she said, “It was a natural kind of synchronicity with my own rhythm and nature.”

Beyond that, she found that with aging, “all of our ideas become one idea...everything gets channeled into a smaller and smaller lens, until it is distilled into that one main object that defines our spirit, our essence.” Thus, each character strongly represented one thing. The photographer had his relationship with his camera. Another man was primarily into eroticism.

An Armenian woman, Selma, returned again and again to the terrible events of her childhood and their aftermath. Looking at life this way, Mizrahi said, it makes us all wonder what that thing will be for any of us eventually, and what level of control we might have over it.

Mizrahi tried to add some humor in the film as leaven, noting that “any moment of humor becomes so accentuated because it is in the context of the topic of mortality.” The discussions between residents Serkis Zilfioglu (another Armenian) and Izzet Cemal Alpokay, aptly described by Mizrahi as like a Laurel and Hardy pair, provide one example. They sometimes took refuge in the elevators for their conversations about the cosmos, riding up and down to ensure privacy while discussing topics like aliens.

Mizrahi says that she finds she is better at presenting real time visually and less in showing archival footage and laying out the narrative of past history. Along with an impressionistic approach, she has added a supernatural element to the film, with eerie sounds like wind blowing in the background and unusual lighting. There are long shots of snow falling, flames burning, and people sleeping in the dark.

Mizrahi says her approach to the film was a sort of sci-fi anthropology and not purely ethnography. She called it “painted, with a supernatural kind of emotion...so things had to be stylized and arranged and colored and the sound design had to be decorated with certain supernatural sounds to convey that.” The quality of the light

around the world.” People from audiences in varied places like Locarno, Switzerland, would come up and say the film echoed stories from their own grandparents.

The film has played in many competitions internationally. It received the Jury's Special Mention Award in Locarno and the FIPRESCI

tant-constellation), on November 9 in Chicago (Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art in Evanston, Illinois) and will be shown on November 26 in Boston again with the director present at the Brattle Theatre (<http://www.brattlefilm.org/2018/11/26/distant-constellation/>). Grasshopper Film



A window to the world: a construction site near the retirement home in “Distant Constellations” (courtesy of Grasshopper Film)

in the home, with its large windows, was in fact one reason why she chose it.

Clearly, the film, slow-paced and noncommercial, is not congruent with television and internet culture today, yet, according to Mizrahi, younger people have formed one of the audiences most receptive to the film. She finds, she says, that they are open to new forms of showing time. In addition, there are a lot of universal elements to the film. Mizrahi says, “There is a humanistic quality to these portraits that seems to really connect with people, whether they had an older relative they took care of, or witness modernization in their own neighborhoods. I think this has helped us in sharing all

Award at Viennale in Vienna, Austria. In South Korea theaters were really packed and it won Best Picture Prize at the Jeonju International Film Festival. It was shown at the Istanbul Independent Film festival this year and theatrical distribution will begin next May in Turkey if all goes well. It also was shown at the retirement home once and the residents, Mizrahi said, really enjoyed it.

“Distant Constellations” won the top prize in Yerevan’s Golden Apricot Film Festival, with the jury primarily composed on non-Armenians. Mizrahi said, “It was one of the festivals I did not attend. It is one of my biggest regrets from the past year.”

In the US, the film ran November 2-8 in New York at the Metrograph (<http://metrograph.com/film/film/1828/dis->

<http://grasshopperfilm.com/film/distant-constellation/>) will begin distribution in the United States and Canada afterwards.

Mizrahi won a Guggenheim Fellowship this year, which will help her continue her work. She is already thinking about her next film. She said, “It is my hope that I will be able to make it with the same level of intimacy and visual style. I think it is always a mix of expectations and intention, and unknown circumstances turning them into a new direction. A central idea is going to give the object to focus on and pursue. ... I think also as you discover things during the process the audience goes through that with you. I think that is a very important piece of making things.” She also hopes to continue to operate in the same stripped-down fashion, alone without a crew.



Arman Grigoryan is an Assistant Professor of Int'l Relations at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA. His research focuses on ethnonationalist conflicts, interventions, and the politics of the post-Soviet space. His publications have appeared in International Security, International Studies Quarterly, the International Political Science Review, Ethnopolitics, and the Nationalities Papers.

Professor Grigoryan holds a Ph.D. in political science from Columbia University, a Master's in international relations from the University of Chicago, and a BA in Middle Eastern Studies from Yerevan State University. He has been a recipient of research fellowships at Harvard University, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, and the University of Michigan. Professor Grigoryan served in the Armenian government in 1991-1993.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN ARMENIAN STUDIES PROGRAM
TEKEYAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
AGBU ALEX & MARIE MANOOGIAN SCHOOL

present

Arman Grigoryan Guest Speaker

From Nationhood to Statehood: Reflections on Ter-Petrosian's Writings

Armenia has experienced a set of transformational political events since the late 1980s – the Karabagh movement; independence; war; political and economic transition. These events have attracted considerable scholarly and journalistic attention. The country has also undergone important ideological shifts in this period, which have attracted less attention. What is worse, that attention has produced more heat than light. More specifically, shortly after the birth of the Karabagh Movement, some of the cherished assumptions of Armenian nationalism and politics came under assault. The ideology of the Armenian Cause in particular, which, despite slogans about class politics and socialist internationalism, had been embraced even by Armenian Communists since at least the end of WWII, was subjected to a hitherto unprecedented intellectual scrutiny. In a parallel conversation, Armenia's political class debated the competing visions of a liberal vs. a “national” state in the early years of independence. With some modification and with varying intensity these debates have continued to this day. The recent publication of Levon Ter-Petrosian's speeches, articles, and interviews on these matters for the English-speaking audience is a good opportunity to revisit these debates and look at them through the eyes of one of its most important contributors.

Open to the public - join us on..

Thursday, November 29 at 7 pm

AGBU Alex & Marie Manoogian School

22001 Northwestern Hwy., Southfield

Reception will follow lecture



The retirement home in “Distant Constellations” (courtesy of Grasshopper Film)

Read News in Armenian at:





ARTS & LIVING

A Dreamer's World: 'Endza' Babakhanyan Paintings Tour 4 Cities

ENDZA, from page 12

"This exhibit is significant because it is in support of a very important project which will aid in the development of the Karvajar region located between Armenia and Karabakh, a strategic region connecting Armenia to the rest of Artsakh. I have intentionally reduced the prices of my paintings for this exhibit to help raise the funds necessary," said Babakhanyan.

"Building a cultural center in Karvajar will support 16 surrounding villages and will provide an important cultural space for the people living in Karvajar. Our goal is to raise \$160,000 and we are hoping that this exhibit will bring more attention and focus to our mission," said project leader Fred Vartanians with the Ararat Foundation.

Established in 2005 in Los Angeles, Ararat Foundation, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt, non-governmental, independent organization. Since its creation, it has embarked on numerous public service programs upholding the Armenian heritage through educational, cultural and humanitarian projects.

To learn more about the Karvajar project and to donate, visit: <https://www.araratfoundation.org/>



Arno Yeretzin speaking at the Roslin Art Gallery Exhibit, with Gevorg Babakhanyan at left.

The Mystical Art of St. Vartan Cathedral

CATHEDRAL, from page 12

represents the eighth day: the day of the new creation, when Christ was raised from the grave." He noted that eight steps ascend from the cathedral plaza to the platform leading into the sanctuary.

The church chandeliers, he said, are based on those in the majestic cathedral of Ani in Armenia, and again the lights are arranged in multiples of eight. The dome with its eight windows and eight medallions depicts the days of creation.

In the center of the cathedral dome is the powerful Armenian Christian symbol "Eh": the seventh letter of the Armenian alphabet. Kochakian explained that it also articulates a complete thought: "He Is"—which echoes the Divine Name of God as He presented it to Moses: "I am who I am."

Kochakian described the major zones of the cathedral sanctuary as the entry, the nave (named for the "ship" that carries us securely over the turbulent waters of life), and the altar, which is elevated on a stage called the "bema" — a name derived from Hebrew, and meant to "symbolize of the height of heaven, the throne of God, the presence of the divine on earth."

He noted that the position of the altar means that prayers in the sanctuary are spoken in an Easterly direction: "towards the location where Jesus was born, lived, rose from the dead, and where Christ will come again." The praying congregation faces the altar icon depicting the Virgin Mary, whom Kochakian called "the pre-eminent saint in our church."

Finally, he noted that church doors often contain images that symbolizes entry from the outside world into the kingdom of heaven. The bronze entry doors of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral — in the design of which Kochakian participated — tell just such a story of entry into a holy kingdom, keyed to the turning point in Armenian history: namely, the baptism of King Drtad by the hand of St. Gregory the Illuminator, whereby Armenia became the world's first Christian kingdom.

In the course of his talk, he paid tribute to the men who designed the cathedral and its decorations: architect Walker O. Cain, and artist Bogdan Grom, who created the stained-glass windows and the sanctuary's original sculptural features.

At the conclusion of the lecture, following a brisk question-and-answer period, a reception was held in Guild Hall of the Diocesan Center, where Kochakian entered into an enthusiastic exchange of ideas with the audience members.

Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian



Lentil Potato Patties

INGREDIENTS

2 cups cooked red lentils, well drained
2 cups leftover chilled mashed potatoes
1 medium onion, grated
1 cooked carrot, chilled and mashed
2 tablespoons unsalted melted butter
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1/2 cup plain bread crumbs (or a little more)
1/4 cup finely chopped parsley
1 tablespoon lemon juice
Salt, pepper, cumin, paprika, cayenne pepper
1/4 cup chopped walnuts or pecans (optional)
Flour, plain bread crumbs or cornmeal for rolling
Butter or cooking oil for frying
Sour cream, yogurt, labneh
Chopped parsley, za'atar, lemon zest, sesame seeds

PREPARATION

In a small pan, cook onions in butter or oil for a few minutes to soften; do not brown.

In a large bowl, combine and mash together the lentils and potatoes until smooth; add onions, carrots, butter, eggs, bread crumbs, parsley, lemon juice, spices, and nuts, if desired, and mix thoroughly.

Form mixture into patties, roll in flour, bread crumbs or cornmeal, and chill for 30 minutes until firm. Fry patties in butter or oil until lightly browned on both sides. Drain on paper towels.

Serve with sour cream, yogurt or labneh; sprinkle with parsley, za'atar, lemon zest, or sesame seeds, and a drizzle of olive oil.

Serves 4-6.

* To bake instead of fry patties, roll in flour, bread crumbs or corn meal. Place patties on a baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Bake at 425° for 12 minutes. Carefully turn patties over, and bake for an additional 12 minutes or until golden.

**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

CALIFORNIA

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

NOVEMBER 18 — “Captain Jim Chankalian: Leader of the Armenian-American Volunteer Soldiers” sponsored by the Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles Chapter. Keynote speaker: Aram Arkun. Dedicated to the 100th Anniversary of the Victory at the Battle of Arara by the Armenian Legion. Bilingual program, 5 p.m. Tekeyan Center, 1901 N. Allen Ave., Altadena. For more information: info@TekeyanLA.org

FLORIDA

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

MASSACHUSETTS

NOVEMBER 12 — Trinity Men’s Union Dinner and Meeting – Guest Speaker: Hunter Mack, Assistant Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Massachusetts Lowell, “The Role of Combustion in an Evolving Energy Landscape.” Monday, 6 p.m., Social Hour, 7 p.m., Dinner; Johnson Hall, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. All are welcome! Open to the public. Donation for the losh kebab and kheyma dinner is \$15 per person. RSVP requested by November 11 to the TMU at tmuhtaac@gmail.com or call Dave Dorian, 617.501.4300.

NOVEMBER 14 — Najarian Lecture on Human Rights at Historic Faneuil Hall, Boston. Wednesday, Doors open at 6:45pm. Program at 7:30pm. INCARCERATION: Untangling the Web of Injustice. Performance: Karen Yamaguchi and Brett Fairchild, Berklee College of Music sophomores will perform their original piece, WAKE UP. They will be introduced by Gretchen Shae Moore who has created a course on mass incarceration that she teaches at Berklee. Speakers: Cherise Fanno Burdeen, Chief Executive Officer, Pretrial Justice Institute and Marc A. Levin, Vice President of Criminal Justice, Texas Public Policy and Right on Crime; Moderator: Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian, Sheriff of Middlesex County; President, Massachusetts Sheriffs’ Association. Reception follows at The Bostonian Hotel. Free and open to the public. An endowed public program of Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway.

NOVEMBER 14 — Preventative Health. Know Your Health. First Armenian Church, 380 Concord Avenue, Belmont. Open to all in the community. 6 p.m. Registration and refreshments. 6:30 to 8 p.m. Panel discussions. Free Access to Panel of Experts including Dr. Armen Arslanian, Internist at Winchester Physician Associates, Dr. George Vosgerichian, DMD, General and Esthetic Dentistry in Arlington, and Pierre Panoyan, R.Ph Walgreens Pharmacy Manager in Arlington. Event will be moderated by Tanya Iliadis, Pharm.D., associate director, Clinical Pharmacy Program at Atrius Health. This event sponsored by: Armenian American Pharmacists’ Association, Armenian American Medical Association, Armenian American Dental Society, New Paths - Bridging Armenian Women. For further information contact: arademirjian@hotmail.com

NOVEMBER 15 — The Armenian Museum of America Presents “Armenia: art, culture, eternity,” Opening Celebration. Thursday, 6-9 p.m. 6–7:30 pm: Gallery viewing and welcoming remarks by President, Michele

Kolligian, and Executive Director Jennifer Liston Munson. Wine reception and live music in the Bedoukian galleries, first floor. 7:30-9 p.m. An Armenian-inspired buffet reception will follow in the Adele & Haig Der Manuelian Galleries, third floor. RSVP: Stephanie.Garafole@armenianmuseum.org or 617.926.2562 ext. 4 or visit armenianmuseum.org 65 Main Street, Watertown, MA 02472

NOVEMBER 16 and 17 — Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church, Annual Food Festival and Fair, 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford, Phone 978-256-7234. Armenian Food and Pastries and Vendors, Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tours of the church sanctuary and complex - Friday, 11 a.m. and Saturday, 4 p.m. Tavloo Tournament - Saturday, 2 p.m.

NOVEMBER 30 and DECEMBER 1 — Friday and Saturday, Trinity Christmas Bazaar, Friday, 12-9 pm, Saturday, 10 a.m.-7 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Featuring delicious Armenian dinners, a la carte menu and take-out meals; booths and vendors – perfect for Christmas shopping; Armenian gourmet foods, delicacies and pastries; raffles, and more. Activities for Children, Peter Adamian Hall: Friday, 7-9 p.m., All Aboard “The Polar Express” Pajama Party, for children ages 5 and older; Saturday, 11 a.m., Children’s Entertainment, and 3-5 p.m., “The Star” movie, for all ages. Saturday, Visit with Santa, 1-2 pm, Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall. For further information, contact the Church office at 617.354.0632, or log onto www.htaac.org/calendar/event/580/.

DECEMBER 2 — Acapella Christmas Concert by Boston Jazz Voices to Benefit the Armenia Tree Project. 5 p.m. at the Jenks Center, 109 Skillings Road, Winchester. Free parking. Event will feature an acapella performance, refreshments, raffle, and silent auction. Tickets are \$30 each and a family four-pack of tickets is available for \$100. Tickets available via Eventbrite at www.armenia-tree.org/acappella

DECEMBER 3 — Monday, St James Armenian Church Men’s Club Dinner Meeting. Speaker: Gregory Vartanian, Esq., a Boston-based immigration attorney. He will provide an overview of US immigration laws and regulations. He will also discuss cases of Armenians and non-Armenians in various parts of the world seeking asylum and those just wanting to immigrate to the US. He will also present his opinions on issues with the US immigration system, the Presidential proclamation affecting Muslim countries, and how to interpret what you hear and read in the news. Social hour and mezza at 6:15 p.m. and dinner at 7 p.m. Mezza and Losh Kebab & Kheyma Dinner \$16/person. Ladies invited. St. James Armenian Church, Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center - Keljik Hall, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown.

DECEMBER 9 — Christmas Holiday Concert – Erevan Choral Society and Orchestra, Sunday, 7 p.m., Church Sanctuary, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Remembering the Very Rev. Oshagan Minassian on the 10th Anniversary of his passing, and Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the earthquake in Armenia and the 2,800th Anniversary of Yerevan. Under the direction of Composer Konstantin Petrossian, Music Director and Conductor, with Guest Soloists Anahit Zakaryan, soprano, and Michael Calmés, tenor, the program will consist of a variety of traditional Armenian and Western sacred and holiday music. The public is warmly invited to attend this complimentary concert. Reception to follow featuring an Exhibit, “To Armenia” by Winslow Martin, an Arlington-based documentary photographer. For further information, call the Church office, 617.354.0632 or log onto www.htaac.org/calendar/event/582/.

DECEMBER 16 — St. James Annual Name Day Banquet - Celebrating the 87th Anniversary of the Parish and Honoring Rev. Fr. Arakel Aljalian on the 25th Anniversary of his Ordination to the Priesthood. V. Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan, Primate, Presiding. St James Armenian Church, Watertown, MA. Details to follow.

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.

MICHIGAN

NOVEMBER 29 — “From Nationhood to Statehood: Reflections on Ter-Petrossian’s Writings,” lecture by Prof. Arman Grigoryan at 7 p.m. at the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School, co-sponsored by the University of Michigan Armenian Studies Program, the Tekeyan Cultural Association and the AGBU Alex and Maria Manoogian School. Grigoryan is an assistant professor of international relations at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania and focuses on ethno-nationalist conflicts. He holds a PhD in political science from Columbia University and a master’s in international relations from the University of Chicago. Open to the public and free. A reception will follow the lecture.

NEW JERSEY

DECEMBER 8 — Tekeyan Cultural Association of Greater New York Mher Megerdchian Theatrical Group will present a Christmas gala with Sarina Cross. Save the date. Details to come.

NEW YORK

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>

RHODE ISLAND

NOVEMBER 3-4 — Sts. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Church, 88th Annual Food Fair and Bazaar. 70 Jefferson St., Providence. Saturday, 11:30 a.m.- 10 p.m.- Sunday, Noon – 6 p.m. Daily Raffle & Silent Auction, Kids Games, Kids Movies, Arts & Crafts, Balloon man. Shish Kebab, Losh Kebab, Kufta, Kheyma, Yalanchi, Armenian Pastries, Lahmajoon & many other delicious food available. All are welcome. Handicap accessible. Cash, Check, Visa and Mastercard Accepted. For further information, call church office 401-272-7712.

NOVEMBER 10 & 11 — Armenian Fest 2018, Sts. Vartanatz Armenian Church of Providence presents its ARMENIAN FOOD FESTIVAL AT RHODES ON THE PAWTUXET, 60 Rhodes Place, Cranston. - Featuring chicken, losh and shish kebabs and kufta dinners. Armenian delicacies, dancing to live music, arts and crafts, flea market, gift baskets, children’s corner, country store, jewelry, hourly raffles. Armenian Dance Group will perform on Saturday and Sunday at 5 p.m. Armenian food and pastry are available all day. Saturday from noon – 9 p.m. and Sunday, noon – 7 p.m. Free admission and parking. Valet parking available. Please call the Church Office at 401-831-6399 or www.armenianfestri.com/food for further information.

CANADA

NOVEMBER 14 — Book presentation by Adrienne G. Alexanian on her father’s memoir. Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army. Wednesday, November 14, 2018 7:30 p.m. AGBU Montreal Center – Demirdjian Hall 805 Manoogian Street Saint Laurent , QCH4N1Z5. Reception and book signing to follow. (All proceeds from the sale of the books will be donated to the AGBU). RSVP – info@agbumontreal.org (514) 748-2428.

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



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Parliamentary Election to Fulfill Promise of Velvet Revolution

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Armenians will go to the polls to elect a new parliament for the first time since the first elections of the independent third Republic of Armenia without bribes or coercion.

The mayoral elections of Yerevan were conducted in a very peaceful atmosphere last month. The enthusiasm and the euphoria which had catapulted Nikol Pashinyan to the post of prime minister were lacking during the staid elections.

Under the previous regime, Yerevan's mayoral elections were held with the participation of 40 percent of the registered voters. After the Velvet Revolution, only minor changes were recorded in the percentage of voters participating, which became 43 percent. Some facts and justifications are needed to explain the low number of participants.

One explanation referred to the lack of bribes. The other one, the certainty that Pashinyan's My Step (Eem Kayleh) party would carry a landslide victory, therefore participation or staying away would not impact the outcome of the elections.

At this time, it is feared that the same factors may once again keep voters from the election booths.

The political mood of the citizenry can be gauged by talking to the cab drivers. Before the Velvet Revolution, they could not wait for a passenger to get in the cab to begin their complaints about the government leaders and the rising prices of commodities.

Immediately following Pashinyan's coming to power, the mood was jubilant. Today, their reaction is to mostly one of wait and see.

Pashinyan and his team believe that the people had given them a mandate to overthrow the old regime. After accomplishing that mission, it looks like they are lost about what the next step should be.

People, in general, are in the mood of expectation and anticipation. They are impatient and if their living conditions do not change overnight, they will be disappointed. The corruption and system of bribery disappeared right away. Yet, it will take a painstaking process to heal the wounds, to reform the system and begin to enjoy the dividends of the Velvet Revolution.

All hopes for now are pinned on the upcoming elections. Pashinyan is taking the people through a time consuming process to deliver a new legislature run by members of the young digital age generation.

At this time, intense horse trading is being conducted between parties and alliances in Armenia's very fluid political system. In anticipation of the elections, new parties are emerging and old alliances are falling apart. Until solid parties are formed around ideological lines, the fluidity will continue to threaten the political system in Armenia.

In the West, the traditional parties have been formed to represent different interests of the groups in society and sustain democracy. Political parties formed around influential individuals and their pocketbooks will not have a long life. This time around, it seems that political structures are being built round ideological principles in Armenia too.

The electoral system is very complicated and very few people understand its workings. But people vote anyway. Pashinyan tried to overhaul the electoral system but the corrupt parliament struck down the drive by one vote.

There are 13 electoral precincts in the country, from which 101 members of parliament will be elected. Candidates will be elected in two ways: on a party ticket or a rating system.

The parties have to hit the 5-percent margin to be elected whereas an alliance needs a 7-percent margin. Any party which crosses the 5-percent threshold will elect 10 members to the par-

liament. On the back of the ballot there is a long list of other set of candidates who will be elected based on the votes they receive nationwide.

Any party which receives 42 percent of votes will be entitled to bonus votes which will raise its percentage to 50-percent-plus-one. That party will form the cabinet and designate the prime minister.

Pashinyan's party is poised to win 80 percent of the vote. But the constitution does not allow any party to control the parliament with that kind of power. Assuming that Pashinyan will hit that percentage point, his party will lose 10 percent of this in practice because 30 percent of the parliament is allocated to the opposition. At least two parties may constitution the opposition. If the second party in the opposition fails to cross the 5-percent barrier, its candidates will be elected to assume a two-party opposition mandated by the constitution.

November 14 is the deadline for submitting the slate of candidates and paying the participation fee. Candidates can only run on party tickets. They may not run as individuals.

At this time, the following parties or alliances have decided to participate in the elections:

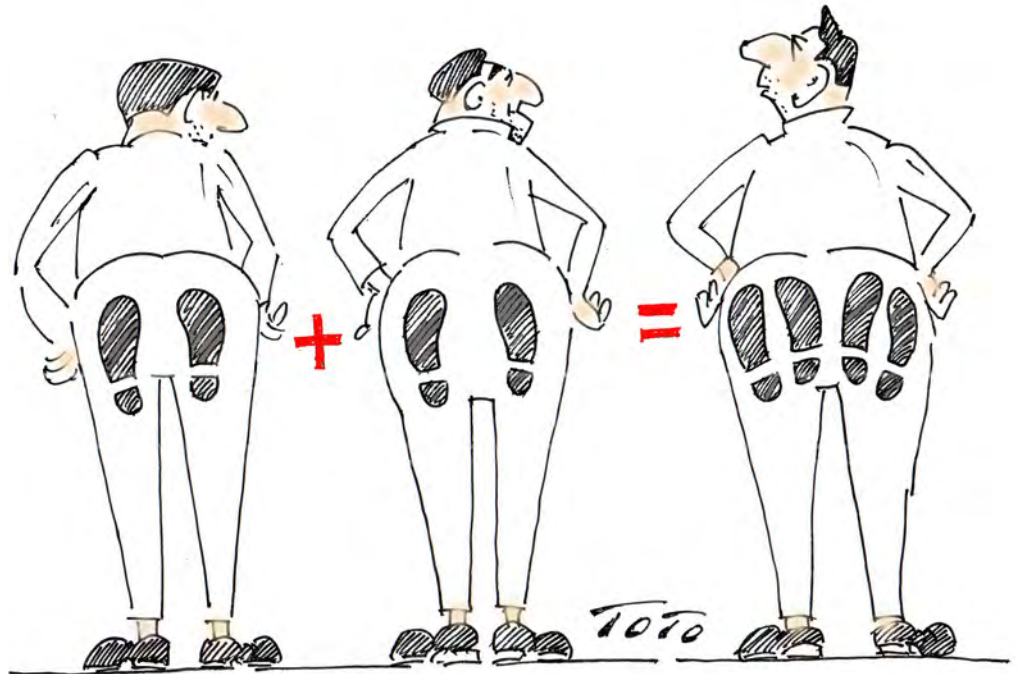
- My Step headed by Pashinyan. It is a foregone conclusion that Pashinyan and his group will sweep the elections.
- Prosperous Armenia headed by Gagik Tsarukyan. The latter has been distributing charity year round which may amount to a solid bloc of votes.
- Menk Alliance headed by Aram Sargsyan, brother of slain Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan.

The Armenian Democratic Liberal (ADL) Party may also join the Menk Alliance.

- Loosavor Hayastan (Bright Armenia) Alliance, headed by Edmond Maroukyan. Maroukyan and Sargsyan were planning to participate in a joint alliance but they recent split, each going their own way. The split may hurt both groups.
- The Heritage Party, headed by Armen Martirosyan.

Discredited groups are the following which may receive a minimal number of votes:

- The Republican Party, headed by Vigen Sargsyan. This was the ruling party headed by deposed Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan.
- The ARF (Dashnaktsutsyun) headed by Hrand Markaryan
- Sasna Dzerer, headed by Jirayr Sefilyan. This group repre-



sents an extremist faction which overran a police station last year and resulted in the deaths of several officers. As a result Sefilyan and several others were tried and jailed. The party's leadership was recently released from jail and they are still full of rage and rancor.

• Yerkir Dzirany (Country of Apricots) led by Parliament Member Zarouhi Postanjyan has not revealed its intentions yet.

If the voter turnout is low once again, blame may be laid at the lack of bribes. The Velvet Revolution will not fulfill its goal until it accomplishes its next mission, placing the country on the true path of democracy. Once Pashinyan wins his mandate, he can fully immerse himself in the economic recovery of the country which is facing so many domestic and global challenges.

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COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

Trump's National Security Advisor tries to Distance Armenia from Russia, Iran

John Bolton, the National Security Adviser of President Trump, visited Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia in October, conveying the White House position on regional and international issues. Bolton is known as a hawk on foreign policy and is often described as a warmonger for his extremist positions!

In his meetings with Armenian officials, Bolton spoke about US sanctions on Iran which may affect third countries, including Armenia. He also made a surprise offer to sell American weapons to Armenia and discussed Armenian-Turkish relations, and the resolution of the Artsakh conflict.

It became clear that Bolton tried to distance Armenia from its strategic ally Russia and key trading partner Iran, since the border with Armenia is blockaded by neighboring Azerbaijan and Turkey.

Even though serious concerns were expressed by many Armenian commentators and particularly Russian officials regarding the policies advanced by Bolton, Acting Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan, was surprisingly upbeat and told the Armenian Parliament: "I've met with Bolton. There wasn't even the slightest nuance during this meeting which can cause disturbance in Armenia and among the Armenian people. I consider this meeting to be a major diplomatic achievement for us, I will say in the future as to what is the reason that I am saying so."

The Acting Foreign Minister of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan added: "The dialogue [with Bolton] was very successful, and the US understood the logic of our relations

with the Russian Federation, Iran, our position on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, relations with Turkey, etc."

Putting a positive spin on his meetings in Armenia, Bolton tweeted: "Yesterday I had a nice visit to Armenia, an important friend in the region. I enjoyed productive conversations with the [Acting] Prime Minister and his national security team."

Despite the heated relations between the United States and Russia, Armenia has to maintain a delicate balance between the two superpowers. On the one hand, Armenia relies on Russia for its critical needs: weapons, energy, and trade, and therefore, cannot afford to antagonize its strategic ally. On the other hand, Armenia has maintained friendly relations with many other countries, particularly Western Europe and the United States.

Proposed Sale of Weapons to Armenia

Bolton surprised his Armenian hosts by offering them to purchase American weapons by stating that they are superior to those of Russia. However, he did not mention how impoverished Armenia would be able to pay for these weapons. As we know, Russia supplies the bulk of Armenia's weapons either by providing loans or at discount prices. Pashinyan responded by stating that Armenia will consider the American offer, while Acting Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan told NEWS.am that there was no need to purchase US weapons at this time.

By acquiring American weapons, Armenia would risk antagonizing Russia, its main source of arms. Secondly, the United States may be using its offer to Armenia as a cover to sell multi-billion dollars of advanced weapons to Azerbaijan, something it can afford to purchase, while Armenia cannot.

Bolton's other illogical statement was that the Russian sale of weapons to Armenia and Azerbaijan has hampered the settlement of the Artsakh conflict. Ironically, this is exactly what Bolton is proposing by offering to sell US weapons to both countries. In my opinion, the United States and all other countries should refrain from selling weapons to both Armenia and Azerbaijan!

In response to Bolton's statement that the United States will enforce sanctions against Iran "very vigorously" and for that reason the Armenian-Iranian border is "going to be a significant issue," Pashinyan stated that Armenia as a land-

locked nation does not have diplomatic relations with either neighboring Turkey or Azerbaijan, so it must retain "special relations" with its other two neighbors – Iran and Georgia – which are Armenia's only "gateways" to the outside world. Pashinyan optimistically told the Armenian Parliament: "I think that the position of Armenia was clear, comprehensible and even acceptable to representatives of the US delegation."

Rather than pressuring Armenia to disrupt its critical trade relations with Iran, the United States should be urged to pressure Turkey and Azerbaijan to open their borders so Armenia can trade more easily with and through all four of its neighbors. Pashinyan correctly pointed out that the Republic of Armenia has its own national interests which do not always coincide with the interests of other countries. In my view, the United States has no right to demand that third countries comply with its misguided sanctions on Iran. Furthermore, since the United States is exempting Turkey from implementing US sanctions on Iran, why shouldn't Armenia be also exempt from these sanctions? Besides, Bolton acknowledged that the United States does not "want to cause damage to our friends in the process."

Bolton declared that the resolution of the Artsakh conflict would help open Turkey's border with Armenia. Pashinyan responded by stating that Armenia is ready to establish relations and have open borders with Turkey, however, without any preconditions which Turkey tried to impose by linking the opening of the border with the Artsakh conflict. To counter Turkey's precondition, I suggest that Armenia impose its own precondition by linking the opening of the border with Turkish recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Bolton suggested that the December 9 Parliamentary elections, during which Pashinyan's political party is expected to win the majority of seats, will give him a strong mandate to take decisive steps in the resolution of the Artsakh conflict. Bolton did not seem to be aware of Pashinyan's repeated statements that "the ones who determine whether to resolve or not resolve the Karabakh conflict are the Armenian people, and specifically the people of Armenia, the people of Artsakh and in this case also the Diaspora, because this is a Pan-Armenian issue."

As Armenia is facing both internal and external uncertainties, it is mandatory that Armenians worldwide support their homeland and join forces against their common adversaries.

Prof. Hannibal Travis Speaks on the Assyrian, Armenian, Greek, and Yezidi Genocides

By David Boyajian

Assyrians and Armenians have lived near each other for thousands of years and shared similar trials and tribulations.

So as an Armenian American in an audience of about sixteen Assyrian Americans, I knew I was among compatriots.

The occasion was a talk by Prof. Hannibal Travis, titled "The Plight of Refugees and the Law of Genocide: Assyrians, Armenians, Greeks, and Yezidis," on a rainy, blustery Saturday afternoon on October 27, at the Watertown Public Library.

The event was sponsored by the Assyrian American Association of Massachusetts (AAAM; Facebook.com/AssyrianAmericanAssociationOfMassachusetts).

The talk's primary topic was the World War I era genocides – and previous massacres – of Christian Assyrians/Armenians/Greeks, as well as Yezidis, committed by Ottoman Turkey and allied Kurds.

Prof. Travis also discussed the ongoing victimization of Assyrians, Armenians, and Yezidis by Islamist jihadists and others in the current wars in Iraq and Syria.

The Assyrian Genocide

The 14th century Turko-Mongol invasions of Timur/Tamerlane, said the speaker, had forced many Assyrians into the mountains of northern Mesopotamia (today's southeastern Turkey) from their cities in the southern plains.

In 1843 in Hakkari (now in southeastern Turkey), perhaps 10,000 Assyrians were massacred and sold into slavery by Kurdish tribes and Ottoman forces.

The Hamidian Massacres of the mid-1890s – so named after Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II – are usually thought to have had only Armenian victims.

Professor Travis pointed out, however, that perhaps 25,000 Assyrians also fell victim to these massacres.

In the World War I era, an estimated 250,000 Assyrians were murdered by Ottoman Turkey and Kurdish irregulars in the Assyrian Genocide or "Seyfo," which means "sword" in

the Assyrian language.

In the same period, invading Ottoman forces also murdered many Assyrians in northwest Persia (now Iran).

In 1915, explained Travis, Assyrians made resistance stands, such as in Ayn-Wardo (in today's southeastern Turkey), against Turkish troops and Kurdish brigands – similar to that period's Armenian defense stands in Van and at Musa Dagh.

About 2,500 Assyrians presently call Armenia their home.

The Yezidi Genocide

The Yezidis (or Yazidis) were also swept up in the 20th century genocides that engulfed Christians in the Turkish Empire.

In Iraq/Syria today, Yezidis often find themselves under siege by ISIS jihadists.

YEZIDIS PRESENTLY
LIVE MAINLY IN IRAQ
AND SYRIA, THOUGH
APPROXIMATELY 30,000
ALSO RESIDE IN
ARMENIA.

Most Yezidis regard themselves as a distinct ethno-religious group. They often speak the Indo-European language known as Kurmanji Kurdish. Their unique religion, Yazidism, combines some aspects of other major monotheistic religions.

Yezidis presently live mainly in Iraq and Syria, though approximately 30,000 also reside in Armenia.

Hannibal Travis

Hannibal Travis is an Associate Professor of Law at Florida International University College of Law in Miami. A magna cum laude graduate of Harvard Law School in 1999, he has authored scores of articles on genocide and international law as well as Internet, business, copyright, and antitrust law.

He is the editor of the recently published *The Assyrian Genocide: Cultural and Political Legacies*.

His mother's family was from the traditionally Assyrian regions of Hakkari and Urmia.

He explains that the name Hannibal is of Semitic origin and attested in Phoenician/Carthaginian history. It means "Mercy of Baal" where Baal is usually translated as "the Lord".

Travis has previously spoken at events sponsored by such Armenian organizations as AGBU, Armenian Assembly of America, Centennial Project Foundation, and USC Institute of Armenian Studies.

Assyrian Friends

I spoke to Ninos Hanna and Prof. Sargon George Donabed at this event.

Hanna is AAAM's President and a communications and marketing professional.

His mother's family was from Kharpert province (in Western Armenia/Turkey), a major Armenian center prior to the 1915 Genocide. His father's family came from Diyarbakir and Mardin in present-day southeastern Turkey.

Sargon Donabed is an associate professor of history at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island. He is the author of *Reforging a Forgotten History: Iraq and the Assyrians in the Twentieth Century* and *The Assyrians of Eastern Massachusetts*. His father's family hails from Kharpert.

I suggested to both men some ways to better inform the Armenian community of Assyrian events and news.

Hopefully this can be the start of much greater cooperation between the two communities.

(David Boyajian is a freelance journalist.

Many of his articles are archived at Armeniapedia.org/wiki/David_Boyajian.)



Panel Addresses the Disappearing Christian Population in the Middle East

POPULATIONS, from page 1
prepared for congressional testimony this past June. “Of the three million Christians who are estimated to have been living in Iraq and Syria in 2003, 75-80 percent of them have been forced to abandon their homes because of sectarian violence, civil war, the rise of the brutal Islamic State. Of the 1.5 million Christians in Iraq in 2003, perhaps only 200,000 remain, and many of them are IDPs (internally displaced persons),” he said.

“Despite repeated Administration promises and Congressional pleas to respond quickly to be of assistance to the IDPs in the quest to return home, this simply did not happen, though I am pleased to report that in recent

months there seems to be a commitment to do more in the future than has been done in the past,” Hill added. “It is not too late to make a difference. We are capable of moving much more quickly than we have been moving, but that will never happen if we are not persuaded that this is really a priority.”

Hill is part of an advisory committee to USAID mandated by Congress, comprising faith-based organizations. He assured the conference attendees that, according to Congress, more money will go to help the minorities.



National Council of Churches NCC President and General Secretary Jim Winkler at the Armenian Assembly's 2018 National Advocacy Conference



General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church Director Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe at the Armenian Assembly's 2018 National Advocacy Conference

Crowe explained that she has “traveled to several Middle Eastern regions throughout the years” and has “seen some of the disastrous results of economic, political, and nationalistic aims. And, very often, it does in fact affect religious minorities and indigenous peoples.”

After speaking about updates in the region, she pressed the participants to take the next step to help the Christian minorities. “Being with the people and hearing the stories of what their lives are like on the ground are very, very important. So, I urge you to continue to go and see, and then to go back to your homes and tell the stories of the Christians in the Middle East,” Crowe concluded.

The NCC president, who recently traveled

to the region, encouraged everyone to engage in public policy advocacy and fight for the Christian population. “Life is harder and harder for Christians throughout the Middle East, and Christians in the United States must stand and act with solidarity on their behalf,” Winkler said.

“We believe that Christians in the United States must be made more aware of the dire situation of our brothers and sisters in Christ in the Middle East and that education about their situation must be our priority for action,” he continued. “We believe that Christians of the United States must engage in public policy advocacy – such as what you are doing – that supports the well-being of our church members of the Middle East. This includes constructive

Armenia Donates Nansen Portrait to Norwegian Government

YEREVAN (Public Radio of Armenia) – Armenia has donated Fridtjof Nansen's portrait by Diaspora Armenian artist Daniel Varoujan Hejini to the Kingdom of Norway.

Armenia's Acting Minister of Diaspora Mkhitar Hayrapetyan on November 6 handed over the portrait to Norway's Honorary Consul in Armenia Timothy David Straight.

Addressing the ceremony, Mkhitar Hayrapetyan noted that Nansen was one of the first to condemn the Armenian Genocide and helped tens of thousands of Armenian refugees find refuge in Armenia and other countries. He also recalled missionary Bodil Katharine Biørn, who worked as a nurse in Western Armenia and saved thousands of homeless and ill children.

“For the Armenian people Fridtjof Nansen and Bodil Katharine Biørn stand as symbols of Norway's generosity, human benevolence and devotion to the protection of human and

nations' rights,” the acting Minister said.

Mkhitar Hayrapetyan also reminded about the support of the Norwegian government and people in the restoration of the earthquake-hits areas of Armenia after 1988.

Norwegian explorer, politician and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Fridtjof Nansen was a strong supporter of Armenia-related issues. One of the important parts of the public work of Nansen was his activity aimed at helping the Armenian people.

He became interested in the Armenian Question in September 1896, after he became aware of 1894-1896 Hamidian massacres. Prior to World War I Nansen presented a report on the rights of small nations at the University of Christiania (nowadays Oslo) University and touched upon the problems of the Armenians, among others. Right after World War I he became involved in the matter.

Starting from 1920 Nansen actively participated

in the works of the League of Nations. During 1920-22 he was the League of Nations' High Commissioner for the repatriation of prisoners of war. In 1921 he was appointed a High Commissioner for Refugees and organized an exchange of prisoners and repatriation of refugees.

Upon Nansen's suggestion, the League of Nations ratified the Nansen Passport which gave

right to the stateless refugees to enter different countries. This allowed more than 320,000 Armenians receive the right to free movement.

In 1924 Nansen started to study the repatriation issues of the Armenian refugees. In June 1925 he visited Soviet Armenia and, as a result, succeeded in organizing the repatriation of nearly 7,000 Armenian refugees.

NAASR/Gulbenkian Program on Armenia's Velvet Revolution Attracts Broad Audience

PANEL, from page 5

Emil Sanamyan, a journalist based in Washington with more than 20 years of experience, writing predominantly about the South Caucasus, and a senior fellow with the University of Southern California's Institute of Armenian Studies, picked up where Grigoryan left off, and discussed factors that precipitated Sargsyan's resignation, as well as the stages of the peaceful transfer of power, the focus of the new government on arresting corrupt officials, and the victory of winning 81 percent of the vote in the mayoral election, creating a good moment to push for Parliamentary elections.

Armen Kharazian, an attorney based in Washington and a former member of the Armenian diplomatic service, holding several positions from 1993 to 2001, offered his perspective on Armenia's successes over time in garnering international support and suggested ways Armenia could now strengthen its position worldwide by focusing on security, communications, and technology by building an infrastructure independent of Russia. Among specific suggestions was that Armenia launch its own satellite for an independent internet, not managed by Russia, as well as its own inde-

pendent airline.

The audience, ranging in age from 20 to 98, engaged in lively questioning of the panelists, with most audience members remaining for the entire afternoon on a fall day, in the scenic City View Room of GW's Elliott School.

“Washington DC is an ideal venue for contemporary topics,” said Judith Saryan, NAASR Board member. “This program showed the broad interest among DC-area residents of all ages in the international implications of the recent political transformation in Armenia.”

This program capped NAASR's series of three programs on “Armenia's Velvet Revolution After Six Months,” all held within the past 30 days along the Eastern Seaboard in Cambridge, New York and Washington, DC, at Harvard, Columbia and George Washington universities, respectively, as part of the NAASR/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues, whose goal is to encourage discourse on current-day topics of vital interest to the international community. The Voice of America's Armenian Service and Armenian Public Television televised segments of the Washington event for their audiences.

Primate Extolls ‘Higher Vision’ Uniting All Faithful at Interfaith Memorial

INTERFAITH, from page 1

and a president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, and the Vatican's Observer to the UN Archbishop Bernardito Auza, also attended and spoke in a show of solidarity among the city's religious, diplomatic, and elected officials. A congregant of the Tree of Life Synagogue, Lauren Myer, was also present.

Findikyan, in his remarks, extolled the spirit of unity among all godly people.

“Despite the very visible differences among us in our approaches to faith, we are united in a vision for humanity that is so much more exalted than what we see around us in recent times,” he said.

He continued: “We must inspire our congregations, and our fellow citizens, to a higher vision of humanity.”

The entire service of about 75 minutes' duration was recorded by CBS News and can be viewed at <https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2018/10/31/interfaith-service-for-pittsburgh-synagogue-shooting-victims/>