

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

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## Hope after Seven Years of War for Syria

### Reconstruction of Churches and Holy Places

By Elisabeth Hellenbroich

BERLIN — At the beginning of 2018 a booklet was published by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN International), a charity of pontifical right which through its offices in 24 countries supports Christians wherever they are persecuted, oppressed or in material need through information, prayer and action). The booklet provides a very moving testimony to the immense destruction which was caused by the war in Syria that began in 2011 and led to the total destruction of many parts of the country — killing half a million Syrians and forcing almost 12 million Syrian citizens to flee their homes.

During this war, the Christian population was targeted with particular brutality, which included the slaughtering of Christians by jihadist forces, ransacking their holy places and homes as well as symbols. Almost no attention has been given so far to the immense damage that was inflicted by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to Christian holy places, churches, monasteries, cemeteries and youth centers. The booklet provides information for the

first time on how reconstruction has begun in several holy places, offering renewed hope to the thousands of Christians that were persecuted by the fanatical Jihad forces and had to flee their homes.

The publication comes thanks to the initiatives of a joint commission of Catholic and Russian Orthodox priests which was

created in the aftermath of the historic meeting between Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Pope Francis in Havana, on February 12, 2016.

The preface of the booklet was written by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External see HOPE, page 6

## Armenian Delegation Meets with al-Assad

### Syrian Leader Promises to Rebuild Razed Genocide Monument

By Anna Gziryan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — A meeting between Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Syrian-Armenians as well as businesspeople from Armenia was held in December, in a positive and warm atmosphere.

The group from Armenia was led by George Barseghyan, chairman of the Syrian-Armenian community in Armenia. He presented details from the aforementioned meeting during a recent interview.

see DEIR ZOR, page 6



The destroyed Deir Zor monument in Syria

## Pashinyan Reappointed Prime Minister

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Nikol Pashinyan was formally reappointed as Armenia's prime minister on Monday, January 14, more than one month after his My Step alliance won snap parliamentary elections resulting from last spring's Velvet Revolution in the country.

President Armen Sarkissian signed a rel-

evant decree at a meeting with Pashinyan timed to coincide with the inaugural session of the Armenian parliament, in which My Step has a two-thirds majority.

"Congratulations, Mr. Prime Minister," Sarkissian told the 43-year-old former journalist at the meeting held in the presidential palace in Yerevan.

"Your success is our country's success, our people's, everyone's, including me, success," he said.

"I want to emphasize that the main political change anticipated in Armenia has already happened: power has been fully



Nikol Pashinyan

returned to the people and democracy has been established in Armenia," Pashinyan said for his part.

Under the Armenian constitution, Pashinyan has to name members of his cabinet and ask the president to formally appoint them within five days. He will then have 20 days to submit the government's five-year policy program to the parliament. The program's approval by the National Assembly will amount to a vote of confidence.

It is expected that most of the current cabinet members — including Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan and Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan — will retain their posts. Outgoing First Deputy Prime Minister Ararat Mirzoyan and Culture Minister Lilit Makunts have resigned to take up senior positions in the parliament.

Pashinyan is expected to make major changes in the government's structure. A see PASHINYAN, page 2

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Putin Congratulates Pashinyan

MOSCOW (Panorama.am) — Russian President Vladimir Putin sent on Monday, January 14, a message to Nikol Pashinyan, congratulating him on his appointment as prime minister of Armenia, the Kremlin press service reported.

Vladimir Putin noted, in part, that relations between Russia and Armenia rested on the good traditions of friendship and mutual respect, and that both countries had accumulated substantial experience of fruitful cooperation in various areas.

"I hope that our dialogue and constructive joint work will further strengthen Russian-Armenian allied cooperation, and that this will also help promote integration processes in the Eurasian region. This, undoubtedly, meets the interests of our fraternal peoples," the head of the Russian state noted.

Putin, until this announcement, had been cool toward Pashinyan, while repeatedly sending greetings to former Armenian President Robert Kocharyan, who is currently jailed by the Pashinyan regime.

### New Ambassador to US Presents Credentials

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Armenia's Ambassador to the United States Varuzhan Nersesyan presented his credentials to US President Donald Trump on January 15, the Armenian Embassy announced on Facebook.

"Welcoming President Trump on behalf of Armenia's president, prime minister and people, the ambassador stated that it is a great honor and responsibility for him to represent Armenia in the US in this important period.

"During the meeting President Trump and Nersesyan spoke about expanding bilateral relations in different areas. They highlighted the role of the American-Armenian community in developing the friendship between the two countries," the Embassy said in a statement.

### Armenian President Recalls Ambassador from Spain

YEREVAN (Arka) — Armenian President Armen Sarkissian recalled this week the country's ambassador to Spain Avet Adonts.

By another decree, he appointed Armen Papikyan as head of the Armenian mission to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as the permanent representative of Armenia to the UN headquarters in Vienna and other international organizations.

Also Sahak Sargsyan was appointed as Armenia's Permanent Representative to the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization.



The Blessing of the Water ceremony

## New Primate Welcomes Armenian Christmas at St. Vartan Cathedral

NEW YORK — January 6, 2019, fell on the first Sunday of the New Year, and the Armenian Church of America welcomed the occasion with the new Primate of the Eastern Diocese celebrating the "Armenian Christmas" Divine Liturgy.

Celebrating the Feast of the Nativity and Theophany of Jesus Christ for the first time since his election as Diocesan Primate, the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan led an inspiring badarak before a crowded sanctuary and several thousand viewers watching an online broadcast.

see CHRISTMAS, page 10

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### Leading the City of Roses

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Armenian Parliament Condemns 1990 Pogroms in Baku

YEREVAN (Arka) — The Armenian National Assembly condemns the Armenian pogroms committed in Baku in January 1990, Parliament Speaker Arrarat Mirzoyan said on January 15.

He said all the members of the parliament denounce that violence as well as any violence based on discrimination.

"We, as people that had experienced several times in our history such tragedies will never tolerate such violence against any nation," Mirzoyan said.

On February 26 to 29, 1988, authorities-backed mass pogroms and atrocities against Armenians were committed in Sumgait, a city in Azerbaijan.

According to the official reports, 32 Armenians were killed and hundreds injured in these pogroms. As many as 14,000 Armenians fled their homes in Sumgait.

Anti-Armenian pogroms took place also in other cities of Azerbaijan. In January 1990 they were raging in Baku.

As a result, more than 360,000 refugees from Azerbaijan's different cities have come to Armenia over a period between 1988 and 1992. Other 140,000 ethnic Armenians migrated to other countries.

## More than 1,000 Indian Nationals Granted Residency Live in Yerevan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — More than 1,000 out of the 2966 nationals of India currently living in Armenia have been granted residence permits for education purposes, while 800 received permits for employment, Director of the Migration Service Armen Ghazaryan told a news conference on January 11.

"According to data of the nine months of 2018, 21061 citizens of India entered Armenia, and the departures totaled 18,095 Indians. As a result, 2,966 people have stayed, and around 2,000 of them have received residence permits in Armenia. As far as nearly 200 of them, we can't claim that they are irregular migrants since they might have valid visas," Ghazaryan said.

In 2016, 1,086 Indian nationals received residency permits, and in 2017 the number was below 1,000.

## Yerevan to Have Huge New Park

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The city of Yerevan is planning to build a new forest-park in collaboration with the private sector, City Hall Nature Protection Department Director Khachik Hakobyan said at a news conference on Tuesday, January 15.

The new park will cover an area of 20 hectares in the Nubarashen district.

Hakobyan said the area is near the district's landfill.

He said a new drip irrigation network will be constructed and a variety of valuable trees will be planted.

"In the future, when the Nubarashen landfill will be closed, the forest area will also continue and cover this area," he said.

## Pashinyan Sends Letter Of Condolence to Iran Over Plane Crash

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan has extended his condolences to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on the deadly plane crash in the country's Alborz province, the government's press service said.

In the cable, the "Armenian prime minister expressed condolences and support to the President Rouhani and the good people of Iran, wishing patience, resilience and strength to the families of the victims, and speedy recovery to the injured", the press service said in a statement.

A Boeing 707 cargo plane crashed in the Iranian province on Monday, January 14, killing 15 on

# Another Former Armenian Defense Chief Indicted over 2008 Violence

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — Former Defense Minister Seyran Ohanyan has also been indicted in connection with the deadly breakup of opposition protests staged in Yerevan in 2008, a senior prosecutor confirmed on Monday, January 14.

Vahagn Muradyan, who oversees major criminal investigations, said that the Special Investigative Service (SIS) charged Ohanyan with "overthrowing the constitutional order" in the wake of a disputed presidential election held in February 2008.

It is not yet clear whether Ohanyan accepts or denies the grave accusation. He is understood to have not been arrested pending the outcome of the investigation conducted by the SIS.

The SIS brought last year the same charges against two other retired generals, Mikael Harutiunyan and Yuri Khachaturov, as well as former President Robert Kocharyan. They all denied any wrongdoing.

Only Kocharyan has been arrested to

date. He claims that Armenia's current leadership is waging a politically motivated "vendetta" against him.

The SIS says that Kocharyan illegally used the armed forces against opposition supporters who demonstrated in Yerevan against alleged electoral fraud. According to the law-enforcement body, the ex-president ordered troops into the Armenian capital before declaring a state of emergency late on March 1, 2008 amid deadly clashes between security forces and opposition protesters. Eight protesters and two police service-men died in what was the worst street violence in the country's history.

Harutiunyan, who now lives in Russia, served as defense minister while Ohanyan was the chief of the Armenian army's General Staff at the time.

Ohanyan was personally involved in the enforcement of the three-week emergency rule. Serzh Sarkisian, the official election winner, appointed him as defense minister after succeeding Kocharyan as president of the republic.



Seyran Ohanyan

Shortly after being sacked in October 2016, Ohanyan teamed up with two opposition politicians, Vartan Oskanian and Raffi Hovannisian, to challenge Sarkisian in parliamentary elections held in April 2017. Their ORO bloc failed to win any seats in Armenia's parliament.

# UAE Delegation to Visit Armenia

YEREVAN (Arka) — Armenia's President Armen Sarkissian, who is in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on official visit, in Abu

Sarkissian's press office reported.

Sarkissian and Al Jaber, according to the former's press office, spoke about opportunities for cooperation, in particular, implementation of joint projects in different areas. According to President Sarkissian, through the years, there have been minor and major achievements but the existing potential is much greater.

Sarkissian said Armenia is famous for its fruit and vegetable production and processing, dry fruit production and in this area the two

countries can launch a mutually beneficial cooperation. He said information

technologies and telecommunications might become another platform for cooperation as well as the financial sector, energy, especially the area of renewable energy production.

Among promising areas of cooperation, Sarkissian singled out areas of tourism, infrastructure, and services and noted that Armenia can offer different solutions in these areas such as eco-tourism and cultural tourism.

The president highlighted also the importance of cooperation in the areas of agriculture and food production.

Sarkissian was quoted as saying that although Armenia is a small country, Armenians are a global and closely interconnected nation and when speaking about cooperation as president, he means not only the Republic of Armenia.

The interlocutors agreed that, as a first step, a delegation from the UAE would visit Armenia in order to familiarize themselves with the cooperation possibilities.



President Armen Sarkissian with Minister of State of the UAE Sultan Al Jaber

Dhabi met on January 15 with the Minister of State of the UAE Sultan Al Jaber,

# Pashinyan Reappointed Prime Minister

PASHINYAN, from page 1  
controversial bill circulated by his office last month calls for reducing the number of ministries from 17 to 12. The post of first deputy prime minister would be abolished altogether.

My Step won as much as 70 percent of the vote in the December 9 parliamentary elections which European observers described as democratic. The strong performance reflected Pashinyan's continuing popularity after the spectacular success of mass anti-government protests launched by him in April.

Armen Sarkissian, who has largely ceremonial powers, called on Pashinyan's government to carry out "many serious reforms in all areas" when he addressed the newly elected parliament earlier on Monday.

"The first phase of the political changes ends with the formation of the new National Assembly and the new government," said the president. "A new phase starts: one of realization of hopes and promises and hard, consistent and



President Armen Sarkissian (L) signs a decree appointing Nikol Pashinyan (R) as Armenia's prime minister, January 14, 2019.

daily work."

"You have received ample opportunities to put into practice the ideas of the 'velvet revolution,' to live up to the society's expectations and to build a new Armenia," he told the 132 lawmakers representing My Step and the

Prosperous Armenia and Bright Armenia parties.

The Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) holds 26 seats and Bright Armenia holds 18 seats, while the HHK failed to clear the 5 percent threshold needed to secure parliamentary seats.





## ARMENIA

# Where Is Serzh Sargsyan?

By Ani Mejlumyan

YEREVAN (Eurasianet) – When Serzh Sargsyan cast his vote at a school gymnasium in Armenia’s December 9 parliamentary elections, it took several tries for the machine reading his fingerprints to recognize him. A video of the event went viral in Armenia; it was a rare public appearance for the former president – and once the country’s most recognizable man – who since being cast out of office last April has been almost completely invisible.

Sargsyan was the target of the massive street protests that eventually led to his ouster; the main slogan of the demonstrations was “Reject Serzh.” His resignation in April after 10 years in power prompted unprecedented scenes of jubilation across the country.

But unlike most former post-Soviet heads of state, Sargsyan has remained in his country after leaving office, and unlike many of his associates and family members he has been spared from the wave of prosecutions being carried out by the new authorities against corrupt members of the old regime.

Sargsyan is now living quietly in the village of Dzoraghbyur, just outside Yerevan, in a house belonging to his son-in-law Mikael Minasyan, but commutes regularly into Yerevan to work. The government offered Sargsyan an official residence, but he rejected it “for security reasons,” one source close to the former president told Eurasianet on condition of anonymity. (Attempts to reach Sargsyan through his spokesman failed.)

The source said that Sargsyan’s disappearance from public life is in part due to “the current atmosphere,” in which the political conversation is dominated by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who led the “Reject Serzh” movement in the spring before taking over from Sargsyan. “He keeps track of everything, but he doesn’t plan on speaking out any time soon.” As for Facebook, Armenia’s primary source of political expression, the source said that Sargsyan doesn’t read it himself but is regularly briefed on the most salient discussions.

And Sargsyan has no intention of retiring from politics, the source said. “Sargsyan never was a talkative type, and now there are too many emotions,” the source said. “There should be the right atmosphere and the right moment. A moment that works for the president.”



Former President Serzh Sargsyan casting his ballot today in the polling station in Dzoraghbyur

## Still Head of Party – for Now

While he has disappeared from public, Sargsyan continues to be active in politics, as head of the former ruling Republican Party of Armenia.

Ahead of the parliamentary elections, Sargsyan was coming to work every day to the party’s offices in the heart of Yerevan to help coordinate the campaign behind the scenes. “He’s the head of the party,” Armen Ashotyan, the party’s vice president, told Eurasianet. “Having confidence in his young party members, he left the campaign for us. For sure he’s informed, he consults us, criticizes us,” Ashotyan said with a laugh. “So he is in the process, watching the situation, trying not to interfere much but also enjoying the new generation of Republicans.”

But the Republicans recognized that Sargsyan was not a popular figure and so the former president was excluded from the party’s list of candidates and the slate was instead headed by former defense minister Vigen Sargsyan (no relation to Serzh). Regardless, the party performed below expectations and failed to reach the threshold to enter the new parliament.

Sargsyan’s stewardship of the party has reportedly been opposed by other members. According to a post-election report in the newspaper Past, some party officials were unhappy with the appearance of some candidates on the party list, which they blamed on Sargsyan.

But Vigen Sargsyan said there was no talk of jettisoning Serzh Sargsyan as party leader. At a November press conference, he said that big decisions will be made at the party congress in the spring.

## Still Escaping Prosecution – for Now

Despite the central role that Sargsyan played in the protest narrative, since taking office Pashinyan has been relatively quiet about his predecessor, instead aiming most of his fire at other former officials – most notably another former president, Robert Kocharyan.

The fact that Sargsyan has remained

untouched has spurred speculation about a potential deal that he may have made with Pashinyan when he resigned and cleared a path for Pashinyan to take his place. But the source close to Sargsyan denied that: “There were no deals made. Nothing happened except for what has happened in public,” the source said.

At a press conference in December, Pashinyan was asked why there had not yet been any criminal charges filed against Sargsyan. “That is yet more proof that investigative bodies don’t work based on my announcements, but instead based on data they have,” Pashinyan answered. (That assertion may be debatable, as a growing body evidence has emerged that Pashinyan has in fact been personally involved in decisions about criminal cases against Kocharyan.)

Many of Sargsyan’s associates and family members have not been as lucky, and have been targeted by investigations under the new government. In September, Pashinyan took aim at Sargsyan’s brother, Alexander (commonly known as “Sashik”). “Sashik Sargsyan has \$30 million in one Armenian bank alone,” Pashinyan said, and demanded that Sargsyan voluntarily return the money to the state treasury. In November, Sashik Sargsyan complied, and agreed to hand over the \$30 million to the state.

In the summer, Armenian law enforcement raided the home of a nephew of Sargsyan’s, Narek Sargsyan, discovering large caches of drugs and weapons. Narek Sargsyan fled the country but in December he was arrested in Prague; when asked to produce identification he presented a Guatemalan passport under the

name “Franklin Gonzalez.” The authorities also have brought charges against another nephew, Hayk Sargsyan, related to a 2007 shooting.

But for now, Sargsyan himself has been spared. “I believe there is some sense of appreciation – after all Serzh effectively handed power to Nikol. He did not use force and did not ask Russia to interfere to support him,” Emil Sanamyan, a Washington, D.C.-based Armenia analyst, told Eurasianet. “And over the years, Serzh has moved to soften government pressure on the opposition, among other things granting amnesty to Nikol” after Pashinyan was imprisoned for his role in organizing protests in 2008. “I think this is why he has avoided Nikol’s wrath so far.”

Sargsyan’s public silence also has served him well, Sanamyan said, in contrast to Kocharyan, who emerged after Pashinyan’s ascent to power as an outspoken critic of the new authorities. “Serzh remained completely silent as people closest to him, as well as ex-president Kocharyan, were targeted, which tells me that Serzh is still wary of antagonizing Nikol,” Sanamyan said.

Another analyst, Yerevan-based Richard Giragosian, said there were “two equally plausible scenarios” for why Sargsyan has remained beyond the reach of the anti-corruption investigations. “First, despite the rumors, Sargsyan himself may have been smart enough to avoid any direct personal connection to ill-gotten wealth or corruption, instead relying on his bodyguard or head of security and his notorious brother to hide or safeguard his own wealth,” Giragosian told Eurasianet. “Or second, he may have been beyond the temptation of securing the wealth, driven instead by the pursuit of power over money,” a tendency he had displayed throughout his political career, he said.

Indeed, while many Armenian officials have been implicated in scandals involving offshore holdings of ill-gotten wealth, Sargsyan’s name itself has never surfaced in those reports. Sargsyan reported in official declarations that at the end of 2017 he had 26 million drams in assets, or just over \$50,000.

It’s not clear how long Sargsyan will remain untouched, however. The head of the Special Investigation Service, Sasun Khachatryan, has said that Sargsyan is to be questioned over the violent breakup of protests over his election in 2008, the center of the charges against Kocharyan. “Serzh Sargsyan is an important witness,” Khachatryan said in September. “Or maybe he is not just a witness.”

(Ani Mejlumyan is a reporter based in Yerevan. Grigor Atanesian and Joshua Kucera contributed reporting.)

## Yerevan Court Rejects Motion by Kocharyan’s Lawyers to Recuse Judge

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – The Yerevan Court of General Jurisdiction turned down the motion filed by the lawyers of Armenia’s second

President Robert Kocharyan to recuse judge Artur Mkrtchyan, set to hear their bail plea.

The defense team had asked the court to disqualify the judge set to examine a motion of the ex-president to free him from pre-trial arrest on bail, claiming the court dealing with the case was formed “illegally.”

One of the ex-president’s lawyers, Hayk Alumyan, told reporters on January 15 the court rejected the motion on grounds that a court chairman is entitled to assign a case to one of the on-duty judges at his/her discretion.

“This argument is unacceptable for us, but we cannot appeal it or take any other measures. We have to take part in the examination of this case with that judge,” he said.

Kocharyan’s lawyers filed a motion to the Yerevan court to free the ex-president on bail on December 26, 2018, asking the court to determine its amount. Meantime, the investigators have petitioned the court to extend the pre-trial arrest of the former president.



Attorney Hayk Alumyan

## Opponents Threaten Legal Action Against Yerevan Mayor

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Opposition members of the Yerevan city council on Friday, January 11, threatened to sue Mayor Hayk Marutyan if he refuses to release details of bonuses paid to about 2,000 municipal officials late last month.

Marutyan allocated a total of 1.2 billion drams (\$2.5 million) for the year-end financial rewards to the employees of his office and the administrations of Yerevan’s ten districts.

The opposition Luys alliance wants him to name those officials and specify the amounts of bonuses paid to each of them. The mayor has so far refused to disclose such information on the grounds that it may constitute a privacy violation.

The Luys leader, Davit Khazhakyan, condemned that stance, saying that it runs counter to an Armenian law on local self-government in the capital. “If the matter is not solved we will be ready to appeal to the administrative court,” he warned.

Khazhakyan suggested that the municipal authorities may be worried about negative public reactions to the disclosure demanded by Luys.

One of Marutyan’s deputies, Hayk Sargsian, brushed aside Khazhakyan’s claims. He said the mayor’s office has asked the Armenian Ministry of Justice to advise whether details of the bonuses can be made public.

“I can say that the mayor did not receive a bonus,” Sargsian told RFE/RL’s Armenian service. “I want to make clear that we are not worried about anything. Why? Because we are open and transparent.”

Luys controls only three seats in Yerevan’s 65-member municipal council, compared with 57 seats held by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s My Step alliance.

Marutyan, 42, is a close ally of Pashinyan. The council appointed the former TV comedian as mayor after last September’s municipal elections in which My Step won 80 percent of the vote.

Khazhakyan and the two other Luys councilors have repeatedly criticized Marutyan. In particular, they accused him of failing to improve garbage collection and address the dismal state of public transport in the city.

Marutyan and his team have dismissed the criticism. They claim to have already rooted out corruption in the municipal administration, which is thought to have been widespread under the previous mayors.





## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

## New Ambassador to Egypt Presents Credentials

CAIRO (Armenpress) — Armenia's new Ambassador to Egypt Karen Grigoryan presented his credentials to the country's deputy foreign minister Hatem Tageldin, the foreign ministry reported, on January 15.

Tageldin congratulated the Armenian ambassador on taking office and wished good luck in his mission.

The ambassador, in turn, thanked for the good wishes and vowed to make maximum efforts in developing and strengthening the Armenian-Egyptian relations. The contribution of the Armenian community of Egypt to the cultural and social life of the country was also touched upon at the meeting.

## Valence School Construction Underway

VALENCE, France (Public Radio of Armenia) — The groundbreaking ceremony for a French-Armenian bilingual school was held in Valence, France on Monday, January 14.

The Armenian Cultural Center of Valence has embarked on an ambitious, but much needed project to build the school with a view of passing the Armenian language on to generations and preserve the national identity.

There are seven Armenian schools in France located in Paris, Lyon, Marseille and Nice. Valence has so far been the only city with a strong Armenian community not to have a daily school, although 15% of its citizens are of Armenian descent.

The project started in 2015, Valence-based Hampig Osipian told said. He added that the issue has been on the agenda for over 35 years.

The project has been sponsored by Lebanese-Armenian Gevork Arabian and the local Armenian community.

## Pashinyan Meets with Georgian Counterpart

BOLNISI, Georgia (Armenpress) — Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze had an informal meeting in Bolnisi, Georgia on January 15. Bakhtadze once again congratulated Pashinyan on being appointed to the post of prime minister of Armenia, and expressed confidence that the future active bilateral cooperation will foster the development and expansion of cooperation in various spheres between the two neighboring friendly countries.

Pashinyan thanked Bakhtadze for the kind words and emphasized the importance of Armenian-Georgian relations in all the spheres.

During the informal meeting the two exchanged views on a number of issues of bilateral agenda.

Pashinyan and Bakhtadze also had a short meeting with the residents of the Armenian-populated Bolnisi village, previously called Bolnis-Khachen.

## Erdogan, Putin 'Likely' To Meet on Jan. 23

ANKARA (Anadolu Agency) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday, January 15, that he would "most likely" meet with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin next week, on January 23.

"I will hold a one-to-one meeting with Mr. Putin," Erdogan told reporters in parliament.

Erdogan also said they plan to hold a trilateral meeting with Russia and Iran.

Following a meeting last September between Erdogan and Putin, the two sides agreed to set up a demilitarized zone — in which acts of aggression are prohibited — in Idlib, Syria.

Ankara and Moscow also signed a memorandum of understanding calling for the "stabilization" of Idlib's de-escalation zone, in which acts of aggression are expressly prohibited.

Under the deal, opposition groups in Idlib are to remain in areas where they are already present.

Syria has only just begun to emerge from a devastating conflict that began in 2011.

# Pompeo: Trump Threat to Turkey Shows US Commitment to Kurds

By Matthew Lee

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Monday that President Donald Trump's threat to devastate NATO ally Turkey's economy if it attacks US-backed Kurdish fighters in Syria underscores America's commitment to its partners.

Pompeo said he had yet to speak with Turkish officials or Trump about the president's tweeted threat and that he assumed Trump was referring to the imposition of sanctions should Turkey take military action against the Kurds in Syria, US allies in the fight against the Islamic State group.

On Sunday, Trump tweeted that the US will "attack again from existing nearby base if it (IS) reforms. Will devastate Turkey economically if they hit Kurds."

Trump's decision to leave Syria, which he initially said would be rapid but later slowed down, shocked US allies and angered the Syrian Kurds.

Pompeo said the US message on the Kurds has been straightforward and unchanged since Trump made the decision to withdraw US troops from Syria last month. (See related editorial, page 17.)

"The administration has been very

consistent with respect to our requirement that the Turks not go after the Kurds in ways that are inappropriate," Pompeo said. "If they are terrorists, we're all about taking down extremists wherever we find them. I think the president's comments this morning are consistent with that."

Asked specifically about what Trump meant by devastating Turkey's economy, Pompeo replied: "We apply sanctions in many places around the world. I assume

"THE ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN VERY CONSISTENT WITH RESPECT TO OUR REQUIREMENT THAT THE TURKS NOT GO AFTER THE KURDS IN WAYS THAT ARE INAPPROPRIATE,"

US SECRETARY OF STATE MIKE POMPEO

he's speaking about those kinds of things but you would have to ask him."

Trump's tweet drew a sharp response from Ankara and the Turkish lira lost some 0.84 percent of its value against the dollar on Monday following the US president's threat.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's spokesman responded to Trump on Twitter by saying that Turkey "fights against terrorists, not Kurds" as a people. "Terrorists can't be your partners & allies," the spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, said.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu also rebuked Trump, saying that strategic partners do not speak to each other through social media and stressing that Turkey is "not afraid of any threat. You cannot achieve anything with economic threats."

"We would do whatever is necessary to eliminate threat to our security," Cavusoglu added.

Pompeo said Trump's call for a 20-mile safe zone between Turkish forces and the

Kurds was consistent with what the US is trying to achieve in talks with the Turks. But, he said it remained it work in progress.

"We want to make sure that the folks who fought with us to take down the caliphate and ISIS have security and also that terrorists ... (in) Syria aren't able to attack Turkey, those are our twin aims," he told reporters in Riyadh after talks with Saudi officials.

"If we can get a space, call it a buffer zone ... if we can get the space and the security arrangements right, this will be a good thing for everyone in the region," Pompeo added.

For his part, Cavusoglu welcomed Trump's proposal for a 20-mile safe zone, saying Turkey had long advocated such a zone in northern Syria.

"They bandied this idea after they saw Turkey's determination," Cavusoglu said during a news conference. "We are not against it."

## Car Owned by Aznavour to Be Surprise Highlight of Bonhams' Paris Car Auction

PARIS — A 1966 Vanden Plas Princess 1100, originally belonging to Charles Aznavour, has been uncovered by Bonhams specialists after having been stored in a his sister's chateau for decades. It will be offered at Bonhams Grandes Marques du Grand Palais Sale in Paris on February 7.

Aznavour, a French-Armenian singer and songwriter, was the first registered owner of the 1966 Vanden Plas Princess 1100 that he bought new in 1966.

Aznavour was one of the most popular French singers and sold more

than 180 million records. He was voted Entertainer of the Century by CNN and beat legends such as Elvis Presley and Bob Dylan in the popularity vote. Aznavour was deeply involved with humanitarian events and politics, and in 2009 he was appointed ambassador of Armenia to Switzerland. In 2017, a year before his death, he was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of fame.

The 1966 Vanden Plas Princess 1100 is still registered with its original plates and is offered with the carte grise

signed by Charles Aznavourian — his full name — and an autograph to the current vendor, only the second owner. It has not been driven by the second owner, so the last person at the wheel was Aznavour himself.

This motor car is a piece of French musical history. Charles Aznavour was loved around the world for his contributions to music, song writing and entertainment. This beautiful little car is in astoundingly original condition and has been driven by just one owner — Aznavour.



The Vanden Plas Princess owned by Charles Aznavour



## INTERNATIONAL

# Moscow Slams Azeri Travel Ban on Russian Armenians

MOSCOW (RFE/RL) – Russia again demanded on Friday, January 11, that Azerbaijan stop barring Russian citizens of Armenian descent from visiting the South Caucasus country, saying that the practice is “incompatible with friendly relations between the two countries.”

“We have repeatedly raised this issue with the Azerbaijani side and said that such instances are becoming a tradition, a bad and wrong tradition,” said Maria Zakharova, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman.

“In our view, such facts constitute a blatant violation of the rights of Russian citizens,” Zakharova said at a news briefing in Moscow. “The Russian Foreign Ministry has repeat-

edly brought the Azerbaijani side’s attention to the unacceptability of the existing situation. We have demanded an end to detentions and expulsions. The practice is incompatible with friendly ties between the two countries.”

The Azerbaijani government has long maintained a travel ban for not only Armenia’s citizens but also ethnic Armenians from other countries because of the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It considers any Armenian presence on Azerbaijani soil a security risk and an affront to the country’s honor and territorial integrity.

According to Zakharova, in 2018 there were at least 16 cases of Russian nationals denied

entry to Azerbaijan “on ethnic grounds.”

The most recent of them was reported late last month. Kristina Gevorgyan, an ethnic Armenian holder of a Russian passport, said that she was held in detention at Baku’s Heydar Aliyev international airport for 13 hours before being deported to Russia.

Moscow had already publicly denounced the practice in July 2017. Reacting to that criticism, an Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry spokesman cited continuing “Armenian occupation” of Azerbaijani territory.

“Unfortunately, some ethnic Armenian individuals display ethnically motivated hostility, and that is why we take certain measures,” he

said at the time.

Incidentally, Russia’s longtime Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was born to an ethnic Armenian father. Lavrov visits Baku on a regular basis.

The Azerbaijani ban also applies to presumed or actual ethnic Armenians from Turkey, Azerbaijan’s closest ally. In 2014, a Turkish arm-wrestler called Zafer Noyan was reportedly barred from entering Azerbaijan and participating in a major competition there because of his last name which officials at the Baku airport felt was Armenian. Noyan was forced to fly back to Istanbul despite his assurances that he is not of Armenian origin.

## Spain Arrests 15 Connected To Armenian Tennis Match-Fixing Gang

MADRID (Deadspin) – Spanish police arrested 15 people, and said another 68 have been investigated, as part of probe into tennis match-fixing by an Armenian criminal gang.

In a statement released on Thursday, January 10, the Spanish Civil Guard said that 28 of those 83 people are professional tennis players, one of whom took part in the last US Open. The statement doesn’t name any of the individuals who have been investigated or detained. The statement said:

“A group of Armenian individuals used a professional player who served as the link between them and the other members of the network. Once the bribe had been paid, the Armenians went to the match venues to use their imposing muscle to make sure that the player kept their end of the deal. They then gave the order for bets to be laid both nationally and internationally.”

The Civil Guard said that the operation had been prompted by complaints from the Tennis Integrity Unit, the sport’s anti-corruption body. Law enforcement began to investigate a Spanish player, which led to the Armenian group.

According to the Civil Guard, which investigated the corruption along with Europol and Spanish tax authorities, the match-fixing group had been operating since at least February 2017, generating millions of dollars in profit. During the operation, police searched 11 addresses in Spain, finding €167,000, a handgun, stolen identity documents, jewelry, more than 50 electronic devices, and five luxury vehicles. Law enforcement froze 42 bank accounts.

As has been repeated in numerous reports and investigations into corruption in tennis, match-fixing is rampant in lower levels of professional tennis where many thousands of players don’t make any money. Last month, yet another report from the Independent Review Panel, which was tasked with finding ways to clean up the sports after BuzzFeed and the BBC published a report in 2016 that revealed widespread match-fixing, recommended that there be no live streaming, or scoring data provided, at low-level professional tennis tournaments.

# Authoritarian Regimes Pay Millions To K Street Lobbyists

By Megan R. Wilson

WASHINGTON (Bloomberg) – Saudi Arabia and other countries with records of human rights abuses spend tens of millions of dollars every year to put their best faces forward in Washington.

They hire lobbying firms whose rosters include former members of Congress, high-profile former staff, ex-government staffers, and longtime veterans of the influence industry. More than 60 firms represented countries with some of the lowest ratings by the human rights group Freedom House at some point in 2017 and 2018.

“They’re realizing this is how a lot of Washington works. Just as they are cracking down and preventing people from speaking freely in their own countries, they are buying the ability to tell their story here,” said Adotei Akwei, Amnesty International USA’s deputy director for advocacy and government relations.

Saudi Arabia, whose leaders have been implicated in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, has spent about \$24 million on lobbying and public relations since the beginning of 2017, according to government disclosure reports.

The kingdom has more than a dozen firms on retainer, including Hogan Lovells, which employs former Sen. Norm Coleman (R-Minn.).

More than \$25 million was spent in 2017-

18 by entities with ties to the government of China, and the United Arab Emirates dropped more than \$29 million, including \$10.5 million spent since the beginning of 2017 on an advisory firm run by former Treasury Department officials.

The work to burnish perceptions of Saudi Arabia included a Washington gala last March that offered invitees a chance to rub elbows with Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman, later accused of ordering Khashoggi’s murder.

“Nations with even the most notorious human rights violations don’t have a problem finding a lobbying firm to represent them,” said Craig Holman, a lobbyist at Public Citizen.

### Human Rights Rankings

Freedom House, a non-profit human rights group partially funded by the U.S. government, does an annual analysis of political liberties and civil rights around the world. Bloomberg Government analyzed disclosure filings from the 12 nations with the worst human rights records that also hired lobbying, public relations, or consulting firms.

More than a dozen K Street shops had multiple clients among the 12 countries at some point in 2017 and 2018.

For instance, MSLGroup is Saudi Arabia’s longest-serving public affairs firm in Washington, with their relationship beginning in 2002.

The firm represents Equatorial Guinea and

previously represented China, both countries governed by authoritarian rule. Lobbying powerhouse and international law firm Squire Patton Boggs also has Saudi Arabia and China as clients, and has worked to ease U.S. sanctions on Sudan.

Glover Park Group and Harbor Group, both of which dropped Saudi Arabia as clients following Khashoggi’s murder, still represent the United Arab Emirates. BGR Group dropped Saudi Arabia but continued to represent Saudi ally Bahrain and two other countries ranking low on the human rights group’s list, Azerbaijan and Somalia.

Consultants say they’re helping the client nations learn how Western media and governments work while creating beneficial relationships.

“If the United States doesn’t have a dialogue with the country, you can’t improve conditions in that country,” said Christopher Harvin, co-founder of Sanitas International, who represents the Democratic Republic of Congo and formerly worked for Azerbaijan.

“We’re often helping them overcome these criticisms so they don’t make those mistakes again,” said Harvin, who advised the Trump campaign and served in the George W. Bush administration.

Akwei disagrees.

“It doesn’t allow for an honest debate for the situations inside the countries, it doesn’t allow for real progress,” he said. “It is an exercise in spin.”

(With assistance from Jorge Uquillas, Jodie Morris and Madi Alexander.)

## Blogger Lapshin Decries Murder of Former Jail Mate in Baku

MOSCOW (news.am) – Blogger Alexander Lapshin wrote a post on his Facebook page under the heading of “They killed a blogger,” on January 13.

In his post, he noted about the brutal killing of the Azerbaijani blogger Mehman Galandarov and keeping of the second Azerbaijani blogger, Mehman Huseynov, at the remand facility.

“I know the two Azerbaijani bloggers, they’re both named Mehman. I have met Mehman Galandarov, who was brutally murdered in the Kurdakhani prison in Baku at the end of April 2017, personally and I was the last person who saw him alive. I was kept in the same prison at the same time,” he noted adding that he doesn’t meet the second Azerbaijani blogger personally.

“I know about him from the mass media. Today he is being held in the same Baku detention center in Kurdakhani on fabricated charges,” as revenge for his brother Emin Huseynov, a well-known journalist and

human rights activist living in Switzerland.

“I met with the late Mehman Galandarov by chance. His face was unfamiliar to me. But the man told me “Alexander, hello! I am also a blogger. You probably don’t know me, and I saw you on TV. My name is Mehman. Help me, they will kill me here ... “. I answered him that I had no idea how I could help him, since I myself was abducted here and held illegally. We could no longer talk, the jailers rudely ordered to shut up. The only thing I could do for him was to convey information about him when meeting with the ambassadors of Russia and Israel, who periodically visited me in prison. Those took note.

“After being freed from Azerbaijani captivity and returning to Israel, I began to look for this man. I asked some Azerbaijani friends and they said that this person was Mehman Galandarov, a Baku-based blogger convicted for writing something critical about Ilham Aliyev.

“It turned out that the blogger Mehman

Galandarov was brutally murdered in prison just three days after our random meeting in the corridor. The authorities declared that he allegedly “hanged himself”, exactly as they had said about me. Although, as we know, four bastards broke into my cell, beat and strangled, then hung up in the toilet to simulate a suicide, But I was lucky,” Lapshin noted.

“But blogger Mehman Galandarov was killed, and then was secretly buried his body in the city cemetery, by simply digging a hole and throwing off a lifeless blogger into it. Without a monument, without a sign. Relatives many days refused to report what happened. Despite a serious scandal, the Baku authorities managed to “hush up” the case, and the crime was never solved. The killers were not punished.

“Now they are keeping the blogger Mehman Huseynov, in the same prison there is still the same brigade of murderers that killed Mehman Galandarov. I’m scared for the guy’s life ... “. - wrote Alexander Lapshin.





## INTERNATIONAL

# Hope after Seven Years of War for Syria

HOPE, from page 1

Church Relations Moscow Patriarchate, and by Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

In reference to the “historic” meeting which took place between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill, Hilarion emphasized that “the two first hierarchs were motivated by the really catastrophic situation in which our brothers and sisters in Christ found themselves because of military conflicts and the invasion of extremists into the ancient Biblical land of the Middle East and North Africa. Irreparable damage has been done to Christianity in the region. Thousands of Christians died as martyrs, Millions were left without shelter and had to flee from the country. Hundreds of church buildings, monasteries and holy sites were desecrated and ruined.” He underlined that “interreligious dialogue” is a key tool for protecting Christians from prosecution and that it is important to note that “the Syrian Christians used to live amid Muslims for centuries and good-neighborly and peaceful co-existence is a priority to them.” With the assistance of the Moscow Patriarchate, humanitarian cargos were delivered to the Valley of Christians in Homs province, to Aleppo and other cities of Syria, he reports, now that the main terrorist forces have been defeated. “The post-war structuring of Syria has become a priority. It is necessary to restore churches, infrastructure and residence buildings, to create conditions for regular celebration by clergy, and for safety and security.” He particularly thanked the Foundation ACN for its support and expressed hope that “the booklet will contribute to the restoration of the churches and holy sites in the ancient land of Syria where the word ‘Christians’ was first pronounced.”

In the second preface, Cardinal Kurt Koch described the booklet as the “fruit of ecumenical collaboration between the Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church” and emphasized



The Forty Martyrs Armenian Church in Aleppo

that it was the dramatic situation in the Middle East which was one of the main concerns on the agenda of the 2016 meeting between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill. The shared concern of “our Churches for peace in this region, for the end of the persecution suffered by many Christians and other minorities, and for the importance of interreligious dialogue, was reflected in the joint Declaration signed on that occasion.”(...) In order to take tangible steps, a joint working group bringing together representatives of the Catholic Church in Russia and representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate, with the participation of the ACN was established almost immediately following the Havana meeting.

During the last two years, as Cardinal Koch recounts, several initiatives have been taken: “The first delegation of this joint group visited Syria and Lebanon from April 6-7, 2016, in order to offer a sign of solidarity to Christians of various Churches in the region and to reflect with them on constructing a way forward together. On September 17, 2017, a second delegation of this group visited the region.” While the primary needs of the local populations in Syria, according to Cardinal Koch, are of humanitarian nature, “with the prospect of a gradual return to peace, it is also important to be able to prepare the reconstruction not only of houses, but also of the numerous religious buildings destroyed by the war. The reconstruction of holy sites, churches and pastoral structures is indispensable not only because they are part of the cultural and spiritual heritage of this region, but also a sign of hope and encouragement for Christians, who have lived in these lands since the very origin of Christianity, either to remain or to return.”

The booklet shows photos representing the Catholic-Orthodox Working group, one showing the Metropolitan Hilarion and Catholic Bishop Kimovich during their meeting in Zahleh (Lebanon). In another article, Father Andrzej Halemba (PhD), who is the head of the Middle East section for ACN, describes the multiple projects in which ACN is involved in the Mideast. Since the beginning of the military crisis in Syria 2011 ACN has supported Christians with emergency aid. Last year alone suffering Syrians were helped by ACN benefactors with 4.7 million Euros in emergency aid. Economic sanctions affected access to health care, medicine and basic essentials and, as result of the embargo, as Father Halemba reported, this had a “devastating effect upon families, especially among those with children, pregnant women and elderly people who were unable to satisfy their basic needs.” ACN initiated food supply projects, such as “Food baskets”, a program which enjoyed the cooperation of ecumenical partners from nine different Christian Churches, thus strengthening the unity of the Church which in Syria is made up of a number of different ecclesial rites.

The “drop of milk” project supported families with small children, adopting the same ecumenical approach, thus increasing the project’s effectiveness. In autumn 2017, as Halemba reports, the security situation allowed children and students to return on a regular basis to school, college and university. Here it became clear that more support was needed in terms of renovating school buildings, as well as meeting basic needs like core text books, transport and school uniforms. In order to address this challenge another ecumenical initiative was launched, namely scholarships, and about 10,000 pupils and other students from Homs, Marmarita, Aleppo, Tartous and other parts of the country were able to benefit from them. This program developed the communion between different churches.

As a next step, the ACN is now determined to work with church Leaders and their communities to restore the Christian presence and prestige in

the country, “which historians recall as the cradle of civilization and Christianity, the birthplace of cultures.” The ACN charity is thus giving signs of hope, “by rebuilding the destroyed homes of Christ and his people. Christians still live in Syria and many of those who were displaced want to return. Rebuilding is this key to the future of Christianity in Syria,” Halemba wrote. He referred to a recent ACN survey: Of “300 parishes in Syria, 120 reported damage or destruction of at least one of their buildings – either a church or a church-owned structure, such as a school, kindergarten, convent or parish hall/ community center. This means that more than one out of three parishes under review were affected. Many Christian homes also came under fire as well. To date, ACN has recorded 5,675 damaged or destroyed homes (mostly in regions such as Aleppo and Homs).

Even more tragic is that the jihadist violence and military action has led to massive loss of life, including many Christians. In a graph it is shown that 920 Christians were killed and 450 Christians kidnapped. Halemba underlined that aside from the need to raise enough funds on an international level to support the kind of reconstruction that is needed in Syria, it is important to note that the “Church in Syria has long since been recognized for its role in promoting reconciliation, acting as a mediator, a bridge-builder, a voice of dialogue and an advocate of the rights of minorities.”

## Crimes against Civilization

The booklet includes many photos that document the case of 31 Christian churches and holy places, most of them located in Aleppo, Homs, Damascus and some in the countryside. Looking at the photos which show the holy places before and after destruction, it becomes evident what crime against humanity and Syrian culture has been done against the country and its people. The only information given by the Western mainstream media pertains to the “Monster Assad” but remains totally silent about the crimes that have been perpetrated against the Syrian people, their precious culture and holy places. It is clear that Syria is one of the cradles of early Christian culture and civilization which were targeted by Jihadists. These places include, only to name a few: Saint Mary (Mart Meryem) Assyrian church in Tel Nasri, Al Hasskah Governorate; the Forty Martyrs Armenian Apostolic Church, in the Al Jdeyeh district of Aleppo; Mount Sayda Greek Orthodox Cemetery in Aleppo; Saint Assia (Mar Asia Al Hakim) Syriac Catholic Church in the Al Jdeyeh district in Aleppo, one of the oldest churches in Aleppo dating from the 15th century; Saint Varta (Deir Vartan) Jesuit Center and Monastery, Al Midan district in Aleppo; Saint Elijah Maronite Cathedral, Al Jdeyeh district in Aleppo; Our Lady Queen of Peace Greek Melkite Cathedral, Old City of Homs, as well as Saint Mary of the Holy Belt (Um Al Zennar) Syriac Orthodox Cathedral, old city of Homs. This cathedral, which was built on the site of an underground church dating from the 1st century, is the seat of the Syriac Orthodox Archbishop. It was damaged in 2011-2012 during conflict between the armed opposition and the Syrian government security forces.

The Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II, stated: “We are a peace-seeking people, and we will rebuild the country of Syria on the basis of coexistence and amity – for both Muslims and Christians.”

Monsignor Elias Adass from “Our Lady of Montligeon” Maronite Church, Al Hamadiyah district in Aleppo, expressed the hope which is shared by the Christians inside and outside of Syria: “In this situation of destructive terror, there is only one path, illuminated by faith, that can be taken by every believer who lives in Jesus Christ. There is only one answer to all: The resurrection. As Christ renewed what was destroyed, we must lay a new foundation and rebuild our Christian life there.”

(For more information: [www.acninternational.org](http://www.acninternational.org))

(Elisabeth Hellenbroich is a free-lance journalist in Germany. This article appeared in <http://www.frontiere.eu/hope-after-seven-years-of-war-for-syria-reconstruction-of-churches-and-holy-places/>)

## Syrian Leader Promises to Rebuild Razed Genocide Monument

DEIR ZOR, from page 1

Barseghyan said the activities began after the appointment of a new Syrian ambassador in Armenia. The new staff of the embassy started actively working with the Syrian-Armenian community in Armenia. At that time, a board of the Syrian-Armenian community in Armenia was elected led by George Barseghyan.

“The task of this board it to boost Syria-Armenia ties. The first step was asking for a meeting with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. And this request was granted very quickly. A meeting was scheduled not only with the Syrian president, but also other high-ranking officials of Syria,” he said.

He noted that Assad’s government managed to overcome the current situation. The US thinks of withdrawing its troops from Syria and is already taking practical steps. A number of Arab countries are thinking of opening their embassies in Syria. All these actions suppose restoration of Syria, and for this purpose quite major economic programs are expected to be implemented.

“The Syrian government plans to give priority in these programs to those countries which stood together with it during those years. Armenia is among those countries which didn’t close its embassy during the war, always kept state ties and sent aid to Syria. And during the upcoming development, business programs and restoration works the priority will be given to Armenians,” Barseghyan said, adding that the Syrian government appreciates the role of the Armenian community. He said it’s not a coincidence that the Syrian President promised to restore the Armenian church in Deir Zor.

During the visit in Syria the Armenian delegation also met with the prime minister, the parliament speaker, as well as business companies. They have outlined a number of directions for future cooperation.

“Our visit pursued several goals. Firstly to strengthen and intensify the Armenia-Syria ties. In addition, we also wanted to express our support to the Syrian president and government. Armenia is one of those unique countries most of the population of which supports the current Syrian government, because we have managed to reach significant success during that leadership’s government. It was a proper occasion to show our support. We have an Armenian community in Syria, in Aleppo, Damascus and etc. The local Armenians have very good relations with the authorities, and we also must think about this,” he said.

The meeting with Assad was also marked by handing over a symbolic gift, the miniature of a monument in Armenia which symbolizes Armenians’ gratitude to the Syrian people for the support shown during the Armenian Genocide. The original monument is located on the way to the Zvartnots airport and has been constructed by the funds of Diaspora-Armenians. It depicts the map of Syria, the Armenian eagle and the pillar of eternity. It was unveiled in 2013.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad hosted the Syrian-Armenian delegation in late December. The meeting participants discussed the situation in Syria and the country’s restoration process. The businessmen expressed wish to participate in the reconstruction activities. The Syrian President stated that Armenia’s principled position and support provided during the whole period of terror war unleashed against Syria enable it to be one of the leading countries which have a fair right to participate in Syria’s restoration works.



# Community News

## Getting Salty With Nina Festekjian of Anoush'ella

By Kara Baskin

BOSTON (*Boston Globe*) – Armenian-Lebanese restaurateur Nina Festekjian grew up in Lebanon during the Civil War. She and her husband, Raffi, opened Anoush'ella Saj Kitchen to share their favorite childhood recipes with the South End. She has no professional culinary training; instead, she honed her kitchen skills cooking for three sons and throwing plenty of parties and charitable gatherings. “I feel like I’m a chef by experience,” she says.

**What’s the first restaurant you ever ate at in Boston?**

Todd English’s Olives in Charlestown. I loved his paella! We did catering for my son’s first birthday, and he delivered it himself. We got to know him when he brought it. He gave me the



Nina Festekjian

platter to keep, he explained how to serve it with the sauce on top, and then he left. This was in 1996.

**What’s one thing you’d like to fix about the restaurant industry here?**

I didn’t have [restaurant] experience. My husband and I had to research every single aspect of operating the restaurant. I would love to have a single portal for chefs to quickly make decisions . . . the best way to install digital displays, or to get eco-friendly containers or custom-bottled juices, or to learn social media best practices. We did our own research in every single area. It’s very time-consuming.

**What other restaurants do you visit?**

I love Ostra. Their seafood is so fresh. And I love B&G Oysters, Oleana, and Trade. I tend to like Mediterranean cuisine. Those are my favorites. And I loved the sashimi bar at Uni, back when it was a little place.

**What’s your earliest food memory that made you think: I want to work in restaurants?**

I never thought I’d want to be in the business. I wanted to be an interior designer. Over the years, I learned to enjoy cooking, feeding my boys – we have three boys – hosting dinner parties, doing fund-raisers. I realized I can be good at it. My husband had this crazy idea that I could create a whole experience in the Boston food scene! That’s how we started. I grew up in Lebanon. I cook everything. Italian. Paella. I cook everything at home for my family.

see ANOUSH'ELLA, page 9



USC Shoah Foundation’s ed team meets with leaders from the Genocide Education Project (GenEd). L to R: Lesly Culp, Sedda Antekelian, Roxanne Makasdjian (GenEd’s executive director), Sara Cohan (GenEd’s education director) and Claudia Ramirez Wiedeman.

## Partnership Will Expand Reach of Shoah Institute Materials on Genocide Education

LOS ANGELES – The University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation is joining forces with an organization that is dedicated to bringing curriculum about the World War I-era Armenian Genocide into high schools across the United States.

The relationship between the Shoah Foundation and the Genocide Education Project (or “GenEd”) is in its infancy, but Sedda Antekelian, the Institute’s Education and Outreach Specialist for the Armenian Genocide, says the collaboration will significantly expand the reach of the voices of Armenian Genocide survivors and eyewitnesses.

“It will really help us humanize the story of the genocide of the Armenian people,” she said. “And it will help students realize its relevance to their own lives.”

Between 1915 and 1923, up to 1.5 million Armenians were killed in death marches and massacres at the hands of the Ottoman Turks, who were allied with the German Empire during World War I.

The Genocide Education Project was established in the early 2000s in response to a realization that – although a California law mandating the teaching of the Armenian Genocide had passed in the mid-1980s – few history educators were actually covering the material.

“They were unaware of this history altogether, they never learned it growing up, they didn’t learn it when they were getting their teaching certificates – most of them weren’t clear on the mandate, and they were justifiably reluctant to teach such a sensitive topic without the proper preparation,” said Roxanne Makasdjian, GenEd’s executive director, who said the organization surveyed San Francisco Bay Area school districts in 2000. “There wasn’t any dedicated funding, training, or age-appropriate materials at the time.”

Over the years, GenEd has not only produced curricula but also kept a vigilant eye out for instances in which the Armenian Genocide has been given short shrift in schools. Often, Makasdjian said, this was the result of lobbying by interests from Turkey, which continues to deny that the genocide occurred.

Turks have fought against Armenian Genocide recognition and education across the United States, including by filing an unsuccessful lawsuit against the state of Massachusetts for its Armenian Genocide instruction.

GenEd has successfully helped advocate for the Armenian Genocide to take its proper place in numerous state World History curriculum guidelines.

In California, for instance, the advocacy played a role in how the reference to the genocide in the state’s history-social science framework has become unequivocal. What’s more, in 2016, the state’s revisions to the framework included a recommendation for 10th-grade teachers to use oral testimony from witnesses.

GenEd’s catalog of educational materials includes teaching guides, photos, news articles written at the time of the genocide, and lesson plans attached to novels and memoirs about the genocide. This partnership will expand on its testimony-based resources.

The Genocide Education Project and the Institute have signed a Memorandum of Understanding and have begun to plan collaborative projects. Both organizations share a common underlying aim: to help develop empathy and instill values in students that enable them to stand up to hatred.

“We’re seeking to build good global citizens who, armed with knowledge of the history and consequences of genocide, will take action to improve the world,” Makasdjian said.

Makasdjian said the seeds of GenEd’s relationship with USC Shoah Foundation were planted when acclaimed filmmaker J. Michael Hagopian – known for his stirring documentaries about the genocide – confided in her shortly before his death that he’d made an agreement with the Institute to preserve the interviews he filmed with survivors over decades.

“He was so relieved,” she said of Hagopian, who died in 2010 at age 97. “It was that peace of mind that comes to an elderly person that his legacy will be preserved and it will be preserved for the nation and for humanity and for human rights.”

## Mayor Tornek Gives His Take on the Armenians of the City of Roses

By Aram Arkun

Mirror-Spectator Staff

PASADENA, Calif. – Pasadena has a substantial Armenian population, though not nearly as large as that of neighboring Glendale. Mayor Terry Eliot Tornek noted that both individual Armenians as well as Armenian organizations are very active in the life of the city. Armenians, he said, “are very well represented in commissions and organizations,” and have a significant impact in terms of the welfare of the city.

Tornek, born in New York City in 1945, graduated Princeton University, and obtained a master’s degree from Columbia University in urban planning. He worked as an urban renewal representative in New York City with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development from 1968 to 1969, but moved to Massachusetts in the 1970s. He worked as Planning Director of Springfield, Mass., and served as a member of the Springfield City Council. In 1982 he moved to Pasadena to become the city’s Planning Director and helped establish the redevelopment plan for Old Pasadena.

Tornek has worked for over three decades in real estate, and is a founding partner of Hudson Properties, LLC. Before this, he served for over a decade as Executive Vice President at HASEKO, Inc. While working in business, he served twenty years as a board member of the nonprofit Pasadena Neighborhood Housing Services, and in 2005 was appointed to the Pasadena Planning Commission. He also served on the Design Commission.

He reentered politics with his election to City Council to represent District 7 in 2009, was reelected in 2013, and was elected mayor in 2015. In Pasadena, mayoral elections are direct now for four-year terms, with seven city council members serving along with the mayor. Tornek at the same time serves as chairman of the Pasadena Finance Committee, a member of the Municipal Services and Legislative Policy Committees, the City Council appointee to the Fire and Police Retirement Board, Pasadena’s representative to the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments, and is president of the Burbank Airport Authority.

Tornek said, “My focus has been on the financial well-being of the city. I am a business person and a city planner by training.” He said that he appointed himself chairman of the Finance Committee. “I have been very concerned about expenses outstripping revenues, which is why I suggested we increase the sales tax as in Glendale and Burbank. It passed here by a wider margin. We are giving a third to the school district. I felt we had to do this to maintain the level of services that we have and take care of some of the deferred infrastructure issues that we have,” he said. He declared that 14 million dollars will be raised for the city and 7 million for the school district.

Aside from working on affordable housing, Tornek said that he is very much interested in the future of the Arroyo Seco Park, the biggest park in Pasadena, and so has begun an initiative relating to its improvement.

Tornek said that some Armenians think that they form 15 to 20 percent of Pasadena’s overall population, but he said he thought that figure to be too high. However, he says that though there is a fair number of Armenians in Pasadena, “I have no idea what the population is. I don’t have a viable way to define and measure it. I don’t venture guesses.”

The problem is that there is no complete census survey of Armenians there. A study see PASADENA, page 8





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Mayor Tornek Gives His Take on the Armenians of the City of Roses

PASADENA, from page 7

commissioned by the Pasadena Board of Directors in 1989 placed the Armenian population at 6,850. This was when the new wave of emigration from Soviet Armenia/the Republic of Armenia was starting to snowball.

According to the US Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey 5 year estimate, 140,268 people live in Pasadena, among whom there are 4,245 speakers of Armenian. This of course does not include Armenians who do not speak Armenian (or who have not reported that they speak Armenian). Consequently, logic would imply that the total number must be much larger.

Pasadena City Manager Steve Mermell also recently admitted that there is a need for up-to-date statistics on the numbers of Armenians, who may have increased due to immigration (<https://www.pasadenastarnews.com/2018/11/23/pasadenas-workforce-is-diverse-but-officials-say-theres-room-for-improvement/>).

There is no Armenian city council member at present but William Mihrtad Paparian was a member from 1987 to 1999 and served as city mayor from 1995 to 1997.

The US government does not grant Armenians any special status for affirmative action type programs. However, in 1985, the city designated Armenians a "protected class," along with blacks, Latinos, Asians and Native Americans, and it does track Armenian numbers in city employment. In 2017 Armenians formed 2.3 percent of the city's workforce, which would be less than their percentage of the city population even if a lowball estimate of 5,000 is accepted.

Tornek said that the Armenian population is concentrated in north-central and northeast Pasadena. Pasadena, he said, is unlike Glendale and North Hollywood, which have been the epicenter of Armenian population in the region. In Pasadena, Hispanics are the largest single ethnic group, while Asians are the fastest growing group.

Armenians, Tornek said, are "much more integrated into the Pasadena milieu," compared to their situation in Glendale. He said, "We are unique because we have world-class institutions here like JPL [NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory], Caltech [California Institute of Technology] and Art Center College of Design, and 1,100 nonprofit organizations, so volun-



Mayor Terry Tornek (photo: Aram Arkun)

tarism is really a dominant aspect of Pasadena culture....The Armenian presence is not as intense because they are so engaged in the general fabric of civic affairs." At the same time, he said, "It is a distinctive community and clearly because of the churches and the civic organizations it is an identifiable presence." He gratefully acknowledged that "they have been supportive of me and very helpful to me," and said, "I appreciate that."

There are no dual-language Armenian immersion programs in Pasadena schools, unlike in Glendale. Tornek thought that in part, this was because there were several Armenian schools operating in Pasadena.

Tornek participated in August to September 2017 in an official city delegation trip visiting Pasadena's sister city of Vanadzor, Armenia, for three days, along with other parts of Armenia. Another Pasadena City Council member, Pasadena Sister Cities Committee members, Pasadena United School District Board of Education President Vruyr Boulghourjian and other local elected officials from Pasadena, Sierra Madre, and Glendale participated along with members of the Pasadena chapter of the Armenian National Committee of America. This was his first trip to Armenia and it was self-funded, Tornek said.

The relationship between Vanadzor and Pasadena was established in 1991, and Vanadzor is one of only five sister cities of

Pasadena. Tornek said, "We have a very active sister city committee with Vanadzor. They focus their attention on mostly on the pre-school children, maintaining and improving nurseries in the town. It has been going on for years, with very active, heartwarming activity. I enjoyed the visit very much."

He said that in addition to Vanadzor, "We spent a fair amount of time in Yerevan and met with lots of local officials. We even toured a winery." The Velvet Revolution and consequent changes in administration, Tornek related, have slowed things down a bit, but the dust has been settling now.

He explained, "I have been working and trying to promote tourism. I think that is the best opportunity for Armenia in terms of expanding its economic activity and it is something that we can be helpful with." There is also a project to raise funds to build a replacement pre-school because the largest one in Vanadzor is in terrible shape.

Tornek noted that among the biggest issues in Pasadena is that of rising house prices and rent. At a meeting hosted by the Armenian National Committee of America recently, he received the most questions on this topic. Tornek said that people are being driven out of Pasadena by the rapid increases in costs and parents are concerned that their children cannot afford to live here. Armenians who are renters are being squeezed, Tornek noted.

He said that in response a lot of new housing is being built, which should eventually moderate the price increases, but the demand is still so much greater than the supply. This is a regional problem. He said that many people want to live there, while it is expensive and difficult to build new housing.

Partly as a result, homelessness is a big problem in southern California. Attempts by the Pasadena City Council to deal with it led to a brief conflict with the Armenian community in Pasadena last year when a proposal was made to convert a Ramada Inn diagonally opposite St. Gregory Armenian Church and its Armenian school into permanent supportive housing for the homeless. Armenians and other neighbors came out in large numbers at a community meeting in emotional opposition.

Tornek said that this was an overreaction "in a way that was highly inappropriate and unfair. They killed the project before it even got start-

ed. It betrayed a deep mistrust of the city and a lack of understanding of what our objectives there were in terms of homeless and what kind of facility was being discussed."

He added, "It wasn't their fault. The process was mismanaged. They were not informed. It was just the beginning of a discussion." Tornek said, "I was not involved in the process...If I had been managing it, it would have gone differently."

Crime is fairly low and regionally has been down in recent years. There are some Hispanic and black gangs, but no Armenian gangs or mafia in Pasadena, according to the mayor. The gangs were a generational phenomenon, with 3-4 generations sometimes continuing as members, largely in northwest Pasadena and Altadena. Tornek said that fortunately opioids have not had a big impact in Pasadena, though he did not know why this was so, compared to areas like New England.

One major difference from Glendale is that there is a light rail line, called the Gold Line, with six stations in Pasadena, making it easier to go to downtown Los Angeles. While there is a lot of traffic, Tornek said, "we are not choking with traffic." Apart from the rush hour period, he said, you can get where you are going in a hurry.

Pasadena's economy is doing well, according to the mayor. He cited four major areas in which it has a competitive edge in the marketplace: tech innovation, supported through the Innovate Pasadena tax-exempt organization, medical services (aside from employing some 5,000 people, Kaiser Permanente is now building a medical school, while Huntington Memorial Hospital is a regional center), the hospitality industry (though a relatively small city, Pasadena has 650 restaurants, and many hotels, with Old Pasadena a major attraction) and education, with many top level institutions.

Tornek concluded by noting that the Rose Parade on New Year's Day is one of the best-known aspects of Pasadena, yet when he was recently in China, no one had heard of it. Instead, they all knew about Pasadena through the "Big Bang Theory" television show, as most of the characters work in Caltech. One way or another, Pasadena is known throughout the world, and Armenians, living there since the late 1880s, continue to make their contribution to this vibrant and expanding city.

## Los Angeles Affiliate of AIWA Accepts Applications for Scholarships

LOS ANGELES - The Los Angeles Affiliate of the Armenian International Women's Association (AIWA) announces that applications are now being accepted for the Hasmik Mgrdichian Scholarships.

The Hasmik Mgrdichian Scholarships were established in 2011 to annually award scholarships to female university students. Thanks to the continued generosity of Hasmik Mgrdichian each year \$5,000 is awarded to five students. Applications are now available on line.

Criteria:

- Female California resident of Armenian descent
  - Financial verification (First 2 pages of 2018 income tax returns. If not available, please provide first 2 pages of 2017 tax returns.)
  - Full-time Student at accredited university/college
  - Sophomore, Junior or Senior Status or Graduate Student (2019-2020 Year)
  - Minimum GPA of 2.0 (Certified Copy of University/College Transcripts)
  - Two letters of Recommendation, one from an academic instructor/advisor, one from a community representative
  - Small (Passport Size) Photograph
- Completed Application (Postmarked no later than April 19, 2019)

NOTE: Applicants may submit a scholarship application annually; former scholarship recipients also may reapply.

Applications will not be considered unless all required information is mailed by April 19, to: Scholarship Committee, Armenian International Women's Assn., LA, 2311 Roscomare Road, #10, Los Angeles, CA 90077.

Nicole Nishanian, President of AIWA-LA, stated: "Our scholarship program was created by Hasmik Mgrdichian, one of the founders of the Los Angeles Affiliate. The scholarships are a tribute to her memory and continue to recognize her legacy to assist in the education of young Armenian women."

The Scholarship Committee, is chaired by Lily Balian with committee members Hermine Janoyan, Cindy Norian, Diane Cabraloff, Diana Hekimian, Houry Aposhian, and Lysa Gregorian, granddaughter of Hasmik Mgrdichian. They are committed to reaching out to all California universities and colleges to inform women students of the opportunity to submit an application for the scholarship awards. Flyers and notices are being sent to Armenian Schools, organizations and churches.

In addition to the Hasmik Mgrdichian Scholarship Awards from the Los Angeles Affiliate, other scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 are available through the AIWA International Board in Watertown. Applications are available in all fields, ranging from mathematics and architecture to government, public administration, psychology, art and design, diplomacy, and in the sciences. For further information, email: [scholarships@aiwainternational.org](mailto:scholarships@aiwainternational.org).

Applications for all AIWA scholarships for the 2019-2020 academic year can be downloaded from the AIWA website: [www.aiwainternational.org](http://www.aiwainternational.org) or through the Los Angeles Affiliate website: [www.aiwala.org](http://www.aiwala.org). Young women are urged to apply for both scholarships.

Winners will be announced in late May or early June.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

# Getting Salty With Nina Festekjian of Anoush'ella

ANOUSH'ELLA, from page 7

**What's the worst restaurant experience you've ever had?**

I'm a positive person. Every restaurant where I've had a bad experience, there has been an explanation from the manager. I don't want to be a negative reviewer. But I can't handle clumsiness! I am a perfectionist. I like things to be in order.

**How could Boston become a better food city?**

I wish more restaurants did sugar-free dishes and had minimal use of salt. We need to create menus with spices and sauces other than salt and sugar.

**Name three adjectives for Boston diners.**

They have a global, diverse palate. They are critical. And loyal.

**What's the most overdone trend right now?**  
Steak and burger restaurants!

**What are you reading?**

I'm reading *My Brilliant Friend* by Elena Ferrante. The series just came out on HBO, but I want to finish the book before jumping into the series. Also, I'm reading *Wine by the Glass* by Oz Clarke. My son just got it as a present for me. I want a deeper understanding of the wines

I'm drinking.

**How's your commute?**

We live in Winchester. The commute is short but sometimes challenging with traffic. Most cases, it's a half-hour.

**What's the one food you never want to eat again?**

In Lebanon, we serve these little birds that are fried and served with pomegranate molasses. Some say it's a delicacy. It's like a tweetie bird. Frying the birds, those tweetie birds — I can't!

**What kind of restaurant is Boston missing right now?**

I feel like Michelin star restaurants are missing, maybe like Casa Mono in New York City or Le Bernardin. We also are missing some very good Middle Eastern restaurants, like Ilili in New York.

**What's your most missed Boston restaurant?**

Blue Ginger. We used to live in Lexington back then, and it was a short commute.

**Who was your most memorable customer?**

We have a dentist who is a BU dental professor. He actually worked as a sous chef at one point with Ken Oringer! He's a very nice person




Nina and Raffi Festekjian

and a foodie. He and his colleagues come almost every week, and they appreciate the effort we put into creating healthy, fresh dishes. They've been really nice in providing critical feedback and encouragement since day one.

**If you had to eat your last meal in Boston, what would it be?**

I love oysters, but I stay away from fried ones. If I had a last meal, it would be fried oysters at B&G.



IN UNITY IS STRENGTH - ԼՈՒՅՈՒՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԻՆ ԵՐԱՅՈՒՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ Է

**NOTICE OF MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The Central Board of Directors of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (the "Union") hereby gives notice to all the members of the Union qualified to attend, that the 90<sup>th</sup> General Assembly will be held on Saturday, February 9, 2019 at 10 A.M. at Les Jardins Saint Dominique, 49-51, rue Saint Dominique, 75007 Paris, France.

This is the only notice which will be given for the meeting of the 90<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. We therefore request the qualified members of the Union to attend the Assembly in person at the address and on the date given above, or, deliver or submit, on or before December 31, 2018, their respective proxies duly executed and certified according to the provisions of the Bylaws, to the Secretary of the Central Board at the following address:

Armenian General Benevolent Union  
Central Board of Directors  
55 East 59<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10022-1112, U.S.A.

**AGENDA OF THE MEETING**

1. Consideration and approval of the Report on the Activities of the Union for the years 2016 and 2017.
2. Consideration and approval of the Union's Financial Reports for the years 2016 and 2017.
3. Election of Directors.
4. Election of a member of the Auditing Committee.
5. Consideration and action upon any matters incidental to the foregoing and any matters which may properly come before the meeting or any adjournments thereof, including amendments to the Bylaws.
6. Consideration of any recommendation and resolution of the General Assembly.

ARMENIAN GENERAL BENEVOLENT UNION  
CENTRAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sarkis Jebejian Secretary	Berge Setrakian President
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November 12, 2018

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**Christmas Donations**

Edward Paloyan, Oak Brook, IL \$300  
Mary Bergoudian, Belmont, MA \$125  
Armand and Marilyn Norehad, Northfield, IL \$100  
Arax Balakian, Fort Lee, NJ \$100  
Knarig Khatchadourian Meyer, Ridgewood, NJ \$100





COMMUNITY NEWS

# New Primate Welcomes Armenian Christmas

CHRISTMAS, from page 1

In an animated sermon, the Primate noted how the story of Christ’s nativity – though it describes an event of cosmic significance in human history – is told through the experiences of common, everyday people.

“The story’s heroine, Mary, is a young Jewish girl,” Findikyan said. “Joseph has no prestigious pedigree; he’s not a king; the most we know is that he was a carpenter. The shepherds, gritty with the dirt of their daily work, are the ‘star characters’ who first greet the newborn savior.”

“And the son of God himself comes into this world as a baby, born in an oppressed, occupied land. He’s born not in a palace, not even in a bed, but in a manger, with animals surrounding him.”

The Christian story, the Primate said, marks the greatest possible contrast with mankind’s mythological traditions, which stress the remoteness of the gods from average human concerns.

“Why is that?” he asked – before replying: “Because that’s how God works. God as we know Him – God as Armenian Christians know Him – is a God who brings the glory of heaven down to the earth, in the most unexpected, counter-intuitive way.”

The Primate noted that Armenian Christians have profoundly experienced this truth. “We children of the Armenian Church know that God brings His loving power to bear where we least expect it. Sometimes, it’s in a beautiful cathedral like this, or in Holy Etchmiadzin. But sometimes, it’s in the parched highlands of Ottoman Turkey.”

The story of Christmas, Findikyan said, shows that “God brings His healing power to ordinary people” – in their everyday activities, and especially in moments of weakness and trial. He urged listeners to seek out Jesus Christ in unlikely places and people; to see the frailties of life as the stage on which a loving God acts with His greatest power.



Diocesan Primate, the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan performing the mass.

The sacred music of the Divine Liturgy was rendered beautifully throughout the service by the St. Vartan Cathedral Choir, under the direction of Khoren Mekanejian. Accompanying on the organ was Florence Avakian.

Following services on January 6, a traditional home blessing and Christmas reception were



Diocesan Primate, the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan offers communion.



Diocesan Primate, the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan and the Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan

## Water Blessing

Findikyan delivered his first Armenian Christmas homily as Primate with passion and conviction, in both English and Armenian.

The Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan, the vicar of St. Vartan Cathedral, also participated in the Armenian Christmas service.

Dr. Ed Khoury served as godfather for the *churorhnek* (Blessing of Water) ceremony, which commemorates the baptism of Jesus by the hand of John the Baptist.

To mark the occasion, Khoury had also donated to the cathedral a large ceremonial cauldron of embossed metal, which was used for the 2019 Water Blessing service, and will be used every year going forward.

For the fourth consecutive year, the Diocese broadcast the Armenian Christmas liturgy over the Internet. The live broadcast with a running narration was watched by thousands on Livestream and Facebook. Even more viewers have tuned in to the recorded program in the days that followed.



Diocesan Primate, the Very Rev. Daniel Findikyan and the Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan

held in Haik and Alice Kavookjian Auditorium.

An Armenian Christmas Eve service was held on the evening of January 5. The celebrant was Mesrop Parsamyan.

Parishes across the Eastern Diocese also held Christmas services on Sunday, January 6.



Dr. Ed Khoury



Members of the Diocesan Choir at the service





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Nativity Services at Western Diocese

By Taleen Babayan

BURBANK, Calif. — Echoing thousands of years of religious and cultural tradition, a monumental mass of faithful attended the symbolic Feast of the Nativity and Theophany and Blessing of the Holy Water ceremony at St. Leon Armenian Cathedral (*Surpotz Ghevontiantz*) on January 6, in a moving service led by celebrant and homilist, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America.

The unending stream of the Christian flock in and out of the ornate Cathedral, reminiscent of the treasured historic and artistic ancient basilicas, was a testament to the richness of the Armenian heritage, the commemoration of Christ's birth and the profound ties of the faith that have been embedded for centuries in the homeland's venerated Holy See of Echmiadzin.

As the birth of Jesus Christ (*Sourp Dznount*) was reverberated throughout the sanctuary, more than 2,500 people gathered to participate in the special service and to recreate His baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan River



Archbishop Hovnan Derderian during the Blessing of the Holy Water ceremony

that lies deep within us."

Tying in the celebration of the birth of Christ with the chance to take stock in the past year, Derderian noted the many achievements of the Western Diocese as the institution undertook new initiatives, expanded its programming and asserted its significance as a bedrock of Armenian Christian life. He stressed the importance of "striving to further expand and

Esq., reflected on the strong turnout not only at St. Leon Cathedral but in all the churches throughout the Western Diocese that were "filled with the faithful, elderly and young alike."

"It was truly a blessing to see the youth participate in our religious services," said Kanimian. "Our parishioners have been steadily attending church and renewing their faith in the sacred Armenian Apostolic Church."

Honorary members present during the Feast of the Nativity and Theophany and Blessing of the Holy Water included Dr. Armen Baibourtian, consul-general of Armenia in Los Angeles, as well as Armen Hampar and Antranig Zorayan, among notable Diocesan benefactors.

The spirit of Christmas at the Cathedral continued in the evening during a fundraising dinner to gather support for the rebuilding of the Moshatagh School in Artsakh's Kashatagh region. The purposeful event, hosted by the St. Leon Ladies Society, took place at Nazareth

youth become involved and donating any amount because it meant they understood the meaning of giving, which fulfilled Srpazan's objective."

The overall tone of the Feast of the Nativity and Theophany, Blessing of the Holy Water and the subsequent fundraiser dinner was one of vigor, exaltation and vision that imbued the faithful with an uplifted spirit and led them even closer to God, the Armenian Church and the homeland.

"I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity to be present at St. Leon Cathedral during the celebration of the Nativity of our Lord," said Derik Ghookasian, chief operating officer of the Ararat Home. "The church was packed beyond capacity and was filled with so many familiar as well as new faces who were present."

Derik emphasized the "multi-generational faithful" who were part of the Divine Liturgy celebration to "witness the baptism of our Lord."



Archbishop Hovnan Derderian blesses a child during the Feast of the Nativity and Theophany service.

through the Blessing of the Holy Water (*Churortnek*). The standing-room-only crowd was reflected on the altar as well, where an abundant number of young men served throughout the Divine Liturgy, a reflection of the secure future of the Armenian Church.

In his rousing sermon, Derderian focused on the religious influence of Christ's birth as well as the strength of the Armenian Church and faith. He paid tribute to Vartan Nazerian, a long-time benefactor of the Western Diocese and the Godfather of the Cross for the Blessing of the Holy Water service, who has dedicated himself over the span of four decades to the Church and to the Armenian community "in the spirit of St. Vartan."

In the dawn of the new year, Derderian thanked the Almighty for giving life and conveying God's love and wisdom into the world through Jesus. He remarked that Jesus's birth is a "wondrous miracle" and on that occasion "a new life opens within all of us that we feel in our hearts and our souls."

"As we celebrate Christmas, we pause for a moment of spiritual reflection and self-examination in order to align ourselves with the will of the Lord Almighty God," said Derderian. "We are called to renew our covenant with Christ our Lord and reinstate the spiritual richness

increase in size and in scope our activities in the service of our Church and nation."

With a new year come "new commitments" said Derderian as he encouraged the faithful to "serve each other with meaningful hearts so we internalize the love and wisdom of God and bring blessings to the Armenian Church and the motherland with a blissful heart."

As the cross held by Nazerian was dipped into the Holy Water, the faithful recalled Christ's submersion into the Jordan River as the blessed oil (muron), prepared in Holy Echmiadzin and blessed by the Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II, was poured into the water from a dove-shaped vessel. This ancient ritual deeply touched Nazerian.

"It was very emotional for me, after 40 years of service to the Church and to the community at large, to be part of this significant ceremony," said Nazerian. "It is my honor to serve our Armenian Church."

Upon its blessing, the Holy Water was passed out to the attendees, creating a transparent yet viable link between the Diaspora and the homeland. As they drank the blessed water, the faithful became a part of Christ's giving actions, symbolically joining with Him and experiencing a spiritual rebirth.

Diocesan Council Chairman Joseph Kanimian,



Archbishop Hovnan Derderian with the St. Leon Ladies Society

and Sima Kalaydjian Hall and kicked off the Western Diocese's theme for 2019, Year of the School, as designated by Derderian, which follows on the heels of last year's impactful Year of the Youth.

Chairwoman Angela Parseghian remarked on the "positive environment" of the dinner that drew close to 300 guests and covered the amount to finish the remodeling of the village school. Through the funds, the Moshatagh School, which has fallen into squalor and disrepair due to the ongoing tragic territorial conflict, will have new bathrooms with running water, a gathering space, a safe building free of mold, and will give students the chance to learn in a secure and healthy environment to enable brighter futures.

"We were very successful in fundraising," said Parseghian. "The highlight was having the

"The service was magnificent and the Primate's message was inspired," said Ghookasian. "The procession of entering the sanctuary with such splendor and pageantry showed the uniqueness of carrying on our rituals in the Diaspora."

Former Diocesan Council member Arsen Danielian, Esq., commented on the "ceremonial mystical tradition" of the Blessing of the Holy Water that "further reinforces the trust and confidence that our faithful community places in our Church under the inspirational and servant leadership of the Primate Archbishop Hovnan Derderian and the dedicated clergy of the Western Diocese."

Danielian and his family were touched by the "spiritual significance" of the Divine Liturgy that was an "undiluted joy that not only brightened our hearts, but also enriched our souls."



# Arts & Living

## Soloist Manjelian And Worcester Chorale Offer Christmas Spirit In Concert

By Charles K. Der Kazarian

WORCESTER – The Greater Worcester Armenian Chorale presented its annual special Christmas concert on Sunday, December 2, in the Sanctuary of Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church. The program consisted of Christmas carols and songs in Armenian and English. The Chorale is under the direction of Konstantin Petrossian, artistic director and conductor, with organ accompaniment by Mari Panosian.

The guest soloist was Mezzo-Soprano Gohar Manjelian (née Khandanyan), a native of Yerevan, who began her singing career in 1981 as a member of Armenia's State Academic Chorus, then graduated in 1986 from the Arno Babajanian School of Music and completed her requirements for a master's degree in Voice



Soloist Mezzo-Soprano Gohar Manjelian

Proficiency at the Gomidas State Conservatory of Yerevan 1993. She performed with various theater groups as a leading player and soloist, becoming a member of Armenia's State Symphony Orchestra Chorus as a soloist until December 1995, when she moved to America. She continued singing in many Armenian Evangelical, Apostolic and Catholic Churches, American Churches as well as synagogues in addition to appearing in several concerts throughout the country. In 1997 Manjelian participated in the New Jersey Verismo Opera Society voice competition and sang as a soloist during their gala performance concert.

Her extensive repertoire includes a wide range of European, Russian and Armenian operas, classic, romantic and sacred music. She resides in the Cranston, RI and is married to Rev. Hagop Manjelian, pastor emeritus of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Cranston.

A reception and fellowship provided by the Chorale preceded the concert and included a lecture titled "The Armenian Legionnaires - Sacrifice And Betrayal In World War I," by Dr. Susan Pattie, honorary senior research associate, University College in London, England. The lecture was presented by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and Hamazkayin Armenian Educational and Cultural Society, Worcester Chapter.

The traditional carol *Oh Come, All Ye Faithful*, beautifully performed by the Chorale, opened the concert, followed by *Have Yourself* see CONCERT, page 13



The Forbidden Saints

## Italian Tenor Alessandro Safina Announces US Tour Featuring Victor Espinola and Forbidden Saints

NEW YORK – One of the opera world's hottest stars, Italian tenor Alessandro Safina, has announced his upcoming US tour, accompanied by Victor Espinola and the renowned Forbidden Saints. The tour will visit California, New York and Florida. In California, the group will play two dates, San Jose's City National Civic on April 4 and Los Angeles's Dolby Theatre on April 7; New York's Beacon Theater on April 9 and Miami's Fillmore on April 11.

A household name in Italy and performing in venues around the world, Safina's goal is to create a soulful pop-opera genre that appeals to a variety of audiences.

"My dream is to meld these two musical genres in a way that appeals to the mainstream, so everyone can enjoy the music I love so much," he said.

Safina appeared with Elton John, Cher and Jennifer Lopez for Queen Elizabeth's 73rd Royal Variety Performance.

He has performed for the pope, sang duets with Andrea Bocelli, Sarah Brightman and Rod Stewart and has a large celebrity following.



Tenor Alessandro Safina

as a resident solo artist at Walt Disney World, where he brought his sound to visitors from around the world.

His band, the Forbidden Saints, has toured the world and performed with master artists including Yanni, Shakir and Wyclef Jean, among others.

Espinola will be featured on guitar and vocals, joined by Armen Movsessian on violin, Alexander Zhiroff on cello, Archie Pena on drums, Hova Buryan on bass, Paul Hoyle on keyboards, Fito Espinola and Reinel Rios on guitar, Ramon Flores on trumpet, Kamo Seyranyan on duduk, Walter Rodriguez on percussion and Irina Makarova on vocals.

For more information or to buy tickets, visit [www.facebook.com/AlessandroSafinaUSA/](http://www.facebook.com/AlessandroSafinaUSA/)

## BOOK REVIEW

### Six Decades of Service to God Captured in Book

By Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian

Consistently, and through his 42nd book, *Sixty Years in the Lord's Vineyard*, Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian touches our minds and souls as he celebrates 60 years of calling, commitment and ministerial service.

Those who are familiar with the fruitful life and activity of Reverend Tootikian, whether on the pulpit, at his writing desk, in the classrooms, on the ecclesiastical and interdenominational committees, or on the leadership positions, will understand what it means to stop for a moment and have a retrospective look into the past six decades and discern the paths he has walked and the lives and minds he has touched, communities of faith he nourished, and the calling he has been faithful to. Reverend Tootikian's writing and communication skills turn this "moment" into a composition where he shares with his audience deep reflections from a minister's heart and experience.

The book comes in two parts, English and Armenian. In each part, the author takes the reader into a journey through the ecclesiastical year, and underlines what a minister would have said to reflect on the seasons that churches and communities of faith go through. The topics of his meditations reflect the essentials



*Sixty Years in the Lord's Vineyard*

By Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian

that individuals and communities of faith are called to cultivate in their spiritual lives, such as the importance of knowing Christ, spiritual growth, spiritual balance, prayer, giving, witnessing, and serving. On a similar note, Rev. Tootikian's topics articulate the areas that any committed servant of the Word and the Sacraments would have put his focus and energy into for sixty years, whether by teaching, by guiding or by discipleship.

Tootikian humbly sees himself as an anointed instrument to partake the ultimate Vinedresser, Christ's ministry on earth, which primarily involves strengthening the weak branches, pruning the healthy ones, loving the vine, and ultimately delighting in the abundance of the fruits.

Also, and on par with, the author underlines the fact that his ministry of taking care of God's vine was proudly realized in the context of his Armenian identity and the Armenian culture. For this reason, he stresses the importance of all the Armenian cultural and historical milestones as being elements of our

see REVIEW, page 15





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

## Erevan Chorale and Orchestra Dedicate Christmas Concert to Yerevan, Quake Anniversaries

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — The festive Christmas concert of the Erevan Chorale and Orchestra took place on December 9 at Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge. The concert was dedicated to the memory of its founder Very Rev. Oshagan Minassian, as well as the 30th anniversary of the Spitak earthquake, and the 2,800th anniversary of the founding of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. The Erevan Chorale and Orchestra — the only one of its kind in the diaspora — does a phenomenal job of promoting Armenian music. Thanks to many years of creative communication with composers and performers of Armenia, many works of Armenian composers were first performed by the group and have since become famous abroad.

The concert opened with a welcoming speech by Rev. Vasken A. Kouzouian, who warmly welcomed the participants, as well as sponsors of the concert, followed by the students of the Armenian school of the church who recited poems dedicated to Armenia and Yerevan.

The musical portion of the concert began with the performance of the group conducted by composer Konstantin Petrossian. As is customary for the Erevan Chorale and Orchestra's annual holiday program, the concert had a rich palette. The program consisted of New Year's and Christmas carols, as well as works of Western European (Vivaldi, Caccini, Franck, Handel), and Armenian composers (Komitas, Hovhannissian, Mavisakalyan). Along with these



The Erevan Chorale and Orchestra

works, vocalist Anahit Zakaryan performed Petrossian's arrangement of Tigran Choukhadjian's *Ave Maria* with her most beautiful soprano and with the accompaniment of the orchestra. She also performed *Diramayr*, which is based on the words of Archbishop Nerses Bozpalian and is dedicated to the memory of the founder of the chorale — the Very

Rev. Oshagan Minassian. The magnificent performance of the soloist of the vocal group Bostonians, tenor Michael Calmes, who sang Armenian and Western European songs, was also particularly noteworthy.

The choir sang *For You, Armenia* by George Garvarents and Charles Aznavour, which is dedicated to the memory of the innocent victims of

the 1988 earthquake. The song *Erebuni/Yerevan* inspired by the 2800th anniversary of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, was also a stirring component of the program. Several new arrangements of Christmas songs were performed in the concert for the first time. The entire concert was spiritually uplifting, and the Chorale and Orchestra brilliantly presented a diverse and complex program. The audience warmly welcomed the performers of the concert.

At the conclusion of the concert, Kouzouian introduced the first Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the US, Rouben Shougarian, who praised the activities of the Chorale and Orchestra and noted the importance of preserving Armenia's cultural heritage. He also spoke about the post-revolutionary situation in Armenia and expressed confidence in the successful development of Armenia in all areas. Among the audience members were Armenian cultural, official and political figures of the Diaspora and area clergy.

-Karine Aladjyan

### Soloist Manjelian and Worcester Chorale Offer Christmas Spirit In Concert

CONCERT, from page 12

A *Merry Little Christmas*, *Ave Maria* (by 16th Century Italian composer Giulio Caccini), *Winter Wonderland*, *Carol Of The Bells* and *Silent Night*. Armenian songs included: *Park Ee Partzoons* (Gloria In Excelsis) by Movses Kertogh from the 6th century; *Ov Zarnanalee* (How Wondrous) by Grigor Pahlavuni from the 12th century with solo by Deacon Vazken Yaghmourian; *Aysor Dzaynum Hayragan* (Today, The Paternal Voice) by Hovhanness Yezngatsi from the 13th century. The Chorale also presented its signature piece, *Yegeghetsin Haygagan* (The Armenian Church) by Vahan Bedlian and Vahan Tekeyan; and in honor of the 2800th anniversary of Yerevan, the capital of the Republic of Armenia, *Erebuni/Yerevan* by Edgar Hovhannissian.

Selections by Manjelian included *Aysor Don Eh*, arranged by R. Grigorian; *Diramayr* by Konstantin Petrossian; and *O, Holy Night*. The last was the classic Christmas Carol which brought much applause from the audience for her thrilling rendition.

The free concert was enjoyed by parishioners, friends, and guests who gave the performers a well-deserved standing ovation following the conclusion of the final numbers: Joy To the World and the Hayr Mer.) Board Of Trustees Chairman George Aghajyan of Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church (which co-sponsored the event) congratulated Petrossian, the members of the Chorale, organist Mari Panosian, and Manjelian for the wonderful holiday season performance. He thanked the audience for their attendance and encouraged them to continue to support the Chorale, noting the importance of preserving and promoting the rich musical heritage of the Armenian people.



# Sponsor A Teacher

## In Armenia and Karabagh

# 19th Anniversary

Since its inception in 2001, TCA's Sponsor a Teacher program has raised over \$642,900 and reached out to 6,427 teachers and school workers in Armenia & Karabagh.



☐ Yes, I want to sponsor teachers in Armenia and Karabagh to continue helping them to educate the children, our future leaders. I would like to have the teacher's name and address.

☐ \$200 ☐ \$400 ☐ \$600 ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to: Tekeyan Cultural Association - Memo: Sponsor a Teacher 2014  
Mail your check with this form to:

TCA Sponsor a Teacher  
5326 Valverde, Houston, TX 77056

Your donation is Tax Deductible.



## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# NY Anthropology Museum Looks for New Home to Represent Diversity

FLUSHING, N.Y. — The Anthropology Museum of the People of New York and the Armenian Cultural Educational Resource Center Museum at Queens College, Flushing, New York, are looking for a new home.

The exhibits at present include “The Voyage of Human Origins,” which covers multi-ethnic cultures and the biological aspects of human origins. The “Armenia: Memories from My Home ” exhibit displays the history of the

Armenians from 9000 BCE to the present.

The Armenia exhibit originally opened at Ellis Island in 1996-7 for six months. Its religious history panel shows how controversies resulted in the separation of the Armenian, Catholic and Greek Churches. Petroglyphs are reproduced from Lake Sevan and there is a 3,200-year-old female skull. The 1915 Armenian Genocide display shows both the Armenian and Turkish views of the genocide. Coming to America and Contributions of Armenians to America include the Ellis Island experience and famous Armenians like Ruben Mamoulian and William Saroyan.

Since the Anthropology/Armenian Museum is functioning in such small quarters, there is no space to expand to include comprehensive histories of other ethnic groups, which was the mission of the organization, supported by noted anthropologist Margaret Mead, back in 1977. There are references to Africa through our fossil collection, origins of pertinent languages, and dolls from over 125 nations, but our mission is to display exhibits representing the history and diversity of the people of NYC.

We have contacted New York City Councilmen and wealthy donors, and would even like to be part of the Amazon educational complex slated for Long Island City. “All We Need is a Little Help From Our Friends.” Do you know anybody?

The museum is located at 6419 Kissena Blvd., Kissena Hall 1, Flushing. Parking arrangements are available. Admission is free. Call (718) 428-5650 to make an appointment.



From left, New York City Councilman Barry Grodenchik, Museum Board Member Zarmine Boghosian and Executive Director Margaret Tellalian-Kyrkostas

## Peter Balakian and Susan Barba to Participate in Grolier Book Shop Fundraiser

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Writers Peter Balakian and Susan Barba will partake in a program on January 25 as part of a series of fund raisers for the Grolier Book Shop, which has been a cornerstone of Boston literary culture since 1917.

The program will take place at 7 p.m. in the Mount Vernon Ballroom at the Sheraton Commander Hotel in Harvard Square.

Balakian and Barba will read from their works with conversation to follow. A light menu will be included with the ticket and there will be a cash bar.

Balakian, who is a Grolier Board member, is the author of seven books of poems most recently *Ozone Journal*, which won the

2016 Pulitzer

Prize for Poetry,

as well as the

memoir *Black*

*Dog of Fate* and

*The Burning*

*Tigris: The*

*Armenian*

*Genocide* and

*America's*

*Response*. His

books have been

translated into

more than dozen

languages. He is

the Donald M.



Peter Balakian

and Constance H. Rebar Professor of the Humanities in the Department of English at Colgate University.

Barba is senior editor for the *New York Review Books* and the author of *Fair Sun*, which won the 2017 Anahid Literary Prize from Columbia University's Armenian Center. Her poems have appeared in the



Susan Barba

*New York Review of Books*, *Poetry*, the *Hudson Review*, *Yale Review* and other places and her translations from the Armenian have appeared in *Ararat* and *Words Without Borders*.

Balakian and Barba write: “We will read from our work and reflect on poetry and its relationship to trauma, collective memory and the poem’s engagement with history.

“For us, as for so many poets, the Grolier has been a vital location, and it has been for the past ninety years, a temple to poetry and the most historically important bookstore of its kind. Because poetry is the cutting edge of language and a singular force in probing human experience, the Grolier remains essential to American life. Please come out and support the Grolier and its future.”

Both the Grolier and the Sheraton Commander, founded by the Guleserian family in 1927, have been important Cambridge institutions that have preserved the history and culture of Harvard Square. Michael Guleserian, the general manager, has been generous in his support of the evening.

For further information contact Francine LaChance, consultant for the Grolier Foundation and Forums Trust. Donations can be made to the Grolier Poetry Foundation and Forums Trust in lieu of attendance — include “Balakian Barba reading” in your contribution.

The event is a fundraiser and tickets can be purchased online at <https://conta.cc/2Fc8Mr2>

# Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Dalian



## Apple Cranberry Walnut Bars

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 1/2 cups finely chopped apples, peeled, tossed with 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, sifted
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 1 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon lemon or orange zest
- 1/8 teaspoon sea or Kosher salt
- 3/4 cup brown sugar (packed)
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- 3/4 cup chopped walnuts (or slivered almonds)
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg

### PREPARATION

Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees.

Cream the sugar and shortening together for a few minutes, and add the egg and vanilla and mix.

Sift together the flour, baking soda, and salt, and gradually add to the creamed mixture; mix well, the dough will be stiff. Stir in the apples and zest. Spread batter into a greased 9 X 13 baking pan.

Combine the brown sugar, cranberries, walnuts, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a bowl, and sprinkle evenly over batter.

Bake for 30-35 minutes or until golden brown. Cool and cut into squares.

Makes 12-16 squares.

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





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Director Johnny Kevorkian Releases 'Await Further Instructions,' Talks about Biggest Influences

LONDON (Flickering Myth) — From acclaimed director Johnny Kevorkian ("The Disappeared") and British Academy of Film and Television-nominated producer Jack Tarling ("God's Own Country"), British sci-fi horror "Await Further Instructions" has been a hit at film festivals around the world and highly praised as an original and inventive festive frightener.

It's Christmas Day and the dysfunctional Milgram family wake to find a mysterious black substance surrounding their house. Something monumental is clearly happening right outside their door, but what exactly — an industrial accident, a terrorist attack, a nuclear war? All their limited information now comes from the television. But as the ominous gogglebox exerts an ever more sinister grip on their psyches, their terrified paranoia escalates into bloody carnage.

To celebrate the UK release on digital platforms, also arriving soon on Blu-ray and DVD, we hear from director Johnny Kevorkian on some of his biggest screen influences...

## "The Twilight Zone" (1959-1964)

This landmark, highly influential cult TV series mixes fantasy and sci-fi, famously created and presented by Hollywood legend, Rod Serling. Each episode uniquely explores the depths of the unknown, with the immense cast showcasing many future stars, including Robert Duvall, Robert Redford, Burt Reynolds, Dennis Hopper and Julie Newmar.

Johnny Kevorkian says, "I always loved the mystery element. It wasn't overtly horror, but it was still frightening. In each episode, there's usually a political or social message in there, and it was so ahead of its time. A lot of people who've seen Await Further Instructions have referenced The Twilight Zone too, which I find very interesting. I love a lot of 1950's sci-fi. The first time the text pops up on screen and we see the green light reflected on the characters' faces, I wanted to capture that, a kind of homage."

## "The Birds" (1963)

In this classic Alfred Hitchcock horror, a woman pursues a lawyer to his Bodega Bay home after they meet in a bird shop. After delivering the gift of a lovebird to his young sister, she is attacked by a bird on her way back, with more random, vicious attacks suddenly escalating in the bay.

"I love all of Hitchcock's work and 'The Birds,' in particular, is a real favorite. In this story, we know its birds that are responsible for



Johnny Kevorkian

the attacks but we don't know why they're doing it and there's a lot of suspense there, which I really like. There are also great moments when the characters are locked in the house, not knowing what's happening outside but hearing terrifying noises, so I was definitely inspired by that."

## "Alien" (1979)

In the classic horror that launched a Hollywood franchise, the crew of spaceship Nostromo answers a distress signal from a desolate planet, only to discover a deadly life form that breeds within human hosts. Suddenly, the crew must fight for survival.

"Aside from being very scary, I love the practical effects and how they created the alien creature, with no CGI. It looked extremely believable and realistic, which also means the film doesn't date too much. We used very minimal CGI in our film and also wanted that real-world, realistic look for the big finale."

## "The Thing" (1982)

In this much-loved John Carpenter horror, a research team in the snowy wilds of Antarctica find themselves besieged by a terrifying, shape-shifting creature which has found its way into their base, and which can take the form of any organism it chooses.

"What a great concept Carpenter chose by using the snow storm, trapping everyone inside with an unknown creature. It felt very claustrophobic and really builds a simmering tension between the characters, not knowing who has

been affected. That unknown entity could have taken the form of absolutely anyone. That was hugely eye-opening for me and definitely influenced our film."

## "Poltergeist" (1982)

Produced by Hollywood hero Steven Spielberg and directed by another favorite, Tobe Hooper, things start going bump in the night in a suburban American home, much to the terror of its resident family. When the youngest daughter gets sucked into the television screen, her parents call in a psychic as their final hope to bring her back.

"I really like the idea that 'less is more' here and the filmmakers allow you to feel the tension and mystery, especially as this paranormal threat escalates. You don't see too much, and it's very atmospheric, but it's haunting and keeps you completely on the edge."

## "The Fly" (1986)

The Oscar-winning remake of a 1950's classic, Jeff Goldblum's scientist, experimenting with transmitting matter, uses himself as a guinea-pig, unaware that a fly has landed in the machinery. As he embarks on a relationship with Geena Davis' journalist, he begins horrifically changing.

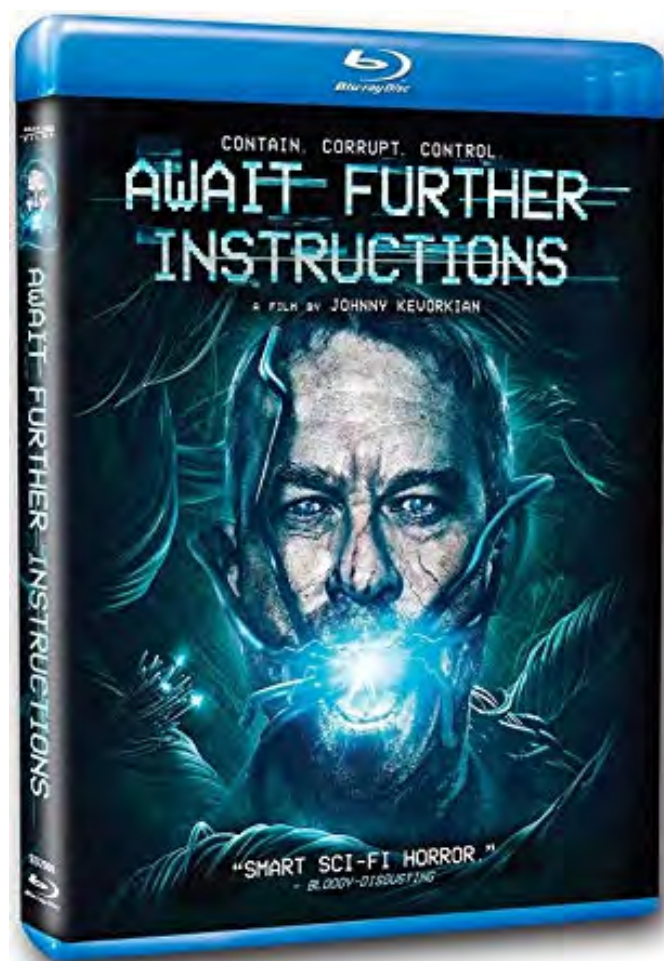
"It's such a fantastic film and I love the sequences where the character metamorphoses into the fly and those incredible effects. It's beautifully shot and beautifully made by David Cronenberg, and it stills looks good to this day. The score, the music, the lighting and every other element heavily contributed to a very unsettling film."

## "Hellraiser" (1987)

Based on his own novella *The Hellbound*

*Heart*, popular author and writer Clive Barker embarked on his directorial debut which became a fan favorite and introduced the world to the notorious character, "Pinhead." In "Hellraiser," a couple moves into a new home, unaware that something truly evil lurks beneath the floorboards of the dilapidated house.

"I watched this as a kid and absolutely loved it. It's very violent and has lots of gore, again all created practically. I love the concept of body horror. Here, the evil Cenobite characters are a group, kind of centrally connected to their master and always summoned together, which I



thought was a really interesting device and helped build anticipation for that arrival."

"Await Further Instructions" is out now on digital download and available for pre-order on Blu-ray and DVD. For links, visit [www.awaitfurtherinstructions.co.uk](http://www.awaitfurtherinstructions.co.uk)



Tekeyan Cultural Association  
Metro Los Angeles Chapter

Presents

**Ara Dabandjian Quartet of Element Band**

Saturday, February 9, 2019

8 PM Dinner • 9:30 PM – 10:30 PM

11 PM • International Singer Koko Hayitian

Phoenicia Restaurant • 343 N. Central Ave, Glendale, CA 91203

Admission • \$80 • [www.tekeyanla.eventbrite.com](http://www.tekeyanla.eventbrite.com)

Contact • [info@TekeyanLA.org](mailto:info@TekeyanLA.org) for group seating

*Tickets must be pre-purchased • No tickets will be sold at the door.*



## Six Decades of Service to God Captured in Book

REVIEW, from page 12

collective identity formation and means of ethnic perpetuation.

Tootikian pens his thoughts in the format of short essays with an easy to read flow of thoughts. His quotes from notable philosophers, theologians and educators add to the richness of his meditations. The book also contains testimonies of those who have enjoyed his earlier publications and wrote reviews, which come to serve as live affirmations to his six decades of legacy in the Armenian spiritual, cultural, devotional and theological literature.

That is why people of all ethnic, cultural, educational and experiential backgrounds will be attracted to the pages of this book, including pastors, lay leaders and members of congregations, because they will see in the Sixty years in the Lord's Vineyard their concerns addressed, their questions discussed, and their voices echoed.

Some 60 years ago, a teenager from Ekizoluk of Kessab heard the call to serve. Though he developed some skill in the actual vine dressing, through the power, the blessing and the Grace of the Lord, Reverend Tootikian has ardently become a spiritual vinedresser in God's Vineyard.

(Rev. Vatche Ekmekjian is the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America (AEUNA) moderator based in Downey, CA.)



# CALENDAR

## CALIFORNIA

**JANUARY 25 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro LA Chapter presents a tribute to Vladimir Yengibaryan**, the gold medal winning Armenian boxing legend. Keynote speaker Avetis Bairamian, sports editor of Nor Or. Remarks by legendary boxers Khoren Injeyan and Nshan Munchyan. 7 p.m., Glendale Public Library, 222 El Harvard St., Glendale. For more information contact Carl Bardakian at 626-345-9705.

**FEBRUARY 9 — Ara Dabandjian Quartet of Element Band, Saturday**, 8 PM Dinner, 9:30– 10:30 p.m. Ara Dabandjian Quartet of Element Band. 11 p.m. International Singer Koko Hayitian. Phoenicia Restaurant • 343 N. Central Ave, Glendale. Admission •\$80 • [www.tekeyanla.eventbrite.com](http://www.tekeyanla.eventbrite.com). Contact • [info@TekeyanLA.org](mailto:info@TekeyanLA.org) for group seating. Tickets must be pre-purchased. • No tickets will be sold at the door.

**FEBRUARY 17 — Lecture by Aram Arkun of Boston, Executive Director** of the Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada, on Roupen Herian: “Rescuer of Armenian Orphans.” Sunday, 5 p.m. at the Tekeyan Center in Altadena

**APRIL 4 and 7 — One of the opera world’s hottest stars, Alessandro Safina, will bring in his pop-opera rhythms** to USA during his upcoming concert tour in April. Safina appeared with Elton John, Cher and Jennifer Lopez for Queen Elizabeth’s 73rd Royal Variety Performance. He also performed for the Pope, sang duets with Andrea Bocelli, Sarah Brightman, and Rod Stewart. Americans first became familiar with Safina when he performed Elton John’s “Your Song” with actor Ewan McGregor for the Oscar-nominated soundtrack of “Moulin Rouge.” Safina will be accompanied by Victor Espinola and the Forbidden Saints. The tour will also feature Armenian Duduk Soloist and Classical Clarinetist Mher Mnatsakanyan and Bassist Hova Burian will take part. Official FaceBook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/AlessandroSafinaUSA/> Official Promo Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHHKpxTCSSY> The performance will be held at City National Civic in San Jose on Thursday, April 4. (Times 8:00-9:30pm) <https://www1.ticketmaster.com/event/1C005554CB5A7778> The performance will be held at Dolby Theater in Los Angeles on Sunday, April 7th. (Times 8:00-9:30pm) [https://dolbytheatre.com/events/details/alessandro\\_safina](https://dolbytheatre.com/events/details/alessandro_safina) <https://www1.ticketmaster.com/alessandro-safina-with-victor-espinola-the-forbidden-saints/event/3B005546FA735928>

## FLORIDA

**JANUARY 20-27 — 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.

**APRIL 11 — One of the opera world’s hottest stars, Alessandro Safina, will bring in his pop-opera**

**rhythms** to USA during his upcoming concert tour in April. Safina appeared with Elton John, Cher and Jennifer Lopez for Queen Elizabeth’s 73rd Royal Variety Performance. He also performed for the Pope, sang duets with Andrea Bocelli, Sarah Brightman, and Rod Stewart. Americans first became familiar with Safina when he performed Elton John’s “Your Song” with actor Ewan McGregor for the Oscar-nominated soundtrack of “Moulin Rouge.” Safina will be accompanied by Victor Espinola and the Forbidden Saints. The tour will also feature Armenian Duduk Soloist and Classical Clarinetist Mher Mnatsakanyan and Bassist Hova Burian will take part. Official FaceBook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/AlessandroSafinaUSA/> The performance will be held at Fillmore Miami Beach in Miami on Thursday, April 11th. (Times 8:00-9:30pm)

## MASSACHUSETTS

**JANUARY 20 — “International Food Festival – A Tour of the World,” sponsored by Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston**, Sunday, 12:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m., Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA. Sample the authentic cuisine from 9 countries: Armenia, Iran/Persia, Lebanon, Greece, France, Russia, Brazil, China and Italy. Donation: \$15 adults; \$10 children 12 and under. For further information, contact the Holy Trinity Church Office, 617.354.0632.

**MARCH 2 — St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School (SSAES) PTO will present its annual fundraiser.** We hope you can join us in support of SSAES for an evening of food, drinks, art, music and fun! 7 to 11 p.m., Sanborn House, 15 High St., Winchester. SSAES is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations are tax-deductible. For additional information and sponsorship please e-mail: [event@ssaes.org](mailto:event@ssaes.org). Note: This event is 21+.

**APRIL 25 — Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Greater Boston Presents The Dr. Michael and Joyce Kolligian Distinguished Speaker Series:** Anthony Ray Hinton, Author of The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life and Freedom on Death Row, “Surviving Criminal Justice in America.” Charles and Nevart Talanian Cultural Hall, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge MA 02138. Reception and book signing to follow talk. Open and free to the public. For further information, contact the Holy Trinity Church office, 617.354.0632, email [office@htaac.org](mailto:office@htaac.org), or log onto [www.htaac.org/calendar/event/622/](http://www.htaac.org/calendar/event/622/).

**MAY 3 – 117th Diocesan Assembly Gala Banquet – V. Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan**, Primate, presiding. Boston Marriott Burlington. Hosted by St. James Armenian Church in Watertown. Save the Date – Details to Follow.

**JUNE 28 – July 10 – St. James Armenian Church 7th Pilgrimage to Armenia.** Led by Fr. Arakel Aljalian. Join us and Discover the Land of our Ancestors. All are welcome. Registration deposits due March 1; Full Payment due April 1. For full details visit [www.stjameswatertown.org/armenia](http://www.stjameswatertown.org/armenia).

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

**NOVEMBER 16 — St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School 35th Anniversary Celebration.** 6:30 PM Cocktail

Reception, 7:30 PM Dinner and Program. The Westin Waltham - Boston, MA \$150 per person.

## NEW JERSEY

**FEBRUARY 9 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of New York, under the aegis of the TCA Board of Directors** of the US and Canada, will present a Valentine’s Dance featuring international Armenian singer Andre. The Elan, Lodi, NJ. Tickets are \$125 before February 2, and \$150 after, while tickets for young professionals are \$100. To reserve seats, visit [https://ticket-stripe.com/TCA\\_ValentinesDayDinnerDance](https://ticket-stripe.com/TCA_ValentinesDayDinnerDance). For further information and seating, write to [rsvptaliab@gmail.com](mailto:rsvptaliab@gmail.com) or call 917-238-3970.

**MAY 18 — SAVE THE DATE! A Celebration of Gratitude & Hope, honoring His Eminence Archbishop Khajag Barsamian and Bishop-elect Fr. Daniel Findikyan.** 6:30pm. Old Tappan Manor, Old Tappan, NJ. For more info, please go to [www.stnersess.edu](http://www.stnersess.edu).

**OCTOBER 25, 2019 — SAVE THE DATE. Honoring Dr. Taner Akçam. Abajian Hall St. Leon Armenian Complex**, Fair Lawn. Sponsored by Knights and Daughters of Vartan, Under the Auspices of Primate Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan.

## NEW YORK

**APRIL 9 — One of the opera world’s hottest stars, Alessandro Safina, will bring in his pop-opera rhythms** to USA during his upcoming concert tour in April. Safina appeared with Elton John, Cher and Jennifer Lopez for Queen Elizabeth’s 73rd Royal Variety Performance. He also performed for the Pope, sang duets with Andrea Bocelli, Sarah Brightman, and Rod Stewart. Americans first became familiar with Safina when he performed Elton John’s “Your Song” with actor Ewan McGregor for the Oscar-nominated soundtrack of “Moulin Rouge.” Safina will be accompanied by Victor Espinola and the Forbidden Saints. The tour will also feature Armenian Duduk Soloist and Classical Clarinetist Mher Mnatsakanyan and Bassist Hova Burian will take part. Official FaceBook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/AlessandroSafinaUSA/> Official Promo Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHHKpxTCSSY> The performance will be held at Beacon Theater in New York on Thursday, April 9th. (Times 8:00-9:30pm) <https://www1.ticketmaster.com/alessandro-safina-with-victor-espinola-the-forbidden-saints/event/3B005546FA735928>

**APRIL 28- Sunday at 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Armenian Genocide Commemoration** at Times Square, NYC Sponsored by : Knight & Daughters of Vartan, AGBU, ADL-Ramgavars. Armenian Assembly of America, ANCA and Armenian National Council

*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.*

## Keshishian among Executive Producers of New Ryan Murphy Netflix Series

By Joe Otterson

LOS ANGELES (*Variety*)— Ryan Murphy has assembled quite the cast for his Nurse Ratched series at Netflix.

Murphy announced on January 14 that Sharon Stone, Finn Wittrock, Jon Jon Briones, Charlie Carver, Judy Davis, Harriet Harris, Cynthia Nixon, Hunter Parrish, Amanda Plummer, and Corey Stoll will all star in the series alongside the previously announced star Sarah Paulson.

“[A] true murderers’ row of talent,” Murphy

wrote on Instagram. “So many of these actors are supremely talented folks who Sarah and I have both longed to work with.” Read the full post below.

Netflix has given the series a two-season, 18-episode commitment to “Ratched.” It begins in 1947 and will track Ratched as she morphs from an average nurse into the monstrous authority figure she became in the Ken Kesey novel One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest and subsequent film. Paulson will star as the infamous nurse, with Murphy attached as executive producer.

Along with Murphy, Michael Douglas, who produced the film, will also serve as an executive producer. Aleen Keshishian, Margaret Riley and Jacob

Epstein of Lighthouse Management & Media will also executive produce. Evan Romansky, who created and wrote the project, will co-executive produce. Paulson will produce along with Paul Zaentz from the Saul Zaentz Company. The Saul Zaentz Company controls the rights to the film. Fox 21 Television will produce.

“Ratched” will be Murphy’s first Netflix series. The iconic creator behind hit shows like “Glee,” “American Horror Story,” and “Pose” inked a massive overall deal with the streaming giant last year. The deal is reportedly worth nine figures. He is also working on “The Politician” for Netflix, a political satire led by Ben Platt.



Aleen Keshishian





## COMMENTARY

## COMMENTARY

# Kurds in the Limelight of the Syrian War Theater

By Edmond Y. Azadian

The Syrian war, which has dragged on for eight years, causing two million casualties and many more refugees, was not fought to determine the plight of the Kurds living in Syria. Many more complicated issues were involved and various other interested parties collided in the process.

As the war winds down and the Syrian government brings much of its territory back under its control, the parties who had a stake in the conflict are about to collect their booties, before allowing the Syrian government and people to begin the recovery efforts.

As an outcome of the war and the ensuing diplomatic negotiations, the Kurdish issue has emerged and became an intractable problem getting in the way of a final settlement.

At the beginning of the war, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan and Turkey cooperated in infiltrating Syria with mercenaries and supplying them with arms, the goal being to topple the last secular regime in the Arab world.

As Iranians showed up on the scene, that changed the paradigm and rendered the crusade into a cause célèbre, as if a Sunni coalition was fighting Shiite expansionism in the region. This concept best suited US policy planners, since the attention of the Arab masses was diverted away from Israel and a bogeyman was discovered to justify the conflict.

On the one hand, advances by the Assad regime on the ground, with the help of Russians and Iranians, and on the other hand the splinter of the Sunni coalition with the fallout between the Saudis and the Qataris, altered the entire scenario.

The Kurdish issue was one of the unintended consequences of the war. At this point, the Kurds are experiencing the same dilemma that the Armenian Legionnaires experienced during 1918-1920. A fighting force of some 5,000 young Armenian volunteers had been recruited by the Allied commanders to fight along them against the German-Ottoman armies entrenched in and around Jerusalem. The Armenian Legionnaires spearheaded the attack at the Battle of Arara, breaking the German-Ottoman fortifications, which signaled the beginning of the end of World War I.

Armenians were motivated to join the Allies with the hope of receiving home rule in Cilicia. As the victorious Armenian Legionnaires marched into Cilicia, followed by the deported civilian population, the French authorities began disarming the volunteer legion, leaving, at the end, the defenseless population to the tender mercies of the marauding Kemalist forces.

The same fate is now awaiting the Kurds who fought along the US forces to defeat ISIS in northern Syria in order to carve out a potential canton for themselves. Once again, the Turks are there to wipe the Kurds out of northern Syria. At this time, two million Kurds occupy one-third of the Syrian territory. Thus far, the US administration is refusing to succumb to the backstabbing policy that the French pursued in 1920.

Therefore, the Kurdish issue has become one of the most topical problems of the Syrian war. There is a standoff between two NATO allies – the US and Turkey.

President Trump is exercising a steadfast policy in defending the Kurdish allies. But if history is any guide, the major forces will eventually find a fig leaf policy to defuse the crisis, mostly at the expense of the weaker parties.

Thus far, the US has been adamant in guaranteeing the security of the Kurds in the region, after the withdrawal of its forces. Already, a concession has been made to the Turkish side by promising them to disarm the Kurdish forces. But that has not met the demands of Sultan Erdogan, who has become more arrogant and belligerent.

President Trump sent his National Security Advisor John Bolton, who is not known for his diplomatic skills, to Turkey to negotiate.

President Erdogan outdid Bolton's arrogance and refused to meet with the latter's delegation. Instead, he relegated the negotiations to a third-rate government functionary, Ibrahim Kalin, and he took to the airways to denounced Bolton and the US policy.

Bolton's earlier stop in the region was Israel, where he told journalists that President Trump would not "allow Turkey to

kill the Kurds." Further unfolding US policy, he had stated, "We do not think the Turks ought to undertake military action that is not fully coordinated and agreed to by the United States at a minimum, so they don't endanger our troops but also so that they meet the president's requirement that the Syrian opposition forces that have fought with us are not endangered."

While the negotiations were still in progress, President Erdogan's furious speech was broadcast. He said Mr. Bolton had "made a huge mistake." Reverting to his Machiavellian skills, Erdogan assured his public that Ankara seeks only to kill "terrorists while actually protecting the Kurdish brothers in the neighboring country."

The definition of "terrorist" has become a bone of contention between the two sides. The US and by extension, the European Union, agree with Turkey that the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) is a terrorist organization which has mounted an insurgency in Turkey for the past 30 years. In reality, the organization, led from jail by Abdullah Ocalan, is defending the rights of 20 million Kurds in Turkey. Across the border in Syria, Kurdish fighters operate legitimate political groups that have allied themselves with the US and proved to be the most effective forces in defeating the IS in Syria. Yet, for the Turkish government, they also are an extension of the PKK in Syria and thus considered terrorists.

The US Kurdish allies constitute the Syrian Defense Forces (SDF), composed of 25,000 Kurds and 5,000 Arabs, and the People's Protection Units (YPG). The Kurds have organized a political organization, the Democratic Union (PYD), which gov-



erns their affairs in the territories under their control.

In his speech, Mr. Erdogan warned that Turkey will deploy its forces soon in the Kurdish areas and no one can stop them. Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu, in his turn, announced: "Turkey will do whatever is necessary against a terror organization posing threats to its national security," even after meeting his US counterpart, Mike Pompeo.

Mr. Pompeo's job is cut out for him. While he was entangled in delicate negotiations with the Turkish officials, his boss, President Trump, threw a live grenade, tweeting: "We will devastate Turkey economically if it attacks the Kurds."

When asked about the president's statement, he answered that the question should be directed at Mr. Trump, while an irate spokesman for Erdogan reminded the US to "honor our strategic partnership."

While dealing with Mr. Trump's intemperate behavior, Mr. Pompeo has to assuage regional allies that the US is not abandoning the region.

All the parties who were encouraged by the US to get involved in the adventure of overthrowing the Syrian regime are now critical of the US policy of unilateral withdrawal. In this matter, Mr. Pompeo threw his hands up and said: "It's an ambitious objective but it is ours and it is our mission."

While fiery rhetoric is crisscrossing the region and while so many issues collide, no one seems to be in the mood to listen. Mr. Pompeo's whirlwind mission in eight Middle Eastern countries continues, where he is engaged in a diversionary tactic announcing that the "United States will expel every last Iranian boot from Syria."

Indeed, Turkey is negotiating the outcome of the war in Syria with Iran and Russia. On the other hand, Iran and Turkey have a common cause to fight all Kurdish aspirations in the Middle East. There is a huge Kurdish minority in Iran, as in Turkey.

see KURDS, page 18

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# Claude Mutafian’s Critique of Metropolitan Exhibit Petty and Wrong

By **Sonia Derman Harlan**

The unprecedented Metropolitan Museum’s 2018-19 “Armenia!” exhibit is now closed. Hundreds and thousands of Armenians and non-Armenians alike visited it, having come away with new learning and admiration of a culture not readily appreciated in the art world.

Several published press releases and art reviews of the exhibit all have been positive – Princeton University historian Peter Brown’s being the most recent, being extremely rich in cultural, historic and aesthetic detail. All, except a boisterous, kitschy, opinion piece written by Claude Mutafian of France (“Bones of

## OPINION

Contention with the Metropolitan Exhibit,” December 8, *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*). Mr. Mutafian is not an art historian. He holds a degree in mathematics and has published several books on Armenian history. It is evident nor is he familiar with the magnitude of launching an exhibit of this scope which is mounted and curated in a world class busy museum.

I found Mr. Mutafian’s article lacking in credibility. I was disturbed by his bias, his insensitive and misleading observations – all presented with “bromide” as a laundry list format . In Armenian there is a word for such style: *gosht* (crude.) It t is obvious to me, that Mr. Mutafian has a huge belly ache, a belly ache stemming from the fact that he was excluded in contributing both to the exhibit and its catalogue.

This article was published in the *Mirror-Spectator* in its December 8, 2018 issue. I am also dismayed that your paper showed equal amount carelessness when publishing his opinion piece. I would like see the editors of the *Mirror* exercise better caution and refrain from publishing such obtuse and one-sided articles in the future.

Mr. Mutafian’s piece, titled “Bones of Contention With the Metropolitan Exhibit.” deserves a rebuttal.

Among his many points of criticism, first, he is galled by the title of the exhibit. Next, he is dissatisfied with the allocated space by the museum. He then insults Dr. Helen Evans and her assistant curators as unqualified Armenian art scholars in working to mount the show.

He moves on to ask why certain hugely representative pieces of a certain style of Armenian aesthetics were omitted from the show (he ponders and does not stop to find the reasons why) He finds a few errors in the exhibit catalogue (for the sake of finding errors) but it is obvious that he has not examined the book thoroughly. Finally, he accuses the Metropolitan Museum of Art with a preposterous complaint/conspiracy theory. Accordingly, he is certain the Met was in cohorts with the Azeri and Turkish governments in limiting space for the loaned pieces and lessening the impact of exhibit upon the visitors.

If Mutafian can do better, he should duplicate such an immense undertaking at the Louvre! By nit-picking, Mutafian has unfortunately demeaned his position as a scholar of Armenian history.

I found Mutafian’s objection to title of the Metropolitan show and the exclamation point following its name – “ARMENIA!” – totally absurd. He claims that this title is too bland and there is an “absence of any time period.” He was expecting a more all-encompassing historic time frame – both in the exhibit and its title – from pagan Armenia, to modern day Armenia – including the history of the 1915 Genocide!

Mr. Mutafian, the Met is not in the business of offering a survey course in Armenian history. Furthermore, any major museum in the United States installing an important exhibit like this one, publishes an accompanying catalogue in order to validate both the show and its scope. Scholars who contribute the catalogue provide supplemental vital information and references for those who desire to be informed further. We need not find the essence of an exhibit in its title, Mr. Mutafian. We need to view it and read about it. Also, during attendance, one can benefit from the audio guide as well as partaking in lectures, movies, musical presentations etc., to further harvest information about the show. This is the comprehensive approach the Met and its sister museums in America take in providing components for enriching the visitors’ experience.

Mr. Mutafian could learn a lot from studying the show catalogue. First, the catalogue cover has a subtitle for “Armenia!: Art Religion and Trade in the Middle Ages.” We are talking about Medieval Armenia Mr. Mutafian. There is your time frame. Next, depicted on the cover, is Mesrob of Khizan’s St. John the Evangelist’s vision: here John receives divine inspiration from Christ in the form of a ray of light (entering John’s mouth) so as for him in turn write and to disseminate Christ’s message of salvation. Mr. Mutafian, here is the point being made about the essence of Armenian Christianity: our own brand of a Monophosite faith based on the Salvation History. Incidentally, this ray of light image is duplicated in many manuscripts of saints, and mortals: for, Jesus said, “I am the light of the world, follow that light and I will lead you to your salvation.” Saints and mortals: Armenian Christian Monophosite doctrine follows the single nature of Christ – both divine and mortal – and in emulating and glorifying him, one can elevate his soul to be with God.

And in being about Medieval Christian Armenia, the Metropolitan show is about Armenia as a purveyor of sacred art. The vast majority of the Armenian population of the Near East and Anatolia, populated cities and towns on the Silk Road, trade centers included ports. Wealth flowed in steadily for the nobles as well as the merchants on these crisscrossing trade routes. And the creation of sacred objects emerged from being commissioned by patrons who enjoyed times and political stability and wealth. Everything on display from coins, to vestments, embroidered and printed curtains, altar pieces, chalice veils, staffs and censors, metal objects, reliquaries, chalices etc., to illuminated manuscripts, monumental Khachkars and works printed at the dawn of the printing press. All objects on view were created by artisans, clergy-monastics-scribes, silversmiths and jewelers, stone and wood carvers, embroiderers and sewers, etc. for one and one reason only – for the glorification of Christ. Devout donors commissioned reliquaries, textiles, books etc. as acts of piety – even

at some most dire political junctures of our history. In time, the Medieval Armenian Church became the protector of its people. She collaborated with princes and other Armenian leaders in warding off the pressures not only from Arabs, Persians, Mongols, the Seljuk Turks, the Mamluks, but also Christian Calcedonian Greeks and Georgians. The Armenian population in different regions of Caucasus, Anatolia, Near East, even Crimea, walked a thin line with their overlords entering political collaboration and mercantile negotiations in order to stabilize their respective domains. Late 13th and early 14th centuries brought about onslaught of the Mongol people (who were not Muslim yet) who pushed us to our limits politically in the north (Syunik) and South (Cilicia). We built relationship with those cultures in order to stay and endure or quietly move the population elsewhere. Through all these changes, Christian Armenian aesthetic presence got modified with borrowed influences but endured. Our artists and artisans borrowed and incorporated – never copied – thus enriching our own artistic heritage of Greater Armenia. In the south the Cilician school emerged with Italianate influences, as well as more Byzantine; to the East, the Khizan and New Julfa styles that are more influenced by Muslim ornamentation and rigidity of human forms. But the Armenian Christian iconography endured in all cases.

Mr. Mutafian is upset that there are limited geographical markers throughout this exhibit. As an Armenian historian, he should know that Medieval Armenia is not one location; neither is it one tidy country.

Medieval mercantile society occupied strategic locations along trade routes in these regions of Anatolia, the Caucasus and the Near East. In some cases, far-flung areas of mountainous obscure principalities contributed as much art as established towns and center of living. The common thread linking these various regions were language, faith, and creative style. It is therefore difficult to ascertain chronological order of artistic growth other than parallel patterns of aesthetics and iconography. What was created in in Cilicia, or in Syunik, or in New Julfa, carried the same message of our own brand of Christianity. Khachkars were created in all regions. Politically savvy rulers like Prince Eachi Proshian would be depicted on the Khodageradz Soorp Nishan Reliquary with Mongol features and wearing Mongol robe, but would be in sublimation prayer to Christ Pantocrator depicted in the same frame, with all the saints and the cross enhancing his journey of salvation. Similarly, saints and motifs will be repeated in the Cilician Gospel of Queen Keran Gospel of 1272 whereby an entire royal family, with Italianate style robes and crown, stands at the foot of the Pantocrator.

Many geographic locations, many different time frames, but the same faith and the same message.

This highly-complex geography and time line are not easy to arrange in a coherent flow of an exhibit in a major museum. Even though our obsessed critic thinks the Met missed “opportunity .. as a pedagogical tool.” for all the reasons of chosen themes and objects ‘Armenia the exhibit’, the Met did not disappoint. In fact see MET, page 20

## Open Letter to Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

We, the undersigned independent journalists of the Armenian Diaspora, join our brothers and sisters in Armenia and the Diaspora who have expressed shock and dismay over recent announcements that Armenia’s Ministry of the Diaspora will be terminated.

Rather than eliminate this critical Ministry, further developing it is what our Pan-Armenian nation needs most. Doing so would enrich Armenia and its Diaspora and contribute to our collective longevity at a time when our existence as a nation is in great jeopardy by nature of emigration from Armenia and cultural assimilation in the Diaspora.

While the Diaspora has not been blessed with the right to participate in Armenia’s political affairs, we, the undersigned, oppose this unilateral and self-defeating decision in the strongest terms possible.

Removing the Diaspora Ministry will create greater distance between the peoples of Armenia, Artsakh, Occupied Armenia and the Diaspora. It will make cultural and intellectual exchanges more difficult. It will also curtail financial aid from the Diaspora, which Armenia so desperately needs. It would be the equivalent of committing national suicide. Is this truly what the people of Armenia and Artsakh want?

If the decision to shut down the Ministry is based on financial need, we propose that the funding be sought from the Diaspora and the Ministry itself staffed with individuals from the Diaspora.

Soon after acting Diaspora Minister Mkhitar Hayrapetyan’s tour of Diasporan communities following Armenia’s “Velvet Revolution,” we drafted the following letter. However, we held it for release until the circumstances surrounding the Parliamentary elections reached their conclusion. Having discovered pending plans for the Diaspora Ministry’s elimination, we reproduce it below realizing that the content of the letter may not interest the Pashinyan administration.

However, we share it in the hopes that our fellow Western Armenians scattered all over the world will come to agree that we have important work to do that Armenia cannot or will not do and that the points mentioned in the letter can be undertaken by the Diaspora itself. Unfortunately, our survival and ambitions to regain our historic homeland must be sought through avenues other than through the government of present-day Armenia.

If the decision to shut down the Ministry is based upon strategic designs within present-day Armenia, we propose that Diasporans whose ancestors were driven from their ancestral Western Armenia pursue other avenues to gain their representation.

In recent years, new organizations, such as the four listed below, have appeared on the scene. They are:

The Defense Council of Western Armenia - <https://western-armenia.org>

The Government of Western Armenia - [http://www.western-armenia.eu/stat.gov.wa/en/index\\_en.htm](http://www.western-armenia.eu/stat.gov.wa/en/index_en.htm)

The Modus Vivendi Center - <http://modusvivendicenter.org>

The National Council of Western Armenians - <http://ncwarmenians.org>

These organizations seek to gain greater visibility and support from Western Armenians scattered all over the globe. We encourage these organizations to introduce themselves to the greater Diaspora, state their goals, describe how their officers were elected and find a way to unite under one umbrella.

Sincerely (in alphabetical order),  
C.K. Garabed, Independent Editor/writer, New Jersey, USA  
Lusin Kasbarian, Independent journalist, New Jersey, USA  
Ludér Sahagian, Independent scholar, Massachusetts, USA  
Jirair Tutunjan, Independent journalist, Toronto, Canada

## Kurds in the Limelight of The Syrian War Theater

KURDS, from page 17

Despite the turmoil, Mr. Pompeo left the region on a positive note that a “good outcome” could be reached between Turkey and the Syrian Kurdish groups. That outcome is a 20-mile buffer zone that the US is proposing to the Turks against a pledge that they will not overrun the Kurdish forces there.

The US insistence in protecting the Kurds does not emanate from charitable sentiments nor is it driven by any moral compunction. The role model is already in view for anyone to see: the Kurdish autonomous enclave in Iraq was hailed by Israel, which is the only country advocating a Kurdish independent state, as Israel has set up shop in that enclave. The repeat scenario may take place in Syria.

No matter how recklessly President Trump may behave against Turkey, there are more seasoned diplomats around him who will caution him against pushing Turkey further into a Russian embrace.

The Kurds were given an independent homeland with the Treaty of Sevres of 1920, along with the Armenians. That dream was frustrated by the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, which resurrected a defeated Turkey at the expense of its victims. Today, after shedding so much blood on the Syrian battlefield, they seem to get closer to their dream of some kind of autonomy.

The next step is dealing with the Syrian government which has vowed to “liberate every inch of its national territory.”





## COMMENTARY



## My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Turkey Ranks Among Top 10 Countries With Probability of Committing Genocide

According to the Early Warning Project of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Turkey is ranked 8th among countries with the highest risk of committing mass killings. Azerbaijan is wrongly ranked much lower at 87th and Armenia is correctly ranked even lower at 102nd. Turkey is assessed as having 11.2 percent or 1 in 9 chance of new mass killings during 2019.

The Early Warning Project stated that “genocides are never spontaneous. They are always preceded by a range of early warning signs. If these signs are detected, their causes can be addressed, preventing the potential for catastrophic progression.”

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s founding charter, written by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, states that “only a conscious, concerted attempt to learn from past errors can prevent recurrence to any racial, religious, ethnic or national group. A memorial unresponsive to the future would also violate the memory of the past.”

Turkey’s high risk of committing genocide once again is based on its past and present actions. The Turkish govern-

ment has not only committed genocide against Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks a century ago, but continues to commit mass killings against its minority Kurdish population. Even more concerning is the fact that Turkish leaders deny their history of mass murders and shamefully remain unapologetic, which leads to the commission of new crimes against humanity!

Turkey’s genocidal risk assessment is understated as the study only includes mass killings within a country, excluding the victims of interstate conflict. As Turkey has been involved in large-scale military attacks against Kurds in Syria and Iraq, and threatens to expand its military actions in Northern Syria, the risk of its commitment of mass crimes is much higher than the study indicates.

The Early Warning Project explains that the failed coup attempt in 2016 increased the chances of mass killings in Turkey. Over 100,000 military and civilian personnel were dismissed and tens of thousands were imprisoned, many without a trial. “Other [Turkish genocide] risk factors include a lack of freedom of movement, the country’s anocratic regime type [a mix of autocratic and democratic characteristics], a large population, a history of mass killings, and the ongoing armed conflict between the government and Kurdish rebels.”

### Turkish Journalist Jailed for Telling the Truth

An Istanbul court sentenced Turkish journalist Pelin Unker to imprisonment for 13 months and 15 days after being accused of defaming her nation’s former Prime Minister and two of his sons. She was also fined \$1,615 on January 8, 2018.

Unker had written an article in the Turkish newspaper Cumhuriyet, exposing that former Prime Minister Binali Yildirim and his two sons owned five shipping companies in Malta. After serving as Prime Minister for two years, Yildirim

became Speaker of Turkey’s Parliament. He is currently a candidate for Mayor of Istanbul on behalf of Pres. Erdogan’s ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

Yildirim family’s ownership of companies in Malta was exposed by the “Paradise Papers” and published in newspapers around the world. As I had reported in my June 2017 article, the Yildirim family owned the following shipping and other foreign assets worth \$140 million:

- 18 ships (Dutch conglomerates, fully or partly owned)
- 1 ship (Netherlands Antilles company)
- 4 Malta companies
- 7 properties in the Netherlands
- 8 ships in the Netherlands
- 3 ships in Malta

Strangely, Pelin Unker was the only journalist punished for exposing the Yildirim assets. Unker said she will appeal the unfair sentence as Yildirim acknowledged in court that he owned the companies in an offshore tax haven. The former Prime Minister and his sons filed a lawsuit in November 2017, accusing Unker of “insulting and slandering a public official.”

Gerard Ryle, Director of the International Consortium of Independent Journalists, condemned Unker’s punishment “as yet another disgraceful attack on free speech in Turkey.” Ryle added: “the sentence ignored the truth of the Paradise Papers’ investigation and it would have a chilling effect on what little remained of press freedom in Turkey. This unjust ruling is about silencing fair and accurate reporting. Nothing more. ICIJ commends Pelin Unker’s brave and truthful investigative reporting and it condemns this latest assault on journalistic freedom under Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s autocratic rule.”

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked Turkey 157th of 180 countries on the 2018 World Free Press Index. RSF described Turkey as “the world’s biggest prison for professional journalists!”

# Lessons from the Armenian Genocide for Saudi Arabia in Yemen

By Robert Fisk

**I**rarely have reason to thank Turkish ambassadors. They tend to hold a different view of the 1915 Armenian holocaust, in which a million and a half Armenian Christians were deliberately murdered in a planned genocide by the Ottoman Turkish regime. “Hardship and suffering”, they agree, was the Armenians’ lot. But genocide? Never.

Well, that’s not the view of genocide scholars – including Israeli historians – nor of that bravest of Turkish academics, Taner Akçam, who has prowled thorough the Ottoman archives to find the proof. The Armenians did suffer, alas, a genocide.

Certainly my gratitude to His Excellency Umit Yalcin, Turkish ambassador to the Court of St James, is not for his letter to me, in which he describes the Armenian genocide as a “one-sided narrative”. But he did enclose a small book, published five years ago by Edward Erickson, whose contents obfuscate the details of the mass slaughter of the Armenians, even daring to suggest that the Ottoman “strategy of population relocation” should be seen in the contemporary setting of Britain’s policy of “relocating” civilians in the Boer War (in “concentration camps”) in South Africa, and by the Americans in the Philippines.

Interesting. But we didn’t mass rape the Boer women, burn their children and drown Boer men in rivers.

Erickson was an American army colonel and is now professor of military history at the Marine Corps University in Virginia. He insists that there was a widespread Armenian insurgency at the time of the killings. A fine Kurdish scholar has described his book *Ottomans and Armenians: A Study in Counterinsurgency* as “rich” in sources, but insists that these sources are distorted. Akçam himself says that even if Erickson’s contention that there was a real Armenian insurgency in Turkey (which Akçam disputes) was true, this would only explain why the genocide happened – not why it never occurred!

But what fascinated me in Erickson’s book was a chapter which probably held little interest for Ambassador Yalcin – but which should be both grim and prescient for Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman of Saudi Arabia. This chapter is contained in a mere eight pages. But it describes a continuous, costly, bloody and hopeless war between the Zaidi tribes of Yemen and the Turkish Ottoman forces loyal to Constantinople in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Houthis – of present-day Yemeni military history – belong to the Shia Zaidi, a branch of the Shia imamiyah of Iran. And the Zaidis, in their battle against the Ottomans, acquired new and sophisticated weapons. The Ottomans attacked a port called Hodeida. There was famine across the land. Does this sound rather familiar?

And bad news for the Saudis who – as near as history would permit these days – are now playing the role of the Ottomans slightly over a century ago, trying to suppress a local Shia rebellion in their sphere of interest with the most expensive of weapons and the most costly of training that

money can buy; and with the hubris of an Ottoman power which thought it wielded the strongest military force in the Middle East. By now, I think that Ambassador Yalcin probably realizes just why I really am grateful to him for sending me this book. Even more so when I add that the Ottomans were forced to end their wars in Yemen with what now faces the region’s leading Saudi warlord: a negotiated settlement.

Historical precedents are never exact. Unlike the Saudis, the Ottomans had no major power to support them in their Yemeni adventures. And of course, they had no air force. The Zaidis were closer to their Sunni co-religionists than the Saudis might accept today. Over centuries, they prayed in the same mosques. But the story of a large and cumbersome Ottoman army floundering around the deserts and mountains of Yemen, pursuing tough and resilient rebels while other major wars loom far to the north has a frightening contemporary relevance.

The ruthless Ottoman military governor Feyzi Pasha suppressed a Yemeni rebellion by Imam an-Mansur in the late 19th century with modern counterinsurgency tactics – with small columns of men and what Erickson calls “devastating European-style firepower superiority”. But the Turks ran out of money to improve the lives of Yemenis. By the early 20th century, Ottoman control was vested in a small 18,000-strong army headquartered in Sanaa. Another rural rebellion began in 1904 under the imam’s son, and within a month the Zaidis had blocked the road between Sanaa and the port of Hodeida. Telegraph wires were cut, caravans suspended and Sanaa put under siege. The rebels themselves had acquired new magazine-fed military rifles. The Ottomans brought in more troops from around the empire – from Macedonia, Albania and, interestingly, Arab units from Syria.

Ottoman reinforcements under Riza Pasha were repeatedly ambushed by the rebels. Turkish morale collapsed. Some of the Arabs in the Ottoman army turned out to be sympathetic to the Zaidi rebels – could they, perhaps, have been Shiite or Alawite Syrians? We do not know.

Thousands more troops arrived to crush the rebellion, but Sanaa was already lost. Then the Ottomans needed to withdraw many of their troops for other campaigns within the empire. As Erickson writes, “the campaign turned into a quagmire for the Ottoman Empire and the Syrian units of the expeditionary force began to mutiny”. Out of 110,000 Ottoman soldiers, casualties stood at more than 25,000 by 1905.

Turkey’s Yemen war turned into a history of ceasefires and negotiated truces while the Turkish Ottoman army had to be reformed in order to survive, with a new officer corps and an end to patronage – not dissimilar to princely patronage in the present-day Saudi military. But the Ottomans were unable to crush yet another insurrection which only ended in 1912. And within two years, the First World War distracted – and then ultimately destroyed – the entire Ottoman Empire.

Thus while the Ottomans remained an imperial power at the end of their Yemen war, their prestige and morale had drained away in this outpost of empire. They squandered their

resources in annihilating the Armenians in 1915 and finally collapsed before Allenby’s advancing armies in 1918. No, history is not exact. Once the British-supported Arab Revolt began in 1916, for example, Yemen was effectively cut off from its notional Ottoman masters. The future “empire” in the Arabian Peninsula would be controlled first by the Hashemites and then by the House of Saud.

Which brings us back to Saudi Arabia and its own self-destructive, useless war with the rebels of Yemen, the descendants of those same Zaidi tribes which so humiliated the Ottomans. It was Mohammad bin Salman who launched this conflict – which is supposed to protect the Sunni world from the Shiites of Iran and its allies – and he will be held responsible for its disasters. He has allowed the United Arab Emirates to do the fighting on the ground. What we do not know – and what the west does not want to know and does not ask about – is the effect of this disastrous campaign on the armies of Saudi Arabia and the Emirates.

While the Saudi crown prince now fritters away his time trying to salvage his own personal prestige from the disgrace of the Khashoggi murder, what are his generals thinking about their military prestige? The Saudi National Guard, the king’s private army, and the Saudi armed forces – all, of course, loyal, trustworthy, patriotic chaps, so we are told – can only be deeply upset at the course of the Yemeni war. If the Ottomans could be humiliated by Yemeni rebels, have not the Houthis shamed and humbled the armed forces of Saudi Arabia?

What do the warriors in the Royal Saudi Air Force think – after firing their bombs and missiles at the puny forces of “Houthistan” – when their enemies are now negotiating a peace in a Swedish town called Rimbo? If the Ottomans had to reform their army, what is to be done with the Saudi military? The crown prince thinks he can reform his kingdom’s economy. But his soldiers may have to reform themselves. An end to patronage, perhaps? A new officer corps? Now there’s an Ottoman precedent to bear in mind. Could the crown prince survive that?

I don’t trust Erickson’s analysis of the Armenian genocide. Nor that of the Turkish ambassador to the Court of Saint James. But I thank them both for the ideas that a small book on the Ottomans contains about Yemen. Maybe it should be essential reading in Saudi military colleges. In the King Abdul Aziz Military Academy and the King Khalid Military Academy, perhaps.

More to the point, this book might be made available to students in the library of the King Faisal Air Academy, where the country’s young fighter pilots and weapons directors are trained. They, after all, are the “tungsten tip” of the crown prince’s war in Yemen. Don’t they have any thoughts of their own?

(Robert Fisk is a columnist for the Independent newspaper in the UK. This column originally appeared in that newspaper on December 20, 2018.)





# AGBU Young Professionals, Northern California (AGBU-YPNC) To Hold 19th Annual San Francisco Winter Gala

SAN FRANCISCO — AGBU Young Professionals of Northern California (AGBU-YPNC) will host the 19th annual AGBU San Francisco Winter Gala, “Leave Your Heart in SF,” on February 15-17. The weekend will offer an unforgettable experience for hundreds of Armenian Young Professionals from across the globe, with three days of events. AGBU-YPNC will donate proceeds from the weekend to the new AGBU Women’s Empowerment Program in Armenia.

“Bringing Armenian YPs together from around the globe to contribute toward a greater cause is the highlight of the for us every year,” said Varant Shirvanian, AGBU-YPNC Committee Member and 2019 Gala Co-Chair. “The new AGBU Women’s Empowerment Program in Armenia is helping young entrepreneurial women, who historically have not had the same opportunities, become future business leaders. We’re pleased to help support this important initiative in Armenia.”

“We are excited to host the growing YP network in San Francisco once again for this year’s Winter Gala. The weekend features an all new remarkable Saturday night Gala venue, a new host hotel, our staple all-inclusive wine tour experience, and a brand new event with Salsa Night closing out the weekend on Sunday night,” said Alec Nicholas, AGBU-YPNC Vice-Chair and Gala Co-Chair.

Gala 2019 weekend kicks off Friday, February 15 with a welcome reception at the stunning Redwood Room inside Union Square’s Clift Hotel, where attendees will mix, mingle, and start their Leave Your Heart weekend. Following the reception, guests will head to The Redford where DJ Mikey Tan will be playing Top40 and mashups at this classic American tavern with a polished look and feel.

Saturday, February 16 brings a Gala weekend favorite: the SF City Walking Tour. With an all



Walking tour in 2018

new route, the tour will include stops at different landmarks around the city featuring stunning views. Saturday night features the weekend’s signature event: the Leave Your Heart in SF Gala Dinner & Dance at the magnificent San Francisco Design Center Galleria, one of SF’s finest venues sitting at the heart of San Francisco’s Design District. The Gala evening will feature passed appetizers, a delicious family style dinner, premium open bar, and dancing to Armenian, international, and popular music courtesy of weekend favorite DJ Raffy.

Sunday, February 17 starts off with a weekend staple event: the Wine Tour. This year’s trip returns to Sonoma Valley, featur-



Tour of the Wine Country in 2018

ing an all-inclusive experience at Gloria Ferrer Winery, including tours, tastings, and a private lunch on the winery’s expansive property. Sunday night introduces the all new Salsa Night at the Cigar Bar and Grill. At Winter Gala weekend’s newest event, attendees will enjoy all-inclusive salsa lessons and dancing with a full menu, craft cocktails, a Winter Gala specialty cocktail,

and cigars available for purchase. Salsa Night will provide a final opportunity for attendees to Leave Their Heart in SF, and a new reason for locals and guests alike to take Monday off.

For more information, tickets, weekend package specials, and to donate visit [www.agbusfwintergala.org](http://www.agbusfwintergala.org). For additional questions, email [agbusfgala@gmail.com](mailto:agbusfgala@gmail.com).



Dancing away at the 2018 gala

## SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Students of Armenian Descent

Having Completed One Year of College by June, 2019

Applications and other information may be obtained from

**ARMENIAN STUDENTS’ ASSOCIATION**  
Scholarship Committee  
333 Atlantic Avenue • Warwick, RI 02888  
Tel. 401 461-6114 • Fax 401 461-6112

e-mail: [headasa@aol.com](mailto:headasa@aol.com)

Deadline for returning completed Applications: March 15, 2019

## Mutafian’s Critique of MET Exhibit Petty and Wrong

MET, from page 18

it surpassed my expectations. Job well done I say. would like to point out the superb job Dr. Helen Evans and her associates did on “Armenia!” The exhibit has no predecessor. Therefore great care needed to be put into its conception and execution. She had to forge new avenues of communication and did so with sensitivity, tenacity and expertise. It is obvious that Claude Mutafian is no admirer of Dr. Helen Evans. He does not even refer to her by her degree or title (Mary and Michael Jaharias Curator of Byzantine Art.) To him, she is a merely Byzantinist at the Met who has mounted several previous Byzantine art shows suggesting that Dr. Evans is not scholastically qualified to do a show on Armenian art. This is so far from the truth: what better qualification than knowing both Calcedonian Byzantine Art and Monophysite Armenian Art in order to mount an exhibit that does not stand in the shadow of better known and followed Byzantine Art. What an insult to a lady who has dedicated her doctoral dissertation to Armenian Manuscript art, who is well informed about the location of every possible piece of Armenian art in world museums, libraries, monasteries and private collections, who has

published her research in several volumes, who has taught in several prestigious universities. She is qualified, Mr. Mutafian. You should have been so lucky to have worked with her.

In this final opus of her career, before retiring from the Metropolitan, Helen Evans moved heaven and earth to secure otherwise hard to obtain pieces from the four corners of the globe. Organizations and individuals who helped her are many, including my own two friends – Dr. Thomas Mathews who was Dr. Evans’ mentor at New York University, and Mrs. Vicki Hovanessian who privately negotiated some hard-to-secure loans. Dr. Evans has three pages of acknowledgments in the show catalogue which list all those who supported her vision. In her humble way, she did not advertise her work in progress until the show finally opened. In witnessing this immense collaboration between museum, curator, scholars, donors, individuals, etc., we respectfully must thank all those who were the wind beneath her wings in this endeavor.

Thank you Metropolitan Museum of Art for shining the spotlight on the Armenian sacred art.

(Sonia Derman Harlan is a retired professor of English and writing at Lewis University. She taught Armenian Studies at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor.)