

## Armenian Parliament Debates ‘Revolutionary’ Program

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — The National Assembly began debating on Tuesday, February 12, the Armenian government’s five-year program which Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan again portrayed as a policy framework for an “economic revolution” in the country.

Pashinyan presented the 70-page program to lawmakers in a two-hour speech that was followed by a question-and-answer session. More than 50 members of the 132-seat parliament registered to ask him questions relating to the document.

“There can be no return to the former criminal-oligarchic ruling regime, and we need to rid our homeland of the last remaining bacilli of criminal-oligarchic and corrupt governance,” stated Pashinyan.

“I am announcing the start of a popular economic revolution in the Republic of Armenia,” he said. “The Armenian people see PARLIAMENT, page 2



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at the National Assembly on February 12.



President Emmanuel Macron and his wife, Brigitte, laying a wreath at the Genocide memorial

## Macron Declares April 24 as Day of Remembrance of Armenian Genocide

PARIS (Combined Sources) — French President Emmanuel Macron declared April 24 as “a national day of remembrance of the Armenian genocide” on Tuesday, February 5.

Macron, in keeping with a 2017 campaign promise, told an annual dinner of the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations in France that France was among the first nations to denounce “the murderous hunt of the Armenian people in the Ottoman Empire.”

France officially recognized the Armenian Genocide in 2001 and a law in 2016 made it illegal to deny that status.

The Council of Europe and European parliament have both recognized the massacres as genocide, as has Pope Francis.

Macron said he informed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan about the decision in advance, adding that he wanted to keep an open dialogue with Turkey.

“We have disagreements over the fight against the Islamic State, human rights and civil liberties in Turkey and on the genocide,” Macron said.

“We also have points of agreement such as the necessity for a political transition in Syria. As such, dialogue with Turkey is indispensable,” Macron said.

Speaking to the Armenian community at a dinner in Paris, Macron said France “will in the next weeks make April 24 a national day of commemoration of the Armenian genocide.”

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## Official Sanguine About West’s Reaction To Armenian Deployment In Syria

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) — A senior Armenian lawmaker expressed confidence on Monday, February 11, that Western powers will not rebuke Armenia for deploying military personnel to Syria with Russia’s support.

The Armenian Defense Ministry sent 83 medics, demining experts and other military personnel to the Syrian city of Aleppo on Friday, February 8. It said they will help

civilians and clear landmines left behind from the continuing bloody conflict in the Arab state.

The ministry attributed the deployment to “the severe humanitarian situation” in Aleppo, “written requests from the Syrian side,” and the existence of an Armenian community in Syria.

Andranik Kocharian, the pro-government chairman of the Armenian parliament com-

mittee on defense and security, said that the thousands of ethnic Armenians in the war-ravaged city will now “feel safer.”

“Our Western partners will definitely understand this [deployment] because we are talking first and foremost about our [ethnic Armenian] compatriots living in Syria,” Kocharian told RFE/RL’s Armenian service.

Armenia’s plans to send military personnel to Syria were first announced by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in September following his talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin held in Moscow.

John Bolton, the US national security adviser, discussed the issue with Pashinyan and Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan when he visited Yerevan in October. Bolton warned them against sending combat troops to aid Syrian government forces or their allies.

The United States and the European Union have been very critical of the Russian military intervention in Syria which helped President Bashar Al-Assad’s regime gain the upper hand in the brutal civil war.

The Armenian deployment came as Tonoyan held talks in Moscow with Russia’s Defense.

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Russian soldiers handing out food in December near Idlib.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Premier Congratulates Iran on Anniversary

YEREVAN — Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan sent a congratulatory message to President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Hassan Rouhani on Monday, February 11, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

The message read, in part, “I cordially congratulate you and the friendly people of Iran on the 40th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution. The centuries-long friendship and historical traditions between our peoples are a solid basis for making more Armenian-Iranian relations, raising the bilateral cooperation to a qualitatively new level.”

Pashinyan is scheduled to visit Iran later this winter.

### Armenian Shooter Wins Silver at Kuwait Tournament

KUWAIT CITY (Panorama.am) — Armenian shooter Elmira Karapetyan has won a silver medal at the 8th International Amir of Kuwait Shooting Grand Prix which kicked off in Kuwait City, the capital of Kuwait, on February 8.

She finished second after scoring 234.5 points in the 10m pistol event, the Armenian Shooting Federation told Panorama.am.

Another Armenian shooter, Hrach Babayan, took the 6th spot in the 10m rifle event, coming 5th in the 50m event.

### Echmiadzin Donates 10 Apartments In Gyumri

GYUMRI (Armenpress) — The Mother See of Holy Echmiadzin will donate apartments to 10 homeless families from Spitak and Gyumri.

The project has been initiated through financial assistance from dioceses.

The Social Service Department of the Armenian Church selected the families based on their need.

Some of the families have already moved in.

### New Charges Leveled Against Kocharyan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — The Special Investigation Service of Armenia leveled new charges against the second President of Armenia Robert Kocharyan, his defense team announced.

In addition to Article 300 of the criminal code of Armenia which concerns overthrowing the constitutional order, Kocharyan is now charged also under Article 311 which deals with receiving large bribes.

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### Tribute to Kerr Legacy

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## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Mixing Old and New Bring Tourists to Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – By merging the reputation of Armenia as the first country to adopt Christianity as a state religion as well as the recent Velvet Revolution, it will be possible to create a new touristic brand for Armenia, Pashinyan told parliament on February 12.

“In 2018 the number of tourists visiting Armenia increased by 10.5 percent. The growth rate further increased in the last quarter. The merger of the reputation of Armenia as the first country to adopt Christianity as a state religion and the implementer of an unprecedented Velvet Revolution will create a new brand that will also have a significant impact on the development of tourism in Armenia,” Pashinyan said.

According to the prime minister, the sphere of tourism is very important for overcoming poverty.

“We have already launched the project in the sidelines of which we give grants to the residents of forest areas, in order they create some businesses offering touristic services,” he noted.

## Armenia Reducing Mining Output

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan sees a necessity to reduce the output of mining industry in the total volume of exports. At the same time he emphasized the necessity for mining industries to meet the strictest environmental standards, Pashinyan told the National Assembly on Tuesday, February 12.

Pashinyan noted that today agriculture and mining industry are the leading branches of the Armenian economy. “Our vision is the following – the volume of mining industry output should significantly decline in the total volume of the Armenian exports. The export of high-tech output should increase,” he said.

Pashinyan also noted that there is no country in the world that without a mining industry, but this industry is monitored rigorously so as to not jeopardize the health of the public. He noted that reasonable use of minerals is beneficial for the country.

## Crocodile Park Expected To Break Ground in March

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – An Armenian businessman is going to import crocodile eggs from Tanzania, Kenya and other African countries. First, the crocodiles will live in a resort to be constructed in Dashtavan community, then a big crocodile farm will be established, founder of ARMON Co. Ltd, geologist Khachatur Sargsyan told reporters on February 5.

“We will import crocodile eggs. The cost of one egg is \$400. We will bring them from breeding farms, we are working with 3-4 different farms in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia. The goal is to create a tourism site in Dashtavan village. In addition to the crocodiles, there will also be chickens, geese, ducks. The park will consist of 31 infrastructures, and the crocodile farm is one of those infrastructures. There will be infrastructures for children in the park and etc.,” he said.

Asked why they have chosen crocodiles, he said he thinks that they will be attractive for tourists. “We mainly focus on tourists. Two of every 10 tourists will visit here for relaxation. There is no such place in the whole region,” he said.

The company has applied to Armenia’s ministry of economic development and investments with the request to import crocodiles during the previous government. “A piece of land in Tavush province was offered to us, but we were not interested in it. Then we sent letters to Armavir and Ararat provinces. The governor of Ararat province immediately responded to us and we met. They offered us several territories, and we selected the one in Dashtavan community, held a discussion with the community representatives,” he said.

The program will most likely launch on March 1. It is expected to be completed within five years.

# Armenian Parliament Debates ‘Revolutionary’ Program

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have prevailed in the fight against corruption, impunity and clan-based governance, and the Armenian people will also prevail in the fight against poverty, unemployment and misery.”

The program presented by Pashinyan affirms the government’s commitment to a “competitive and inclusive economy” primarily driven by hi-tech industries. It says that to this end the government will significantly improve tax administration, ease business regulations, guarantee fair competition, attract foreign investment, and stimulate exports and innovation.

This, the document adds, should translate into an annual GDP growth rate of at least 5 percent from 2019 to 2023.

Armenia’s former government brought down by Pashinyan-led mass protests last year set practically the same economic growth targets in its last five-year program drawn up in 2017. It pledged to reduce the official poverty rate, which stands at around 30 percent, by 12 percentage points by 2022.

The current government is likewise promising “substantial” reductions in poverty and unemployment. But it has set no specific targets.

Critics have pounced on an overall lack of socioeconomic targets in the program, questioning its feasibility.

In an apparent response to the criticism, Pashinyan said: “The numerical parameters of the economic revolution depend on how many citizens of Armenia will respond to our appeal to

ordinary Armenians.

“It is the government of Armenia which would bear responsibility for that,” insisted the prime minister.

Pashinyan also declared that his



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and his entourage enter the National National Assembly on February 12.

become activists of the economic revolution and how many of them will decide to take up opportunities provided by this revolutionary platform.”

Ani Samsonian, a lawmaker representing the opposition Bright Armenia Party (LHK), suggested during the question-and-answer session that Pashinyan wants to shift the blame for a possible failure of his economic policies on to

administration has already “broken the spine of systemic corruption in Armenia.” He said it will now focus on putting in place “institutional” safeguards against corrupt practices. In particular, he said, it will make information about the personal assets of individuals holding or aspiring to state posts easily accessible to the public.

# Pashinyan in Address Urges Clean Government, Environment

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan participated in the “New Format of State-Community Cooperation: Infrastructure Development” conference on February 11. The conference was attended by governors, community leaders, representatives from local administrations and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Armenia office.

Pashinyan made a speech addressing the government’s priorities in the fields of territorial governance and development. Welcoming the forum, the head of government noted that the socio-economic development of communities is the pledge of sustainable development of the Republic of Armenia. The premier stressed that there are many problems accumulated in our communities, which need special care and daily work, but we should first of all identify the parameters to comply with in addressing the problems.

Pashinyan first touched upon the principles of community leaders’ activities as state officials. “In general, I do not like groupings, especially when people are characterized as members of a group or a stratum. I want to say right away. ... We keep talking about improving the investment environment in communities, but at least my long-term journalistic and parliamentary experience has shown that the key facilities in almost every community belongs either to the community head or the deputy mayor, and so on: This is, in general, an amazing reality,

not just because it is so.

“And I want to state clearly that the state service cannot and should not be perceived as a business activity not only by the prime minister, by a minister, but also by MPs, as well as by the heads of community or city council members.

“In their activities, public officials first of all should strive to multiply the public wealth rather than their personal or group assets. And I want to state once again that such phenomena are unacceptable in the new Armenia, and there can be no continuation of such phenomena.”

He added, “Unfortunately, many still believe that a couple of months or a year after the revolution we might forget about why we have gathered and everything would start again. I ask you not to cherish such vain hopes: everything will not start again, and nothing will return to the old way. I want to say this politically and economically in all respects. Vicious practices have no future in Armenia, and the only thing that will happen is the eradication of corruption. During this time, we have given many people, perhaps everyone, even those who will not benefit from it the chance to change the reality, therefore, the law enforcement agencies should deal with such people.

“I welcome all those community leaders who enjoy the confidence of their communities and who are ready to join the government in substituting the old reality with new practices. Naturally, during our activities we will

do our best to support them and make their work more efficient, but I want to note that this should be a two-way process.”

As the next important aspect of government-community cooperation, Pashinyan highlighted the need for doing consistent work on environmental protection and preventing pollution.

Subsequently, the prime minister touched upon the new order in the Government’s proceedings to provide subsidies for the development of economic and social infrastructures of communities. “The government intends to allocate 10 billion drams in subsidies this year. Unfortunately, last year the local self-governance system was unable to master or submit relevant programs. We expressed readiness to allocate 10 billion or even 15 billion drams in subsidies last year, but the program was only partly implemented, and we could not reach the proposed target.

Our goal is the following as the most important issue is the promotion of the investment environment and investment economic activity, we have a problem with infrastructure projects, which, of course, does not exclude other types of programs.

But our primary appeal and condition is that emphasis has to be placed on infrastructure, water, irrigation, road and so on, of course, I say again, not excluding other programs aimed at activating the cultural and public life of communities.”





## ARMENIA

# According to Some Yerevan Locals, Seeds of Change Sowed in Wine Bars

By Martin Guttridge-Hewitt

YEREVAN (BBC) — Born late-December 2012, In Vino was the first specialist wine bar and shop to open in Armenia's capital, Yerevan. The cozy interior brims with hand-picked bottles; pungent cured meats and cheeses fill the deli counter; and passionate staff deliver a wealth of knowledge with every glass.

This scene would be familiar to most oenophiles, and is repeated in cities across the globe. So to understand the significance of this particular bar, some wider context about this corner of the Caucasus is needed.

Armenia claims an enviable history. What are believed to be the oldest known traces of wine-making in the world have been found in the country's south, at the 6,100-year-old Areni-1 archaeological site. Christianity first blossomed here. Literary, artistic, culinary and musical traditions pre-date many ancient civilizations. But modern times have been defined by struggle.

Ottoman occupation in the early-20th Century turned from oppression to mass killings, decimating the population and significantly shrinking borders in the process. Soviet rule, beginning in 1922, restricted opportunities and options — and independence in 1991 resulted in kleptocratic decisions where industrial assets were stripped with little investment to plug the gaps.

Additionally, territorial disputes became numerous. Borders with neighboring Turkey and Azerbaijan remain closed, and swathes of land have been annexed. Successive autocratic regimes over the last three decades had given rise to endemic corruption, stunting the economy and limiting social mobility. An enormous diaspora now remains overseas, and on home turf, one third of the population is currently impoverished with 16 percent unemployed. Those with a job earn an average of £270 per month.

All of which makes Armenia an unlikely candidate for the *Economist* magazine's 2018 Country of the Year. That is until you look at the events of spring 2018, when the Velvet Revolution swept through towns and cities after former president Serzh Sargsyan tried to extend his decade in power.

The public, weary after years of administrative criminality, had finally had enough. Young activists mobilized, using social media to organize large-scale protests, bringing major roads and public realms to a standstill. Within weeks,

the seeds of change were inadvertently sowed in the intimate interiors that define many of Armenia's new specialist drinking dens that stand on Saryan Street, now dubbed 'Wine Street' thanks to the sheer number of establishments that have opened since In Vino arrived. A huge financial risk at that time — with some doubting such a small bar could turn a profit — six years on, In Vino is a firm fixture in the capital's nightlife scene.

The area caters to a new generation of drinkers, who prefer quality wines (domestic and imported), craft beers and spirits with traceable origins over the mass-produced vodka popularized during Soviet times — and a staple of more traditional haunts popular with the now-deposed political class. With the old regime disinterested, establishments such as In Vino became breeding grounds for progressive ideas. Frustrations, resentments and hopes were shared across tables, eventually boiling over into direct action.

"Wine created places where people would come and share ideas without feeling encroached by the presence of the ruling class," said Vahe Balouljian, one of In Vino's owners. "[In Vino] became one of those places where similar types of people would gather and exchange ideas. It didn't happen because they started drinking wine, but wine usually attracts people who are better educated, more forward-looking."

Wine Street's dominant demographic — largely young, educated and employed but tired of the corruption in parliament — would not only support the revolution, but go on to produce the government of today.

"Right now, a lot of the people who are involved in the parliament are just like us, people who used to come to our wine bar regularly," said Mariam Saghatelian, one of Balouljian's partners at In Vino. "They might not be very experienced in the field, they might not know that much about politics, but at least they have the same interests as me, and if I am against something they want to change, I can voice my opinion. I'm not afraid of them anymore."

Wine created places where people would come and share ideas without feeling encroached by the presence of the ruling class. While these new wine bars and ideas might be progressive in today's Armenia, gathering and exchanging thoughts over wine is firmly rooted in the country's cultural heritage.

"Even if you read stories or historical points about our ancestors — my grandfather, their



Representatives of the Liberal Civic Initiative Movement and the Democratic Liberal Party in Armenia

## ADL Central Committee Announces Liberal Civic Initiative Movement Joins Democratic Liberal Party in Armenia

YEREVAN — Contacts have been ongoing for some time concerning some ideological and organizational issues between the representatives of the Liberal Civic Initiative Movement (LCIM) and the Democratic Liberal Party of Armenia (ADL). As the result of an agreement on principles on February 6, a meeting to deal with practical matters took place on February 9 between members of the LCIM and the ADL executive in the presence of the secretary of the ADL Supreme Council, Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian of London.

ADL participants included ADL chairman Hagop Avedikyan, Dr. Kouyoumjian, Suren Sargsyan, Gayane Muratyan, Armen Manuelyan and Harut Danielyan. LCIM was represented by Armen Sakapetoyan, H. Rubenian, R. Donikyan, A. Antreasyan, A. Khachatryan, K. Karakeozian, T. Barseghyan, A. Hovhannisyan and A. Manukyan.

The participants discussed a variety of issues and decided to have periodic meetings to discuss organizational matters, reinforce the dissemination of party ideology and increase membership in the future.

## ADL Sponsors Discussion on Diaspora Role in Armenian Political Life at Yerevan Tekeyan Center

YEREVAN — On February 8, a round-table discussion organized by Azg newspaper and sponsored by the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (ADL) took place at the Tekeyan Center in Yerevan under the title "The Role of the Diaspora in Armenian Political Life."

A representative of the Diaspora Ministry of the Republic of Armenia participated along with other state representatives, politicians, political party representatives and academics. The discussion touched upon the closure of the Diaspora Ministry and its possible consequences, as well as broader issues concerning the Armenian diaspora.



The February 8 discussion at the Tekeyan Center in Yerevan



Patrons outside In Vivo (Martin Guttridge-Hewitt photo)

the ruling Republican Party stepped down. Not a single shot was fired.

Elections in December 2018 then saw reformist acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who was a key figure in the revolution, claim 70.4% of the vote. Many now believe major improvements are possible after seeing barriers between political class and population removed. As a symbolic gesture, the gates to the National Assembly and the prime minister and president's offices were opened to the public in October to convey new governmental transparency. However, some Yerevan locals believe

grandfathers — how they would resolve different issues was always around a table with an alcoholic beverage," Saghatelian said.

Just as wine has been brought back to the fore by Armenians keen to see one of the country's oldest traditions thrive, the slow, relaxed atmosphere we associate with drinking reds, whites and roses has restored that tradition of addressing the day's issues over a fine vintage.

"The whole wine itself is a story — the wine-maker, where it was made, the history of the winery. People started to discuss things around the wine, then the next day you could see them

coming together as a group," Saghatelian said. "A lot of problems were discussed, because wine makes conversations flow."

Domestic wine production has re-emerged in tandem with these new perspectives. Under the Soviet Union, Armenia was instructed to focus on brandies. Many of the red grape vines used to produce wines were removed to increase capacity for the white varieties brandy requires. Other red vineyards simply fell into disrepair as demand declined.

In the years after Soviet authority ended, however, a thirst to resurrect the lost wine industry grew alongside newfound freedoms promoting the recognition and celebration of Armenia's traditions that had been suppressed under communism. Output of Armenian wine has since exploded, as In Vino's success demonstrates. When it opened, there were just 10 native varieties on sale; that number now stands at 85, with reds such as Areni and Kakhet and Voskehat whites particularly popular in the shop.

"Armenian winemakers of the recent generations showed that it's possible to make good wine in Armenia. Because before that people were going for sweet wines which was all sugar and juice or foreign wines," Balouljian explained. "So a lot of things like this made people believe what they were told was impossible was possible."

It may sound tenuous to suggest a link between that newfound belief in quality wine-making and the realization that other forms of positive change could also happen. But there are parallels. Armenia's new producers approach winemaking with hopes of competing

globally. Meanwhile, the revolution began with demands for better prospects from a population tired of an economy that could not function properly on the international stage.

"Winemaking is not a new thing here, but the approach and the philosophy is," explained Varuzhan Mouradian, who heads up the Van Ardi winery, one of Armenia's growing number of award-winning, modern vineyards. "I think the consumer should follow and trace the wine back to starting from that bud break. She or he needs to feel that sun, and see how deep the roots went, how they were fighting the stones to collect different minerals."

"The contrast compared to 15 years ago, or during Soviet times, was that wine was just considered an alcoholic beverage and produced as such," said his daughter, Ani Mouradian, who explained how the last six years have been crucial to cementing the reputation of Armenian wine on the world circuit as producers started appearing at foreign trade shows. And confidence in the wine industry is growing.

The Van Ardi winery is building accommodation overlooking the vines, scheduled for completion in 2020. Elsewhere, in the most prominent wine region of Vayots Dzor, the country's first wine route has been established. There's hope that Armenia could become the next emergent wine destination, like neighboring Georgia, bolstering a small but economically significant tourism economy in the coming years.

Whether Armenian wine really started the revolution is a matter of opinion, but its impact on a country in the throes of being reborn seems undeniable.





## INTERNATIONAL

## International News

## FM Takes Part In Eastern Partnership Conference

TALLINN, Estonia (news.am) – Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan this week participated in the 6th Annual Eastern Partnership Conference in Tallinn, dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership, Armenian MFA press service reported.

Estonian Prime Minister Jüri Ratas made an introductory speech, and the representative of Romania to the EU Danut-Sebastian Neculaescu presented the priorities of the chairmanship and the upcoming programs.

Zohrab Mnatsakanyan noted that the EaP is a good tool for promoting European values and creating institutions according to the European model.

“We have an unusual agenda with Estonia, aimed at developing bilateral mutually beneficial cooperation, as well as promoting the European agenda via European values. We have a rich bilateral agenda with the EU as well,” the minister said referring to EU-Armenia deal, which is “an important and effective tool to support our reform program and deepen cooperation.”

## Stolen Tractor Returned To Armenian Farmer

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Authorities in Turkey have found and transported back to neighboring Armenia a tractor that was stolen from an Armenian farmer in September.

Gor Karapetyan, who lives in a village in the north-western Shirak province, was cutting hay near an Armenian-Turkish border post when his tractor broke down late in the evening. The vehicle vanished before he came back to the grass field the next morning in hopes of repairing it.

An Armenian law-enforcement body launched a criminal investigation after Karapetyan alerted Russian border guards deployed along the closed frontier. The investigation was suspended three months later, with no suspects identified.

The tractor was subsequently found in Turkish territory. Turkish authorities shipped it back to Armenia on February 6.

“We towed it back to the village,” Karapetyan told RFE/RL’s Armenian service. “They say that the tractor was found buried under hay.”

The farmer said that the 30-year-old tractor was looted and vandalized by the thieves. They also stole a hay rake that was attached to the tractor, he said, adding that he did not get it back.

## Closer Ties with Cyprus

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Cooperation in the realm of defense between Armenia and Cyprus has expanded, Armenian defense minister Davit Tonoyan said during a joint press conference with defense minister of Cyprus Savvas Angelides on February 12.

He stated that the Armenian-Cypriot bilateral historic cooperation is based on friendship, mutual willingness and common approaches of the two peoples.

“We have discussed with the defense minister of Cyprus the current situation in the defense sector and the opportunity to expand it. I would like to inform that our 13 cooperation areas became 15. I have introduced the details of Armenia’s humanitarian mission in Syria, and we believe that the exchange of information in the Middle East is very important by both sides,” Tonoyan said.

He added they also discussed issues relating to mandatory military service. “Cyprus is among the few EU member states that keeps the mandatory military service and has great opportunities to exchange experience with us as they share all the difficulties connected with it. And we have agreed to exchange information as a priority,” Tonoyan noted.

Angelides thanked Tonoyan for the invitation.

“My visit proves that the two countries have potential for the development of future programs and defense cooperation. Our two countries share the same interests on regional matters. We are committed to the maintenance of regional peace and international laws. The defense cooperation program, that we signed today, pushes us one step forward at the cooperation level and aims at developing our partnership in different matters of regional security,” he said.

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Kocharian claimed that the Armenian government itself initiated the dispatch of the sappers, medics and other servicemen tasked with protecting them. Russia is “naturally very happy” with their deployment, he said.

Meanwhile, a senior opposition lawmaker denounced the government for sending the contingent to Syria without consulting with the Armenian parliament.

“The authorities constantly talk about a transparent work style and increasing [the government’s] accountability. This action runs counter to that,” said Gevorg Gorgisyan of the Bright Armenia Party (LHK).

“Maybe [the deployment] was necessary,” said Gorgisyan. “But they should have talked about that. The National Assembly should have known why they are doing that.”

Gorgisyan also warned of the move’s possible negative “consequences” for Armenia’s relations with the US and the EU.

An estimated 80,000 ethnic Armenians lived in Syria and Aleppo in particular before the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011. Most of them have since fled the country. Thousands of Syrian Armenians have taken refuge

in Armenia.

Some commentators and critics of the Armenian government have suggested that Pashinyan decided to send military

tional foreign policy. He has specifically backed his country’s continued membership in Russian-led military and trade blocs.



The medical and demining specialists from Armenia at a ceremony in Yerevan before heading to Syria.

personnel to Syria in a bid to mitigate Russia’s discontent with some of his decisions and statements. Pashinyan allies have dismissed such speculation.

Ever since he came to power in May 2018, Pashinyan has repeatedly ruled out major changes in Armenia’s tradi-

For his part, Tonoyan was reported to praise Russia’s role in the “post-conflict reconstruction” of Syria. “And I think that our participation in this humanitarian operation is very important,” he added, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

# Russell Pollard: Instrumental in Armenian Genocide Recognition in Derby

By Dr. Hratch Kouyoumjian

DERBY, UK – Russel Pollard is a photojournalist with close ties to the British-Armenian community since the commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. He is member of HMD and has been instrumental together with the other Derby City Council members in recognising and remembering the Armenian Genocide. Herewith excerpts of an interview with him on January, 28 in Derby City Hall.

**Mr. Pollard thank you for being here for this interview on this day full of emotions. Can you tell us when and why you got involved with the remembrance of the Armenian Genocide?**

When I first went to the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan about 10 years ago I noticed that there was no plaque for the UK government and I subsequently found out that we don’t formally recognise it. In my subsequent visits to Armenian and Artsakh my connection with people there evolved through my writing and photography and that gave me an opportunity to communicate through to the non-Armenian community about Artsakh, and the Armenian Genocide. It was clear to me that whilst it was important to recognise the Genocide as part of a healing process, it had serious, present day consequences, with the conflict with Azerbaijan and it is because of that that I wanted to speak about the Armenian Genocide and to become involved in opportunities to further the cause of recognition...and to avoid any further escalation of the Genocide.

**Derby City is now the torch bearer in England in recognising the Armenian genocide; can you tell us how this came about? I point out that there are only a handful of Armenians in Derby?**

I joined the Holocaust Memorial Day

in 2015. This is an independent group of volunteers who decided 20 years ago to properly remember the Holocaust and other Genocides. Through that work the group gained a lot of respect and credibility within Derby. In parallel, and quite separately, I developed my own network of political contacts within Derby through my journalism work. There was a change of political leadership in the Council in May 2018 and it felt that the time was right to approach them on the recognition issue of 2 Genocides - the Armenian, and the Holodomor in Ukraine. Largely due to personal contacts and the history of individuals’ work in the City this was met with no resistance. A motion was drafted by myself, and a colleague which was put forward at the next available Full Council meeting. I spoke to a number of political contacts to ensure that there was support and it was pleasing to find that they were all very supportive. This meant that, on the night, it was passed unanimously.

**Was there any outside pressure to block this resolution the way it happened in Edinburgh in 2005-2006?**

There was no pressure from anywhere to block this resolution despite the fact that we had been approached by the Turkish Embassy in 2015 to avoid the use of the term Genocide in Holocaust memorial Day events. As we did not feel the need to publicise that this motion was about to happen there was no reason that any outside party would have been aware of it.

**I understand you have visited Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh or we Armenians call it Artsakh, over 10 times; can you tell us more about this and aren’t you worried about Azeri blacklists?**

I’ve visited Artsakh about 15 times, and I usually spend about 3 weeks there at a time. Given the perception of the UK Foreign Office - they tell travellers to avoid going to Artsakh and, as such, it is impossible to get travel insurance. I was pleased to have been given

the “honour” of being black-listed by Azerbaijan. It doesn’t present me with any concerns, in fact it is a help in giving me credibility within Artsakh - there are people who are unsure about my motives as I travel alone. Fortunately I have some good friendships there so, for me, when I visit, it is like visiting my second family, and I have the privilege of being welcomed into people’s houses, attending events and being part of the community. 5 years ago, I was awarded a medal by the Prime Minister of Artsakh for my work there. We regularly visit the border areas to support work in the more impoverished villages.

**Thank you, Mr. Pollard, for being the catalyst to this recognition. Any advice to the British Armenian Community?**

That’s a hard question for me to answer. My observation is that the Armenian community in the UK is a very “broad church” and for many people they seem to have very little in common other than, possibly, a shared perspective on the Genocide. I have met Armenians in the UK whose ancestry is firmly routed in the customs and traditions of Western Armenia, and their subsequent homelands following the Genocide. Others, in Armenia or Artsakh, whose history has always been in the South Caucasus and have been influenced by the Russian Empire and Soviet Union, or even Azerbaijan. This does make any form of inclusive cohesion in the UK very difficult. I am not sure whether the British Armenian Community would wish to have a shared objective to communicate about themselves and their history - perhaps there is more of an opportunity to be active in the UK outside of the main centres, like London?

**Thank you Mr. Pollard for the interview; if Derby is the torch bearer among the English cities for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, you certainly are the engine and the catalyst behind all this. Thank you once again for all your efforts.**





## INTERNATIONAL

# Commission for Theological Dialogue Between Catholic, Eastern Rite Churches Convenes in Rome

ROME — The 16th meeting of the International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches took place in Rome January 27 to February 2, hosted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. It was chaired jointly by Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and by Bishop Kyrillos, Coptic Orthodox Auxiliary Bishop in the Diocese of Los Angeles.

Representatives came from the Catholic Church and from the following Oriental Orthodox Churches: the Antiochian Syrian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church (Catholicosate of All Armenians and Catholicosate of the Holy See of Cilicia), the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. (No representative of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church was able to attend.)

The two delegations met separately on the morning of January 28 and again in the morning of January 31. The first plenary session began with prayers for Metropolitan Bishop of Damiette, who had died on October 2, 2018. He had served as a committed and dedicated Oriental Orthodox Co-Chairman of this dialogue since it began in 2004. The Oriental Orthodox members nominated Bishop Kyrillos as his successor at their family meeting on January 28.

Koch informed the members about ecumenical developments over the past year, including the visit of Catholicos Karekin II and Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia Aram I to the Vatican on April 5; the day of prayer and reflection of Pope Francis and heads of churches in



Archbishop Khajag Barsamian with Pope Francis

members in the Casina Pio IV in the Vatican gardens. On the evening of Wednesday, January 30, the members attended Vespers at the Benedictine Collegio di Sant'Anselmo at the kind invitation of the Right Reverend Gregory Polan, O.S.B., Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Confederation, and shared supper with the community.

At 11:00 on Friday morning February 1, Pope Francis received the members of the Commission in private audience.

The next meeting will take place in Atchaneh, Lebanon, hosted by the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, January 26 to February 1, 2020.

The members of the Commission are:

Representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Churches (in alphabetical order)

Antiochian Syrian Orthodox Church: H.E. Mar Theophilus George Saliba, Archbishop of Mount Lebanon, Beirut, Lebanon; H.E. Kuriakose Mar Theophilose, Metropolitan of the Malankara Syrian

Orthodox Theological Seminary and President of the Ecumenical Secretariat of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church in India, Ernakulam, India; H.G. Bishop Mor Polycarpus Aydin (observer);

Armenian Apostolic Church: Catholicosate of all Armenians: Khajag Barsamian, Pontifical Legate for Western Europe and Official Representative of the Armenian Church to the Vatican; Reverend Father Shahe Ananyan, Director of the Interchurch Relationships Department, Etchmiadzin, Armenia;

Armenian Apostolic Church: Catholicosate of the Holy See of Cilicia: Bishop Magar Ashkarian, Anatelias, Lebanon; Rev. Boghos Tinkjian, Dean of the Armenian Theological

Seminary, Antelias, Lebanon;

Coptic Orthodox Church: Bishop Kyrillos (Co-Chair), Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, Rev. Shenouda Maher Ishak, West Henrietta, New York ; Bishop Daniel of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Sydney, Australia (Observer); Bishop Barnaba El Soryany, Rome, Italy (Observer);

Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church: no representative was able to attend;

Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church: Archbishop Gabriel of Sidamo (unable to attend); Rev. Fr. Daniel Seifemichael Feleke of Holy Trinity Theological University College and Director of Broadcasting Service in Addis Ababa;

Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church: Metropolitan Zachariah Mar Nicholovos, Northeast Diocese of America; H.E. Metropolitan Dr. Youhanon Mar Demetrios (co-secretary), Metropolitan of the Diocese of

Delhi, India.

## Representatives of the Catholic Church

Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (co-chair);

Most Rev. Woldetensae Ghebregiorghis, Apostolic Vicar Emeritus of Harar, Ethiopia, President of the Ecumenical Commission of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia;

Most Rev. Youhanna Golta, Patriarchal Auxiliary Bishop of the Coptic Catholic Patriarchate, Cairo, Egypt (unable to attend);

Most Rev. Peter Marayati, Armenian Catholic Archbishop of Aleppo, Syria;

Most Rev. Paul Rouhana, OLM, Bishop of the Patriarchal Maronite Vicariate of Sarba, Jounieh, Lebanon;

Most Rev. Paul-Werner Scheele, Bishop Emeritus of Würzburg, Germany (unable to attend);

Most Rev. Boghos Levon Zekiyan, Archbishop of Istanbul and Turkey for the Catholic Armenians;

Rev. Fr. Frans Bouwen, M.Afr., Sainte-Anne, Jerusalem;

Rev. Fr. Habib Mrad, Patriarchal Secretary and Chancellor, Syriac Catholic Patriarchate, Beirut;

Rev. Fr. Ronald G. Roberson, CSP, Associate Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC, USA;

Rev. Fr. Mark Sheridan, OSB, Collegio di S. Anselmo, Rome;

Rev. Fr. Columba Stewart, OSB, Executive Director, Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, Professor of Theology, Saint John's Abbey and University, Collegeville, Minnesota, USA;

Rev. Malpan Fr. Mathew Vellanickal, Spirituality Center, Manganam, Kottayam, India;

Prof. Dietmar W. Winkler, Consultant to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Salzburg, Austria.

Rev. Hyacinthe Destivelle, OP, Official of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Rome (co-secretary).



Pope Francis receives a present from Archbishop Khajag Barsamian.

the Middle East in Bari, Italy, on July 7; and the visit of Catholicos Karekin II to Rome on October 24.

Continuing its focus on the sacraments, this session of the dialogue was entirely devoted to the Sacrament of Marriage. The Oriental Orthodox papers included a major presentation, "A Great Mystery: Theology of Marriage in the Oriental Orthodox Churches."

Four papers on marriage were presented by the Catholic members: "The Sacrament of The presented papers and discussions made clear that the two sides are in complete agreement that Christian marriage is a sacrament.

In the evening of Monday January 28, Cardinal Koch hosted a dinner for the dialogue



The assembled members of the clergy with Pope Francis

## Macron Declares April 24 as Day of Remembrance of Armenian Genocide

RECOGNITION, from page 1

At the event, Macron also paid tribute to Charles Aznavour, the French crooner of Armenian origin who died in October last year.

At the dinner, Nicolas Aznavour, the son of the late singer, presented an Armenian duduk to Macron.

Turkey on Wednesday strongly condemned the announcement, accusing the French president of using the event as political fodder.

"We condemn and reject attempts by Mr. Macron, who is facing political problems in his own country, to save the day by turning historic events into political material," a spokesman for

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said.

Turkish-Armenian MP Garo Paylan, representing the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), took to Twitter to respond to remarks about the Armenia Genocide made by Turkish President Erdogan's spokesperson.

"We condemn and reject attempts by Macron, who is afflicted by political problems in his own country, to try and save the day by turning historical events into a political matter," Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said.

In a tweet on Thursday, Paylan questioned Kalin's statement, saying: "If the Armenian Genocide is a lie, why the Turkish President has

been sending condolence messages to the Armenian community five years in a row on every April 24."

"Turkey is yet to face and name the tragedy of the Armenian people displaced and slaughtered by the decision of the state. What happened should concern first the president and the Speaker of Turkish parliament. They should face and call the tragedy with a proper name as we have been waiting for justice for 104 years," Paylan wrote in a separate post.

The French Foreign Ministry responded to the Turkish reaction on President Macron's recent decision to declare April 24 the National

Day for Armenian Genocide Commemoration.

"In establishing this day of commemoration, the President is fulfilling his well-known pledge to honor French citizens of Armenian descent. We have had several opportunities to exchange views with the Turkish authorities on this issue. They have been informed of our positions just as we have been informed of theirs", the French Foreign Ministry responded.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan saluted Emmanuel Macron's decision.

In a Twitter post Pashinyan described it as a "powerful manifestation" and a determination to protect human rights and prevent mass atrocities.



# Community News

## Heal Thy People, Lord: St. Vartan Cathedral Revives An Armenian Spiritual Custom

NEW YORK — An ancient Armenian custom was revived in New York City this past January, when St. Vartan Cathedral held its inaugural “Prayers for Healing” service.

Diocesan Primate the Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan presided over the service, which he described as “aiming to heal worshippers in body, mind, and soul, through prayer, music, Scripture-reading, and a blessing with holy water.”

In remarks to the crowd of about 50 worshippers, Fr. Findikyan said: “Look around our world, and you can see it needs healing — it needs a Healer. Healing is at the heart of the Gospel, and at the heart of Christ’s ministry. The Armenian people have known this from the beginning—it’s no coincidence that the story of Armenia’s conversion to Christianity is a story of healing, where St. Gregory the Illuminator healed the affliction of King Drtad.”

“Healing, therefore, is the first thing we must be doing, as the church,” he said. “To you who have come here in your own trials and afflictions, of body and spirit, we pray for each other, we pray for our world, we ask God to take away our pain.”

“LOOK AROUND OUR  
WORLD, AND YOU CAN  
SEE IT NEEDS HEALING —  
IT NEEDS A HEALER.  
HEALING IS AT THE  
HEART OF THE GOSPEL,  
AND AT THE HEART OF  
CHRIST’S MINISTRY.”

VERY REV. FR. DANIEL FINDIKYAN

The service concluded with a water blessing ceremony, and worshippers came forward to be blessed with the water by the Primate’s hand, and to take away small vials of blessed water. He also gave each person a copy of his recently published book, *Prayers for Healing from the Spiritual Treasury of the Armenian Church*.

Seven clergymen and several deacons took part in the January 23, 2019 service, which is planned to be a monthly gathering for the faithful and the surrounding cathedral community—for Armenian Christians and others who seek to worship and find comfort in our religious traditions.

Cathedral Vicar Fr. Mesrop Parsamyan, who introduced the service and described its origins in Armenian spirituality, came away from the service impressed by the reaction it evoked from the faithful. “People were truly touched. Some didn’t know what to expect from the service, but went away feeling it had addressed some of their deep needs.”

Future “Prayers for Healing” services are planned to take place on the last Wednesday of each month. All are welcome to attend.



The UCSF Fresno

## UCSF Fresno Receives More Than \$1 Million for Medical Education and Research

FRESNO — The University of California San Francisco (UCSF) Fresno Medical Education Program recently received contributions of more than \$1 million from two development companies and families known for giving back to the local community. The donations will enable UCSF Fresno to further develop its physician training and research programs

**By Brandy Ramos Nikaido**

The Kolligian, Arakelian and Kashian families of River Park Properties, donated \$1 million. Fresno developer and philanthropist Edward M. Kashian is the general partner of River Park Properties and CEO of Lance-Kashian & Company, a local real estate development and management firm in the Central Valley.

“We are incredibly appreciative and grateful for the generosity of Mr. Kashian and the partners of River Park,” said Michael W. Peterson, MD, associate dean at UCSF Fresno. “This contribution is an investment in the health of Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley. It will help support medical students in the UCSF San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education and enable us to continue engaging in research that addresses Valley health issues.”



Ed Kashian

California is expected to face a shortfall of 4,100 primary care clinicians in just 10 years, according to the California Future Health Workforce Commission. The projected shortfall will have a disproportionate impact on the San Joaquin Valley, which already has a well-documented shortage of physicians. The Commission, co-chaired by UC President Janet Napolitano, recently released a report underscoring the need to support primary care residency positions and medical student education among other initiatives to meet future health care needs.

“Our focus is on giving back to the local community to improve the quality of life,” said Kashian. “Every donation we make, every development project we take on, serves to enrich the place we call home. Enhancing access to high-quality health care by training physicians and keeping them here where they are needed most to care for Valley residents is from my perspective one of the most important and much needed investments we can make in the region.”

UCSF Fresno also received \$75,000 from Spano Enterprises, a development company headed by Stanley Spano. Stanley and his wife Darlene are Fresno natives and devoted local-area philanthropists. They have two adult children, including Susanne Spano, MD, who is an associate professor of clinical emergency medicine at UCSF Fresno and program director of UCSF Fresno’s Wilderness Medicine Fellowship Program.

“It is truly gratifying to receive this gift from Mr. Spano,” said Dr. Peterson. “We thank him and his family, including our very own faculty member Dr. Susanne Spano, for their contribution.”

“My daughter went to medical school across the country in Philadelphia,” said Stanley Spano. “Thankfully she came home for residency and fellowship training at UCSF Fresno and then stayed on board as faculty. There is an outstanding

see UCSF, page 7

## Testa Siblings Join Armenian Assembly As State Co-Chairs

WASHINGTON — The Armenian Assembly of America announced that recent university graduates Nicholas Testa and Samantha Testa, siblings from Moorestown, NJ, as the Assembly’s newest State Co-Chairs.

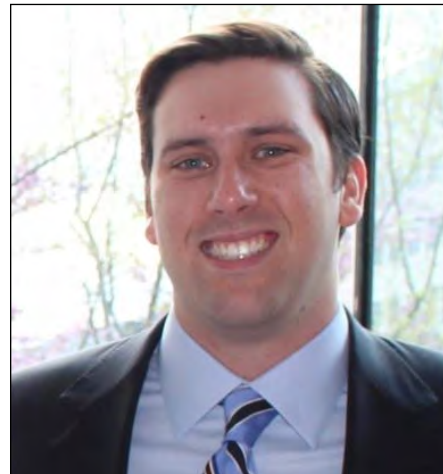
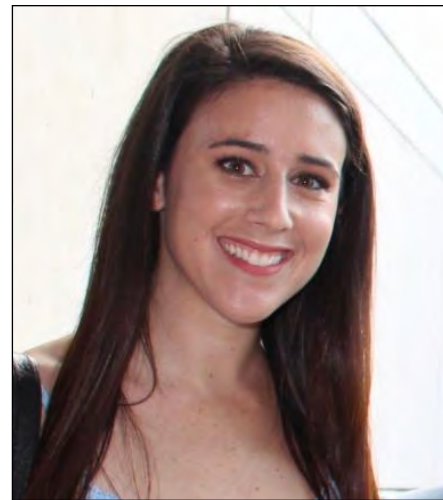
“Building on last year’s successful outreach and Advocacy Conference with the participation of State Chairs and activists from across the country, Nicholas and Samantha make great additions to our nationwide team of State Chairs,” Assembly Grassroots & Development Associate Mariam Khaloyan said. “With the 116th Congress underway, we are reaching out to Members of Congress about the importance of strengthening US-Armenia relations, as well as prioritizing a Congressional Armenian Genocide Resolution.”

Nicholas Testa graduated from Villanova School of Business with a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration. Last year, he was a member of Villanova’s Armenian Society, where he participated in local meetings and events. Previously, he served as the Philanthropy Chairman of the Sigma Chi National Fraternity, for which he organized a variety of philanthropic events to raise over \$13,500 for the Huntsman Cancer Institute. Nicholas works at Ernst & Young LLP as an associate in Transaction Advisory Services and Transaction Real Estate.

“I am very eager to get started as the Assembly’s New Jersey state co-chair and will do my best to help contribute to our cause and success in the future,” State Chair Nicholas Testa said.

Samantha Testa graduated Magna Cum Laude from Villanova University, with a Bachelor’s Degree of Science in Accountancy and Finance. She currently works at Ernst & Young LLP in a senior position in Wealth and Asset Management within its Financial Services advisory. In 2014, she participated in AGBU’s New York Summer Internship Program.

“I am looking forward to this new and exciting year as part of the Armenian Assembly of America team, and will work hard with the local Armenian American community,” stated State Chair Samantha Testa.



Samantha Testa and Nicholas Testa





## COMMUNITY NEWS

Tekeyan Cultural Association and the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School Jointly Sponsor

**Lecture and Discussion**

## Self-Determination of Nagorno Karabakh Armenians Under International Law

**Wednesday, February 27 7 p.m.**

On the eve of the anniversary of the Baku and Sumgait Pogroms

AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School Hall  
22001 Northwestern Hwy, Southfield, Mich.

**Moderator**

**Prof. Ronald G. Suny**  
University of Michigan  
Introductory remarks

**Very Rev. Aren Jebejian,**  
St. John's Armenian Church,  
will offer Memorial prayers at  
the beginning of the program  
In remembrance of the victims

Reception to Follow

**Keynote Speaker**

**Philippe Raffi Kalfayan**

International Law  
Expert from Paris,  
France



## Akcam to Speak on Talat Pasha's Killing Orders and Denial of the Genocide at USC

LOS ANGELES – On Friday, March 22, Prof. Taner Akcam (Clark University), will deliver a public lecture at noon at the University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research, co-sponsored by the USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies.

A unique feature of the Armenian Genocide has been the long-standing efforts of successive Turkish governments to deny its historicity and to hide the documentary evidence surrounding it. Denialists have claimed that there was no central decision taken by Ottoman authorities to exterminate the Armenians and that all available documents that indicate otherwise are either fake or were doctored by Armenians. In this lecture, Professor Taner Akcam (Clark University) will explore how his latest research provides a major clarification of the often-blurred lines between facts and truth with regard to these events. Akcam both brings to light documents either hidden or destroyed by the Turkish government that contain the killing orders, and demonstrates the authenticity of these orders, which had been signed by Ottoman Interior Minister Talat Pasha. He will introduce this new evidence and the online archive he has developed to provide the public access to these documents.

Chair of Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University, Akcam is widely recognized as one of the first Turkish scholars to write extensively on the Ottoman-Turkish Genocide of the



Prof. Taner Akcam

Armenians in the early 20th century. He is the author of more than 10 scholarly works as well as numerous articles in Turkish, German and English on the Armenian Genocide and Turkish nationalism. His most known books, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (Metropolitan Books, 2006) and *Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2012) have received several awards.

Akcam's latest book is *Killing Orders: Talat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide* (Palgrave 2018).

## UCSF Fresno Receives More Than \$1 Million For Medical Education and Research

UCSF, from page 16

medical education continuum in place at UCSF Fresno. I look forward to the day when Valley medical students can stay in the region to do most of their training and I am pleased to be a part of efforts to make that happen."

UCSF Fresno trains more than 300 medical residents and fellows each year and another 300 medical students on a rotating basis. Up to 50 percent of the physicians who complete training at UCSF Fresno stay in the Valley to care for community members.

The UCSF School of Medicine received approval from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education in July 2018 to establish UCSF Fresno as a branch medical campus to lead the San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education (SJV PRIME). The training program

is designed to prepare medical students to address the unique health needs of the region's diverse and underserved populations.

Up to six students will start in the fall of 2019, with the goal of admitting 12 SJV PRIME students in 2020. Students enrolled in the program will spend 18 months at UCSF in San Francisco and then move to Fresno for the remainder of their medical school training.

UCSF Fresno Medical Education Program is a branch campus of the UCSF School of Medicine and UCSF, a leading university dedicated to promoting health worldwide. Established in 1975, UCSF Fresno is focused on improving health in California's San Joaquin Valley through excellence in teaching and patient care, innovative clinical research and community partnerships. UCSF Fresno is the largest physician-training program between Sacramento and Los Angeles – training more than 300 physicians and 300 rotating medical students each year. Nearly 700 UCSF core and volunteer faculty at UCSF Fresno care for thousands of patients annually and train the next generation of outstanding clinicians and patient advocates. About 50 percent of the physicians trained at UCSF Fresno stay in the Valley to provide UCSF care. In addition, UCSF Fresno helps prepare middle, high school and college students for careers in health and medicine through a variety of pipeline programs.

UC San Francisco (UCSF) is a leading university dedicated to promoting health worldwide through advanced biomedical research, graduate-level education in the life sciences and health professions, and excellence in patient care. It includes top-ranked graduate schools of dentistry, medicine, nursing and pharmacy; a graduate division with nationally renowned programs in basic, biomedical, translational and population sciences; and a preeminent biomedical research enterprise. It also includes UCSF Health, which comprises three top-ranked hospitals – UCSF Medical Center and UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals in San Francisco and Oakland – as well as Langley Porter Psychiatric Hospital and Clinics, UCSF Benioff Children's Physicians and the UCSF Faculty Practice. UCSF Health has affiliations with hospitals and health organizations throughout the Bay Area.

Read News in Armenian at:



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Spouse of Prime Minister of Armenia

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Advance ticket purchase required.







## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Couples' Night out at Holy Trinity

By Rev. Dr. Avedis Boynerian  
& Dr. Yn. Arpi Boynerian

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Back when we were still engaged, we ran into a certain man at a market. As soon as he learned about our engagement, he said, “Enjoy your engagement days, because marriage is love’s tomb.” His message bothered both of us and put a heavy toll on our hearts. But God’s provision was very present and eased all doubts because a few days later, we had a meeting with our minister to reflect on our growing relationship. During our meeting, the minister shared how he cherishes his relationship with his wife. Over the years, he told us he understood the meaning of true love. He said, “After 25 years of marriage, today I feel that I love my wife more than I used to love her when we first met.” The minister’s message gave us great encouragement and hope and cleared up the previously negative image of marriage in our mind.

After 30 years of marriage, we can tell you that the minister’s message is true. But our true love did not evolve by itself. It took a lot of effort, time, communication and work over the years. We attended many marriage seminars, which helped us understand each other more and offered practical tools to help others along the way.

Marriage is the most important relationship. That’s why it needs our undivided attention to nourish it, clean it and dust it from the debris

of life’s everyday challenges. Otherwise, it can quickly become something that’s repetitious and lackluster, like a monotonous chore or responsibility in daily life. Without empathy, excitement and joy, marriage can become a decision that we can unfortunately regret.

Knowing the importance of this blessed union, last year the New England clergy along with yeretzgins of the Greater Boston area came together to plan and orchestrate the first Couples’ Night Out. The mutual respect and cooperation of the clergy is a unique reality of the New England area. Eight clergies and 66 couples attended the event. The speakers were Drs. Paul and Virginia Friesen from Home Improvement Ministries.

The couple’s mission has been to equip the faithful and churches to better encourage marriage and families in living out loving relationships. The Friesens have an interesting way of feeding off each other during their presentation; it’s entertaining, engaging and most importantly, enlightening.

Upon the positive feedback from last year, we have decided to host this event on a regular basis. This year, Father Vasken and Yeretzgin Arpie Kouzouian are going to be the hosts of the second annual Couples’ Night Out at the Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge. The program will take place on March 30 at 5:30 p.m.. This year, the Friesens will be talking about establishing and maintaining marriages that thrive, last. The cost is \$100 per couple, and it includes an authentic Armenian buffet and live Armenian music.

## Reddit Raises \$300 Million in Finance Round Led by China’s Tencent

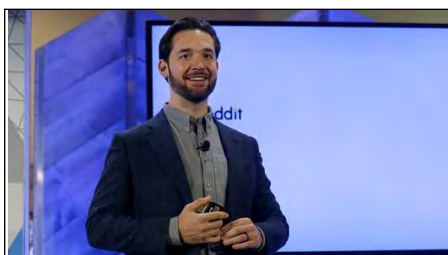
SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Social media service Reddit Inc. says it has raised \$300 million in a financing round led by Chinese internet giant Tencent.

Reddit’s CEO, Steve Huffman, told CNBC on Monday, February 11, that values the privately held company at \$3 billion.

Half the new money came from Tencent, Asia’s most valuable tech company. Other investors included Sequoia, Fidelity, Andreessen Horowitz, Quiet Capital, VY and Snoop Dogg.

The announcement prompted criticism of Reddit for linking itself with a company from China, where the ruling Communist Party enforces extensive online censorship. Access to Reddit is blocked in China.

Tencent operates online games and popular WeChat social media service. It owns 40 percent of “Fortnite” creator Epic Games and 15 percent of photo service Snap.



Alexis Ohanian

### OBITUARY

## Prof. Anahide Ter Minassian Noted Historian

PARIS — Preeminent historian Anahide Ter Minassian died on Monday, February 11, at her home in Fresnes, near Paris.

She had been undergoing cancer treatment for a long time.

Ter Minassian was a lecturer at the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales and Paris I University.

Minassian was born in 1929 in Paris. Her father, Levon Kevonyan, was born in Zara, while her mother, was the daughter of Gülizar and

grants in Belleville.

Ter Minassian started to learn Armenian from the age of 7. She married Levon Ter Minassian, who was also an Armenian countryless.

She grew up in a family setting surrounded by Armenian writers and artists. She studied history and geography at the Sorbonne. She taught at various high schools in Paris. Since 1969, she had worked on the subjects of Russian history, history of international relations and Armenian social, cultural and political history in Sorbonne.

Ter Minassian’s grandmother Gülizar was the daughter of a respectable Armenian family living in the Mush region.

Among her books are: *La question arménienne* (Roquevaire: Parenthèses, 1983); *Nationalism and Socialism (1887-1912)* (Cambridge: Zoryan Institute, 1984); *La République d’Arménie, 1918-1920* (Brussels: Complexe, 1989); *Histoires croisées: Diaspora, Arménie, Transcaucasie, 1880-1990* (Marseille: Parenthèses, 1997); *Vagharshapat: Edjmiatzin, Hripsime, Gayane, Shoghakat* (Venice: OEMME, with Armen Zarian and Arà Zarian, 1998); *Nos terres d’enfance: L’Arménie des souvenirs* (Marseille: Parenthèses, with Houri Varjabédian, 2010) *L’échiquier arménien entre guerres et révolutions: 1878-1920* (Paris: Karthala, 2015).



Kegham Der Garabedian, whose parents were the subject of books, and Armenuhi Der Garabedian, born in Mush.

Her parents traveled with a Nansen passport and spent the 1920s in Paris as immi-

## St. Vartan Cathedral Vicar Shares An Armenian Prayer Tradition

NEW YORK — The Vicar of St. Vartan Cathedral, the Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan, delivered a talk at the St. Ignatius Loyola Roman Catholic Church in New York City, on January 26.

He addressed the church’s Lay Ministers Enrichment Team, offering insights into St. Gregory of Narek’s powerful “Book of Prayers” as an example of the Armenian Christian tradition of prayer. Also speaking was Eastern Orthodox clergyman Fr. Sergey Trostyanskiy, who gave remarks on Orthodox prayer practices.

“It was a pleasure to introduce the faithful at St. Ignatius to our Armenian master of prayer from a thousand years past,” said Parsamyan, “to help guide them in deepening their life of prayer today.”

After his presentation, the audience divided into groups to read and discuss St. Gregory’s “Prayer 80,” dedicated to the Holy Mother-of-God.

The retreat concluded with a prayer service, during which Fr. Parsamyan offered a gospel reflection, and Angela Grigoryan of the St. Vartan Cathedral community sang the meditative hymn, *Der voghormya*.



Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan and other members of the clergy



Very Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan speaks.

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COMMUNITY NEWS



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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# On a Night Steve Kerr Won't Forget, the Armenian Community Reminds Him His Grandparents Will Never Be Forgotten

By Marcus Thompson II

SAN FRANCISCO (The Athletic) — Steve Kerr had known the story of his grandparents saving and caring for thousands of Armenians in the 1920s. But here he was, in a packed banquet room on Saturday night, February 8, at San Francisco's Krouzian-Zekarian-Vasbouragan Armenian School (KZV), feeling the impact of their benevolence like never before.

Stanley and Elsa Kerr saved and cared for nearly 10,000 orphans when they had nowhere else to go. Many of them went on to become college graduates, experts and professionals. The Kerrs put themselves in grave danger for people they didn't know.

One of the most moving moments on Saturday came during a preview of a yet-to-be-completed documentary, "Kerr: Warriors of Peace." When a snippet from a letter from his grandfather was read, 99 years to the day after he wrote it, Kerr put his head down and wiped away a tear as the chills swirled around the room.

Tonight the most bitter cold of all this winter, all the remaining Armenians are preparing to go out again into exile. Many will perish on the way from Turkish bullets or from cold. Our orphans, old women and men, will remain in our compounds. Perhaps by remaining here, we can protect the remaining Armenians from massacre. If the Turks do not respect our flag and our property, we will die with the others. May the horrors of the last weeks be a blot on the pages of history. No matter what happens, remember that I am ready to make any sacrifice, even death, and have no fear. Good bye, with love and hope.

Stanley Kerr heard these long-ago words with the rest of the crowd at Saroyan Hall, which doubles as the K-8 school's gymnasium. On this night, it was converted into an elegant setting with white tablecloths and sparkling chandeliers for the 38th annual KZV School Gala. This year was more special with Kerr in attendance. The Warriors head coach was joined by his mother, Ann, his wife, Margot, his son, Nick and daughter, Maddy.

San Francisco Mayor London Breed attended along with Congresswoman Jackie Speier. Vahan Derounian, a mortgage consultant from Wells Fargo, wore Kerr's blue Arizona jersey on top of his shirt and tie. Anahid Katchian, 74, drove from Denver with her husband. Katchian's father was one of the orphans.

The video of his late father, the images of his grandparents, the interviews with his aunts and uncles — they visibly touched Kerr. He was 10 years old when his grandfather died. He remembers his grandfather being a handyman. Whenever Stanley made the trek from Princeton, N.J., to see his grandchildren in Southern California, he would end up fixing something. Once, they went to the store together to get wood, mesh wiring and nails and Kerr built a rabbit cage with his grandfather. He remembers the kindness of grandmother, Elsa, and how she'd cook for them. He remembers a few of the favorite meals she used to make.

"They were just Granny and Grandpa to me," Kerr said. "They weren't these heroes who saved a generation of children."

Kerr was the guest of honor, but the honor didn't belong to him. More than 400 people turned out this year, unofficially the most ever, to say thank you. They heaped on Kerr the gratitude they were never able to extend to his grandparents. They threw roses at his feet, but only because he stands on their shoulders.

And Kerr, indeed, felt the gratitude. As person after person came up to him and shared their stories. As ovation after ovation serenaded his family.

"There was an energy here that I couldn't have predicted," said Mary Papazian, president of San Jose State University. "And I knew the history of the Kerrs. I've known that history for years. But there was something about (this night). It was a pent up 100 years of thanks that just came out."

Kerr already knew of his favor with the Armenian community. He knew about his family's work. He remembers his dad's parents hav-

ing night's school fundraiser were especially appreciative. Their parents or grandparents were survivors whose stories they hold dear. They overwhelmed the Kerr family. It makes sense, too, as they were directly connected to the Armenian Genocide. Their small children, dressed up in evening wear, ran around without a care in the world, because Kerr's grandparents thought their ancestors were worth saving. Stanley Kerr's book, *The Lions of Marash* — his eyewit-

pennies for their relief. Parents used "Remember the starving Armenians" as motivation for their children to not waste any food. America's entry into World War I slowed the relief activities temporarily, but the end of the war in 1918 allowed for greater efforts to aid the Armenians, including a congressional act in 1919 incorporating the Near East Relief organization.

This is where Stanley and Elsa come in.

"These people went to the other side of the world who had nothing to do with us. They had nothing to do with us," said Ani Hovannisian, the documentarian who attended Pacific Palisades High with Kerr and whose father taught with Kerr's father at UCLA. "He was the son of a Presbyterian minister, Stanley was, and he was in the Army but he wasn't in active service. He was a chemist at Walter Reed and someone came through saying the Near East Relief is looking for people to go over to the Ottoman Empire to help people in need. And he jumped. He jumped."

Kerr's grandparents were among many Americans who took ships across the oceans and seas to help this mission. Elsa Reckman went to teach in an Armenian school in Turkey after graduating from Wisconsin. Stanley Kerr was a chemist at Walter Reed General Hospital in Washington, DC, when he decided to help abroad. They both ended up working with Near East Relief, an American charity created to help the Armenians.

In 1919, Kerr's grandfather was stationed in Aleppo, Syria's largest city. He worked as a medical and sanitary officer who tended to the Armenians who survived what was known as the death march. Some of those exiled trekked through the Syrian Desert — surviving starvation, dehydration, sexual abuse and human trafficking. Stanley tended to the survivors, mostly women and children. He transferred to run a relief effort in Marash. He was there in February 1920 when French troops suddenly pulled out and left the Armenians exposed to the Turks. The Armenians were massacred dur-



The Kerr family wearing AUB sweat shirts in Lebanon. Steve Kerr is at far right. (New York Times photo)

ing Armenian friends. He knew just about every Armenian household had a picture of Mt. Ararat, the Biblical site where many believe Noah's Ark to be and the principal national symbol of Armenia. He knew if he saw a last name that ended in "ian" it was an Armenian. He told them the story of nudging his dad when it hit him Jerry Tarkanian was Armenian.

Kerr gets random thanks from Armenian people on his travels. Warriors assistant coach Ron Adams is from Fresno, a major hub in California for the Armenian community. Adams had a couple of friends on one road trip and they were enamored with Kerr's family story.

The people in the attendance for Saturday

ness account of the annihilation of the Armenian population in Western Armenia, published in 1973 — is practically required reading for Armenians.

By the 1910s, Armenian sympathy was part of the cultural fabric of American society. Then, on April 24, 1915, hundreds of Armenian leaders, intellectuals, writers, artists and doctors were killed, kicking off the exile of Armenians from their homeland, officially beginning the Armenian Genocide.

The US government under President Woodrow Wilson began an emergency drive to procure funds for survivors and refugees. Grocery stores and Sunday schools collected



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## COMMUNITY NEWS

ing a three-week siege.

In 1922, Stanley and Elsa joined the staff of a Near East Relief orphanage in Lebanon that cared for Armenian children. When he married Elsa later that year, one of the Armenian refugees served as a flower girl in their wedding. A malaria outbreak forced them to abandon the orphanage in 1923.

After returning home, the two ended up back in Lebanon at the American University of Beirut. Stanley was the chairman of the biochemistry department and Elsa was the dean of women students. They had four children, including Kerr's father, Malcolm. He was born and raised in Beirut. In 1982, Malcolm became president of the same university where his father worked despite a civil war still being waged in the region. On January 18, 1984, Malcolm Kerr was shot and killed by two gunmen on behalf of Islamic Jihadists who took credit for the murder.

Kerr was in college at the University of Arizona at the time, but the nurturing of his father had already planted the seed of his worldview.

Kerr, as a kid, cared more about playing hoops than what his parents were talking about. But the eight-time NBA champion, now 53, can't overstate the impact his upbringing continues to have on the coach and person he is today.

He spent a lot of time overseas, in places like France, Tunisia, Egypt. His house was like a United Nations gathering. His parents would have barbecues and Kerr said they were like an international festival.

He was back in the midst of one on Saturday. He was gifted a statue of Mt. Ararat as a token of appreciation. At the end of the night, he and the family joined in a "shourchbar" — a traditional Armenian line dance where the participants are connected by pinkies.

"Growing up overseas, knowing people from all over the world, knowing my family's background," Kerr said, "it just gave me a broader picture of the world, gave me a better understanding of people. How we're all pretty much the same at our core but we just come from different cultures and different backgrounds. But

we can all connect very easy, especially through sports.

"It's a good reminder that there's a lot of reasons why people connect to sports, connect to teams or athletes," he continued. "It's not just the ball going in the hoop or the team winning. It's the emotional connection that happens. People who are Steph Curry fans, they know about Steph's life and what he's accomplished, not only on the court and off. You think about all the impact Kevin (Durant) has made, all of his charitable work around the country, all the lives he's touched. So then you think about there is a whole generation of kids out there who are Kevin Durant fans, Warriors fans, for a whole different reason. Part of it is basketball, but part of it is the impact he is making on their lives."

Hovannisian, while working on the documentary, has orchestrated several interviews with the Kerr family. She also found hundreds of pages of letters written by Stanley and Elsa. In one of the letters, Stanley said that as he typed, a gunshot fired off with each stroke of a letter.

For Armenians, these letters bring to life their history. They have lost their homeland and are spread across the globe as a result of their exile. They don't have access to their culture's treasures. They are witnessing pieces of their heritage, such as their native language, slip away as they assimilate into the morays of other countries.

In 1991, the country received its independence with the fall of the Soviet Union. The Republic of Armenia. But most of what was their land now belongs to Turkey. Hovannisian's first name comes from the city Ani, which was formerly the capital of an Armenian kingdom. Ani means "city of 1,001 churches" and its religious structures were considered among the most advanced in the world

and a source of great pride for Armenians. Now, it sits in Turkish territory, in view of Armenia but still unreachable. The Cathedral of Ani was where the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church dwelled for a half of century. It's visible from a distance, the domed basilica abandoned in decay.

For a community of people who have been

They were in the hospital saving people. They were negotiating peace. They were having Christmas dinner. They were giving food to the orphans. And he still had time to write letters. Elsa, too. And these letters are the biggest treasures because that's the evidence.

"My grandmother," Hovannisian continued, "who was orphaned and she saw her twin six-



Steve Kerr and KZV Principal Grace Andonian and others take to the dance floor.

stripped of much of their culture, for people who have heard others deny the validity of the Armenian Genocide, those letters from Kerr's grandparents bring their heritage to life. The stories being told, the evidence they present, it means the world to them. Saturday night, Hovannisian shared some of them with the Kerr family through the preview of the documentary, which was a condensed behind-the-scenes look at its early stages of development.

"He kept a diary and it was so meticulous," she said. "These people were saving lives. They were running out into the street saving people.

month-old siblings taken away, never to be seen again. My grandfather had eight brothers and sisters. He left and came back to his village and everybody was gone. You grow up with these stories and you know it's real. You know it happened. And you have denialists saying it didn't happen but then you have this evidence — not of an Armenian, but of an American, of many Americans and non-Armenians who went from around the world to help. ... Stanley Kerr and Elsa Kerr gave us renewed life."

— Reported from San Francisco



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Kazarian Bill Would Put End to Legislators Treating LGBTQ Marriages Separately

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (Uprise RI) — State Rep. Katherine Kazarian (Democrat, District 63, East Providence) introduced a bill on February 5, H5238, that would take away the power of some Rhode Island General Assembly legislators to pass judgement on marriages of which they disapprove, preventing the institutionalized bigotry currently on display.

Kazarian's bill would "authorize the governor in his or her discretion to designate a justice of the peace in each town or city, as considered expedient, to solemnize marriages. It would also allow the governor to designate any other person to solemnize a particular marriage on a particular date. There would be a fee to obtain a certificate of designation, whether the application is submitted by mail, hand, facsimile or electronically."

If passed, the bill would allow anyone to act as an officiant during a marriage after filling out a simple online form, and would allow people to become officiants when the General Assembly is not in session.

Right now the General Assembly has to be in session to pass such bills.

For the LGBTQ community, a bill like Kazarian's will prevent members of the General Assembly from treating their marriages in a second-class fashion. Since Marriage Equality passed in Rhode Island, both the House and the Senate have separated out those solemnization of marriage bills that appear to be for same sex couples and passed the bills separately.

Doing this allows certain legislators, notably Arthur Corvese (Democrat, District 55, North Providence) in the House and Frank Lombardi (Democrat, District 26, Cranston) in the Senate, to abstain or vote no on these marriages.

Kazarian's bill is the first to try to tackle this issue since 2015, when the Senate passed Sen. Michael McCaffrey (Democrat, District 29, Warwick)'s bill that would have sent would be officiants to the Secretary of State's office and charge a \$150 fee. The bill failed to pass in the House.



State Rep. Katherine Kazarian

Passage of Armenian Genocide Resolution Priority

WASHINGTON — As the 116th Congress begins, the Armenian Assembly of America prioritizes passage of a congressional resolution on the Armenian Genocide as minority communities continue to be persecuted and targeted. Across the Middle East and other parts of the world, vulnerable minorities are facing the preconditions of genocide, or have already been subjected to gross violations of human rights. Just recently, Armenian schools in California were vandalized when trespassers hung Turkish flags. The Assembly has called for universal condemnation of this hate crime and urged a swift investigation to hold the perpetrators accountable.

"We have heard from our members and the community's concern and frustration with the status quo regarding the semantic gymnastics which the Executive Branch, and recently some courts, have gone through to avoid using the term Armenian Genocide. They are not only embarrassing but also dangerous in a time where we see the risk of genocide in the same region and around the world increasing, as well as an increase in hate crimes. Since President Ronald Reagan clearly used the term Armenian Genocide, successive presidents have been afraid to reaffirm the United States record so clearly. It is a dysfunctional situation that needs to be corrected, and once again we will turn to Congress to reflect the will of the American people and be faithful to the principles that make this country great," stated Assembly Co-Chairs Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian.

"The United States has officially recognized the Armenian Genocide since the time of the 1948 Genocide Convention. The subject is covered in the training for United States foreign service officers, exhibited in the US Holocaust Museum, confirmed by the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, and taught in schools and universities around the country. A perfect example is the landmark case in Massachusetts to continue teaching the facts of the Armenian Genocide and other crimes against humanity in public schools across the state, for which the Assembly filed an amicus brief, and, with the support of teachers, students, and survivors, defeated Turkish efforts to remove it from Massachusetts classrooms," the Co-Chairs added.

According to the Early Warning Project of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), Turkey is ranked 8th among countries with the highest risk of committing mass killings, with an 11.2 percent chance of committing new mass killings during 2019. Turkey has been in the top 15 in each of USHMM's past three annual assessments.

"We are watching history repeat itself as minorities are facing genocidal persecution, and in some cases carried out by Turkey. We must act now before Turkey attempts to commit another genocide in the region, this time against the Kurdish population in Syria. By holding Turkey accountable for the genocide committed by Ottoman Turks in 1915 — the first Genocide of the 20th Century — then Erdogan's like-minded genocidal attacks today

would be checked and stopped," Assembly Co-Chairs also stated.

"Events around the world and even in the United States today only confirm the dark

thinking of Hitler in his speech inscribed on the walls of the Holocaust Museum: 'Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?' It is time for passage of a new

Armenian Genocide Resolution for America's sake and for the victims past and present," they concluded.



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# Arts & Living

## Conductor Orbelian Lets Loose on Grammy Nominations, Friends and Future

By Roza Grigoryan

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Opera News describes him as a dream conductor for singers. Constantine Orbelian, People's Artist of Russia, conductor, Director and Artistic Director of the Spendiaryan Opera and Ballet National Academic Theatre, is again a Grammy nominee.



Constantine Orbelian

This year the 61st Grammy Award took place in the US on February 10. His recording of Verdi's "Rigoletto" was nominated in the Best Opera Recording category. Though he did not win ("Bates: The (R)evolution Of Steve Jobs" won), this nomination marked his third for a Grammy.

### Grammy and 'Rigoletto'

The "Rigoletto" CD was released by DELOS Productions and is distributed by Naxos Distribution Company internationally. Regarding this particular recording, Verdi's Rigoletto is of course one of the most well known and popular of Verdi's operas, and Dmitri Hvorostovsky's interpretations in the great opera houses of the world – Royal Opera House – London, Vienna State Opera, New York's Metropolitan Opera and other theatres were received with huge critical acclaim and tremendous success. When Dmitri was tragically diagnosed with brain cancer in June of 2015, there were a number of recordings that he told me he wanted to make before he could no longer sing. Rigoletto was one of them. We were extremely lucky with the cast of the recording- we invited the young superstar American soprano Nadine Sierra to sing Gilda, the wonderful and charismatic Italian tenor Francesco Demuro as the Duke, the velvet voiced and beautiful Byelorussian Mezzo soprano Oksana Volkova was our Maddalena, the remarkable Italian bass Andrea Mastroni was Sparafucile and an extraordinary supporting cast along with the excellent Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra and the Kaunas State Chorus. As a matter of fact, besides Dmitri and myself, Nadine Sierra and Francesco Demuro were also nominated for the Grammy Award as well as our producers and sound engineers ViliusKeras and Aleksandra Keriene.

see ORBELIAN, page 15



Marianne Auricoste

## Marianne Auricoste

### 'I Grew Up with Armenia in My Heart'

YEREVAN/PARIS – Marianne Auricoste started as an actress, but then devoted herself to poetry and reciting. She founded the association Le Chant des Mots [The Song of Words] (supported by the French Ministry of Culture, the National Book Center and the Regional Directorate of Contemporary Art), which organizes creative writing workshops for adults and children. On stage, she performs Euripides, Racine, Chekhov, Claudel, Strindberg, Milosz and Brecht, but also gives poetry shows. Auricoste is also a producer for RFI and France-

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Culture public radio stations. Her published works include *Letter from Beauce* (Chambelland, 2001, poems), *Conversation in the Dark* (L'Harmattan, 2001), *The Promise* (L'Harmattan, 2003) *Guillevic, the Wedding of Gull* (L'Harmattan, 2007) and *The Clay of Words* (2015, Casterman, a poem). Auricoste has contributed to the magazines *Vagabondages*, *Europe*, *Sud*, *Dire* and *Trousse Livre*.

**Dear Marianne, the origin of our first contact was your Armenian grandmother, as well as her sisters. During their long life, these incredible Babayan sisters, three art professionals – a singer, a painter and a pianist – served the Armenian and French cultures. You must remember them very well, do not you?**

I grew up surrounded by my Armenian family. My grandmother, Arminia-Armenuhi, a painter, married to my grandfather, a Catalan doctor Charles Carbonell, lived in Meudon (a suburb near Paris), a few blocks from our house. My sister, my mom (Guidette Carbonell) and I were there almost every day. Every Sunday, the family met at my grandmother's place, including my grand aunt Marguerite Babaian (singer), my aunt, my uncle (the brother of Guidette) and my first cousins. It was then the tea ceremony, the chatter in French, in Armenian, the news of each other. My great-aunt Marguerite, very active in the Armenian community, told us about her students, her meetings and chronicled the latest Armenian events. She was our ambassador, always active and dynamic, very patriotic, very passionate. I loved her stories and her enthusiasm. She dreamed of teaching me Armenian. I began to decipher with her the alphabet and I already knew a few words. She passed on to me her love for her country and I felt that it was mine too. I have always felt from my childhood that I belonged to that culture and people of which I was proud. My grandmother told me about her childhood at Tiflis, and her stories made me dream. My great-grandfather, Avetik Babaian was a doctor, a great researcher. He had founded a research center in Tiflis and the whole family lived there in a big house. My great-grandmother, Sofia Babayan, a great scholar, had opened a French school and took care of the education of her three daughters, Arminia, Marguerite and Chouchik. One was destined for painting, the second for singing and the third for music. The three sisters came to Paris to perfect their art. A very daring trip for the time. The three sisters have not left Paris.

**Your cousin, author Claire Hsu Accomando, the granddaughter of Chuchanik Babaian, mentioned in her autobiography that they called her their Armenian grandmother. Did you also call your grandmother, Armenuhi or Arminia**

see AURICOSTE, page 17

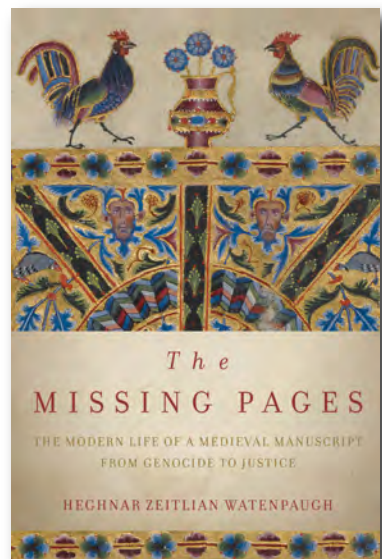
## Heghnar Watenpaugh to Speak about Missing Pages

WATERTOWN – Prof. Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh will speak about her recently published book, *The Missing Pages: The Modern Life of a Medieval Manuscript, from Genocide to Justice*, at the AGBU New England Center, 247 Mt. Auburn St., on Wednesday, February 27, at 7:30 p.m. The event is co-sponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and the Armenian Museum of America.

The *Missing Pages* (Stanford Univ. Press, 2019) is the biography of the Zeytun Gospels, a manuscript illuminated by the greatest medieval Armenian artist, Toros Roslin, and which is at once art, sacred object and cultural heritage. Its tale mirrors the story of its scattered community as Armenians have struggled



Prof. Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh



to redefine themselves after genocide and in the absence of a homeland. Watenpaugh follows in the manuscript's footsteps through seven centuries, from medieval Armenia to the killing fields of 1915, the refugee camps of Aleppo, Ellis Island, Soviet Armenia, the J. Paul Getty Museum, and ultimately to a Los Angeles courtroom.

Reconstructing the path of the pages, Watenpaugh uncovers the rich tapestry of an extraordinary artwork and the people touched by it. At once a story of genocide and survival, of unimaginable loss and resilience, *The Missing Pages* captures the human costs of war and persuasively makes the case for a human right to art.

Watenpaugh is professor of art history at the University of California, Davis. She is the award-winning author of *The Image of an Ottoman City: Architecture in Aleppo* (2004). Her writing has also appeared in the *Huffington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times*.

This event is free and open to the public. A reception and refreshments will take place before and after the program.

For more information about this program, contact NAASR at [hq@naasr.org](mailto:hq@naasr.org).





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Top A-List Hollywood Talent Manager Keshishian Shares Her Key Strategies For Phenomenal Success

By Kathy Caprino

LOS ANGELES — As one who loves film and music and appreciates the immense creative talent that fuels the entertainment industry, I've often wondered about what goes on behind the scenes that contributes to a meteoric rise of a performer or creative talent. Who are the managers of top Hollywood talent today, and how are they conducting their own practices and their lives to help creative talent reach such amazing levels of success?

This week, I had the chance to explore that

manager overseeing her music, film, and branding career. Since then, her singles *Good For You*, *Same Old Love* and *Hands to Myself* hit #1 on radio and Gomez became the highest-selling female artist of 2015. In addition to her role as a representative, Keshishian has also produced films including "My Idiot Brother," "Haven," "Life of Crime" and "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies" starring Lily James, and "Jane Got a Gun," to name a few.

On top of her impressive professional resume, she graduated magna cum laude from Harvard, making her a very unique representative in the industry.

I caught up with Keshishian to discuss her background, strategies for success and key lessons in working with some of Hollywood's top talent today.

**Kathy Caprino:** Aleen, how has your background, education and upbringing helped you create the great success you've experienced?

**Aleen Keshishian:** My parents were the biggest factor. They were hard-working people who pursued and achieved the American dream by immigrating to Boston from Beirut, Lebanon in 1968 so my brother and I could have the best education. They spoke 5 languages and were extremely ambitious. They fully participated in American life and my father, who had been a very successful pediatrician and

author in Beirut, had to retrain here and became a board-certified radiologist in the U.S.

But at the same time, even as my brother and I were growing up in Manchester, N.H., my parents were also very proud of, and devoted to, their Armenian heritage and community. It was just understood that we would speak, read, and write both languages, that we would know the histories of both countries, and that we would put in the extra hours to do well at school in English and at home.

My mother had only heard of Harvard University back in Beirut, so when we were both accepted by Harvard, my parents were thrilled. I majored in Fine Arts and directed plays while at Harvard. But I benefited most from the rigor and breadth of my education. I also met my husband on the first day of school since he was living across the hall of our freshman year dorm. All of our friends from college

are still our best friends and I ended up representing several of them (Darren Aronofsky, Jesse Peretz and Maya Forbes).

**Caprino:** What has motivated you most in your life to reach for the stars?

**Keshishian:** My parents and brother were a huge factor. I was raised to believe I could achieve any of my dreams if I worked hard and took advantage of opportunities. I've always had a lot of energy, enthusiasm, and curiosity from when I was young until now. I've always wanted to see the new movie or Broadway play or TV show.

And I've always had strong opinions. I respond to talent and have great respect and compassion for artists. It takes a lot of courage. I lead from the heart. It's how I interact with the world. And when you combine the curiosity and the enthusiasm, I think that's key.

My father told me from a young age that I should make my own way and be independent. He always told me that marriage was an option, not a requirement, and that I had the intelligence and drive to be just fine on my own, if that was the path I settled on. I wouldn't need to depend on a husband, whether for income or status or whatever. I could do anything men could do.

As it turned out, I did get married. And we have children. And I've been incredibly lucky in that part of my life.

But professionally, thanks to my dad's words and to the daily energy and high standards of my mom, I was just always highly motivated and driven.

**Caprino:** What has working with some of Hollywood's top talent taught you about managing your career and those of other A-listers?

**Keshishian:** I've learned to be grateful for what you already have. Pay attention to other parts of your life, not just work. And when you are at work, do a great job. Do more than what you are asked to do. Become indispensable. Have integrity. Have fun. Whatever the role may be, whatever the project is, commit to it fully. Because each thing leads to the next and helps build your reputation. Don't conserve your best efforts for some perfect role or job you expect down the line. Treat each job as an audition for the next one. And feel pride and gratitude about getting the gig in the first place!

**Caprino:** What do you do to stay grounded (ethically, emotionally, etc.) when working with such high-powered individuals and projects?

**Keshishian:** Even people with only a few years in the business can see that there are great rises and falls, that there are stars who are earning big awards and paychecks today who could well be struggling two years from now. It doesn't take long in the business to realize that there will be peaks and valleys — for everyone, including yourself.

One thing I try to do is to connect in a real way with people. Whether it's established talent, agents, or producers, or people who are just starting out in my business — or any business — we all had to start somewhere, and ultimately we are all human beings who have to deal with all the same stuff. Sickness, aging, the loss of loved ones, stress at work, you name it. I try to keep my eyes and my heart open.

The loss of my father in 2018 was an incredibly difficult time for me. He was 87 and led an amazing life. There was nothing tragic about his passing. But we were also so close, through my whole life. He was always my biggest fan so saying goodbye to him was devastating. But even that — even the incredible awfulness of that human experience, saying goodbye to a loved one — I met some incredible people during it. Nurses, caregivers, peers who were going through similar situations. And my clients and friends that I work with daily rallied around me and were so generous, kind, and helpful. It was a painful time, but there was a lot of love, too.

**Caprino:** What would you say are your top strategies for achieving great success in the male-dominated field of entertainment? What suggestions do you have for other women who wish to do the same?

**Keshishian:** That's a tricky one. I think about it a lot. And I definitely had the feeling, starting out young in the business, that I had to be extra good at my job, or make extra sure that my salary was commensurate with my worth.

On the other hand, I had some incredible mentors, both male and female. Legends in the business. The casting director Juliet Taylor, the super-agent Sam Cohn. It's a long list. So in that sense, I can't say the deck was stacked against me.

I guess I would say, first of all, control what you can control. That is, do an excellent job at work. That's the bedrock requirement.

But also, especially in this rapidly evolving cultural awareness of what women have historically been confronted with, and frequently still are confronted with, I think you need to have a firm understanding, inside yourself, what is okay and what isn't.

When you are confronted with the not-okay thing, whether it's a salary offer that doesn't line up, or a comment that crosses into a sexual area, whatever — you need to speak up, be assertive, make a case for yourself, and realize that you deserve the same respect that men take for granted.

I credit my mom for giving me the daily example there. She's not a lawyer. She never went to law school. But she also is a lawyer, you know? She knows the power of words, the power of conviction, and she has always, always been

see KESHISHIAN, page 15



Aleena Keshishian with friend and client Selena Gomez

very question. I was excited to catch up with Aleen Keshishian, founder and CEO of Lighthouse Management & Media and one of the most highly respected talent representatives in the business. Her clients include Jennifer Aniston, Selena Gomez, Paul Rudd, Mark Ruffalo, Jason Bateman, Gwyneth Paltrow, Laura Linney, Orlando Bloom, Josh Gad, Tophér Grace, Billy Crudup, Justin Theroux, Emily Mortimer, Kathryn Hahn, Nina Dobrev, Miranda Kerr, writer/directors Maya Forbes and Wally Wolodarsky, and director Jesse Peretz.

Keshishian's first client was Natalie Portman (before she came out as the precocious star of "The Professional"). Keshishian put Darren Aronofsky together with Portman to collaborate on "Black Swan," the film that earned Portman an Oscar for Best Actress. Five years ago, Selena Gomez asked Keshishian to be her

## Gomidas Institute Publishes New Book by Raffi Bedrosyan on Trauma and Resilience

LONDON — *Trauma and Resilience: Armenians in Turkey — Hidden, Not Hidden and No Longer Hidden* by Raffi Bedrosyan is a collection of articles about events in Turkey which have profoundly affected the lives of Armenians, hidden Armenians and no longer hidden Armenians who have recently returned to their roots. The genocide in 1915

still denied by the state or unknown by the peoples of Turkey. In all the articles, there is a common theme of trauma — a mixture of negative emotions resulting from risk to one's own life or livelihood, fear, danger, and discrimination, combined with anger, sadness and defiance in the face of continuing denial and injustice. But there is also the other common trait of "resilience," the instinctive skills of flexibility, adaptation and intelligence, resulting in survival against all odds.

The book is available from Amazon.com, books@gomidas.org or directly from the author.

Advance comments about the book include one from Thomas de Waal, Senior Fellow Carnegie Europe, London, United Kingdom: "Raffi Bedrosyan's insights into the state of modern Turkey, the story of its hidden

Armenians and the clashing identities of Turkish citizens are deep, nuanced and illuminating. Anything Raffi writes is worth reading and it is wonderful to have his writings collected in one volume."

*Trauma and Resilience: Armenians in Turkey — Hidden, Not Hidden and No Longer Hidden*

By Raffi Bedrosyan

Introduction by Fethiye Cetin, lawyer and author of *My Grandmother*, Istanbul, Turkey

Introduction by Prof. Taner Akcam, Department of History, Clark University, Mass.

### BOOKS

not only caused the disappearance of 1.5 million Armenians from their historic homeland, but also resulted in the assimilation and Islamization of thousands of Armenian orphans, creating the "hidden Armenians," the living victims of the genocide. Almost 100 years later, certain events encouraged the grandchildren of the hidden Armenians to re-awaken and return to their Armenian roots, language and culture. Some of the articles explain these events and the author's role in them. Some other articles reveal little known historic facts about Armenians and hidden Armenians, their contribution to culture and architecture in Turkey,







## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Conductor Orbelian Lets Loose on Grammy Nominations, Friends and Future

ORBELIAN, from page 13

## Hvorostovsky's Genius

It's hard to pinpoint the uniqueness of working with a genius like Hvorostovsky. Everything is unique — his work ethic, energy, drive, professionalism, intuitive musical architecture, amazing interpretive powers and of course his glorious voice were beyond compare. He was a great colleague, and it was a privilege and honor to stand next to him on the stage for 20 years. I must add that there was one more recording which Dmitri was dreaming of mak-



Conductor Constantine Orbelian with Dmitri Hvorostovsky

ing. He always had wanted to sing the role of Boris Godunov (the original version is written for a baritone) and we were scheduled to record Mussorgsky's masterpiece in February 2017 with an excellent cast from the Mariinsky Theatre. Unfortunately Dmitri came down with pneumonia after our concert in St. Petersburg in December of 2016. He remained in the hospital in St. Petersburg for almost two months and was not able to make that final recording. So, one of his dreams never came true.

No one will ever replace Dmitri — not on a professional level and of course not on a personal level. He was one of the most wonderful human beings I had ever encountered. We were not only colleagues, but, we were true friends. I love his family and children like my own.

## I Don't Expect Anything

Of course it's very exciting to be nominated for such a prestigious award in the Best Opera Recording category. I'm old and wise enough not to expect anything, but, if it does turn out

that we do receive the award on February 10, it will be a fitting and true honor to Dmitri's great talent and the extraordinary cast of singers and to the legacy that he has left us.

This year I am not the only Armenian conductor nominated. My colleague Peter Ounjian (conductor of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra) was nominated in the Best Classical Compendium category. I didn't carefully look through all of the categories and nominations, so, maybe there is another Armenian name on the list somewhere. Last year, the great Tigran Mansourian was nominated for his superb *Requiem* and I was nominated as conductor in the Best Classical Solo Album with the Sviridov recording I was referring to before.

## New breath of Opera Theatre

We are planning the Yerevan Premier of the "Magic Flute" on February 25 with the beautiful projections and production done by our very talented Italian Opera Director Paolo Micciche with costumes done by Alberto Spiazzi.

We are planning a concert version of the Verdi opera "Attila" on February 21 with the great Georgian bass Paata Burchuladze and our soloists, orchestra and chorus. We are also plan-

ning a concert version of Rossini's opera "Il Viaggio a Reims," as well a production of Bellini's "Norma" with our friend Paolo Micciche. We are also planning the staging of Vache Sarafyan's new ballet, "Ancient Gods," and Vartan Adjemian's "The Death of Kikos" to commemorate Tumanyan's anniversary as well as a new production of Tigranian's "Anoush." Of course, everything depends on the financial resources available to us.

This concert which I am planning to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the great American Composer Leonard Bernstein will take place this year. We are a bit late, but, we were very busy in 2018. As it turns out, I understand that the first performance of "West Side Story" in the USSR took place at the Yerevan Opera and Ballet Theatre in 1963. I wish that there were some photos or reviews or articles on the subject. We are still looking for more information on that production. The American Embassy will be helping us in this production and also we will be looking for additional funding to make this a wonderful celebratory event.

As you know, tours are planned a long time in advance — especially with large groups like ballets and operas. So, I am holding talks and discussions with impresarios in various parts of

the world (the UK, Europe, Asia and the USA) to see what we can try to do in the future. Again, everything depends on what finances.

## First Time in Opera Theatre

I was at the opera house for the first time in June of 1970 when I was 14 years old. I had come to Armenia for the first time with my mother from California. It was a tremendously important and emotional visit for me. I met my uncle Konstantin Orbelian for the first time and also my maternal grandmother Zinaida Voznesenskaya. My mother hadn't seen her mother since 1945 when they were separated in Germany and my grandmother and grandfather were forcibly taken back to Ukraine from the German camps. At the time when I met my uncle, and my father hadn't seen his brother since March 1941. You can't imagine what an important and emotional trip that was. At the time, my uncle's State Pop Orchestra of Armenia had their rehearsal space at the Philharmonic Hall, so, I was a frequent visitor at his rehearsals as well. It was a fascinating and very interesting time for me.

My amazing uncle always told me, "Never listen to anyone, think for yourself and do what your heart tells you." I know that he is right.

# Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian



## Apricot Brandy Cake

### INGREDIENTS

1 cup unsalted butter (2 sticks)  
2 1/2 cups sugar  
5 eggs  
3 cups all-purpose flour, sifted  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg  
1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves  
1 cup sour cream  
1 teaspoon vanilla (or orange extract)  
1/2 teaspoon rum or rum flavoring  
1/2 cup apricot brandy (Calvados or brandy of choice)

### PREPARATION

Pre-heat oven to 325 degrees. Grease and flour a large bundt pan. Cream the butter with the sugar in a large bowl. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Sift dry ingredients together two times and set aside. Combine sour cream, vanilla, rum, and brandy. Add the dry ingredients, alternately with the sour cream mixture, beginning and ending with the dry. Pour mixture into the prepared pan. Bake for 1 hour and 10 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cake rest for 10 minutes in the pan or on a rack. Turn onto a serving plate. Serve with warm apricot jam, Brandy Glaze, or topped with fresh whipped cream. Serves 8-10.

### BRANDY GLAZE

1 cup powdered sugar  
23 tablespoons butter  
2 teaspoons brandy  
5-6 teaspoons milk or cream

### PREPARATION

Heat butter in medium pan over medium heat until melted and golden brown; cool slightly. Add powdered sugar, brandy and milk; beat until smooth.

\*Note: 1 cup chopped walnuts or pecans and 1 cup chopped golden raisins may be added to this recipe.

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



## Hollywood Talent Manager Shares Her Key Strategies For Success

KESHISHIAN, from page 14

ready to stand up for herself or for anyone — male, female, young, old — who she thought was getting a raw deal. Her name is Cecile Keshishian. She is in her mid-80's now and still a total force of nature.

**Caprino:** What's your ultimate dream for where you'd like to go in your professional life, and the legacy you'd like to leave behind?

**Keshishian:** I thought about that a lot recently, having said goodbye to my father and having helped organize the memorial service. There's a bottom-line aspect to the whole thing, obviously. What is the person remembered for? How did they live?

Professionally, I try not to be too fixed in what the end goal has to be. I think you need to leave some room for events to occur and situations to evolve. It's not always going to be just according to your own plan. Sometimes it might wind up being even better than your plan!

As for the legacy I leave behind, I want to be remembered for being an original thinker and someone who made a positive difference in people's lives. I hope I'm remembered for being personally generous. And kind. And I hope I can leave the brilliant and creative people I work with with a company that is thriving and making a difference both with the stories being told and with the artists who have platforms to change the world.

Most importantly, I hope my children remember my husband and me the same way I think of my own parents — hard-working, passionate, honest, sincere, curious, and deeply committed to our family.

(Lighthouse Management and Media)





ARTS & LIVING

C A L E N D A R

CALIFORNIA

**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. Sponsored by the Metro LA Tekeyan Chapter.

**APRIL 4 and 7 — One of the opera world’s hottest stars, Alessandro Safina, will bring in his pop-opera** 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. 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> Dolby Theater in Los Angeles on April 7. (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>

**APRIL 27 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada Presents** the 2019 North American tour of the VEM Ensemble of the UCLA Herb Albert School of Music, Danielle Segen, mezzo-soprano, Ji Eun Hwang, violin 1, Aiko Richter, violin 2, Morgan O’Shaughnessey, viola, Jason Pegis, cello. 7:30 p.m. Tekeyan Cultural Association Los Angeles Chapter Cosponsored with Abril Bookstore, 415 E. Broadway, Glendale. For tickets, call Abril 818 243-4112. Introductory remarks by Artistic Director Professor Movses Pogossian. Performing a world premiere of Tekeyan songs by the Los Angeles-based composer Artashes Kartalyan, commissioned by the Tekeyan Cultural Association, and masterworks by Komitas, Khachaturian, Mirzoyan, Hovhannes, and Schubert. For more information, email [tcadirector@aol.com](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com).

FLORIDA

**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 feature Armenian Duduk Soloist and Classical Clarinetist Mher Mnatsakanyan and Bassist Hova Burian. Official FaceBook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/AlessandroSafinaUSA/> The performance will be held at Fillmore Miami Beach in Miami (Times 8:00-9:30pm)

MASSACHUSETTS

**FEBRUARY 20 – MARCH 30 — The Armenian Museum is offering a six-week art** program for children of all backgrounds ages 7-14. The program’s classes are Drawing and Painting, Collage, and Pottery Decoration. Students will find inspiration among the objects on display in the galleries, and study global influences on Armenian art and culture. Full information can be found at <https://www.armenianmuseum.org/events/winter-studio-classes>. Session 1, Wednesdays, 3:30–5:30 pm, February 20–March 27; Session 2, Saturdays, 1–3 pm, February 23–March 30

**MARCH 2 — Sts. Vartanantz Mardi Gras Family Kef Night. What a better way to anticipate Great Lent** than to dance up a storm at Sts. Vartanantz’s fabulous

Mardi Gras Family Kef Night Dinner-Dance, 6 p.m., 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford. Saturday. Following a sumptuous chicken-pilaf dinner, Armenian and Middle East dance music will be provided by the dynamic Jason Naroian Ensemble featuring Jason Naroian-dumbeg/vocals; Ara Jeknavorian – clarinet; Brian Anisbigian – oud; and Dave Anisbigian – guitar/vocals. Prior to the dinner-dance at 5 p.m., there will be an Armenian and Middle East line dancing workshop led by the fabulous “Hye Stepper” Diane Juknavorian where all can learn all the favorite Armenian and Greek dance steps. Paid in advance tickets must be received by February 26: Adults \$25, Students \$10, and 5 & under Free. At the door: Adults \$35 and Students \$15. For reservations, contact Maria Kazanjian (617) 240-3686 or [Ria.tk@verizon.net](mailto:Ria.tk@verizon.net). Tables of 8 can be reserved in advance with full payment Checks made payable to: Sts Vartanantz Armenian Church.

**MARCH 2 — St. Stephen’s Armenian Elementary School (SSAES) PTO annual fundraiser Soiree.** 7 p.m. at the Historic Sanborn House in Winchester. Event will feature food by anoush’ella saj kitchen, sweets by SSAES alumnus Arthur Davtian, executive pastry chef at French Press Bakery and Cafe. Open bar, Scotch and Champagne tasting stations, and a DJ to top it off. The event will feature live artist painting by Alik Arzoumanian, which will be auctioned off later in the evening. Alik is an illustrator, author, and SSAES Kindergarten Armenian teacher. Her illustrations can be viewed online [www.studioalique.com](http://www.studioalique.com). For tickets and sponsorship information e-mail: [event@ssaes.org](mailto:event@ssaes.org)

**MARCH 2 — Poon Paregentan Family Kef Night,** Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church, 180 Old Westford Rd., Chelmsford, MA. Featuring the Fabulous Jason Naroian Ensemble: Jason Naroian – Vocals and Dumbeg, Ara Jeknavorian – Clarinet, Dave Anisbigian - Guitar and Brian Anisbigian – Oud. Armenian Dance Class - 5 p.m. Dinner and Dancing at 6:00 pm. Paid in advance tickets must be received by February 26: Adults \$25, Students \$10, and 5 & under Free. At the door: Adults \$35 and Students \$15. For reservations, contact Maria Kazanjian (617) 240-3686 or [Ria.tk@verizon.net](mailto:Ria.tk@verizon.net). Tables of 8 can be reserved in advance with full payment Checks made payable to: Sts Vartanantz Armenian Church.

**MARCH 3 — Sunday, Amaras Art Alliance presents Dolma Fest and Contest, Celebrating Poon Parekentan.** Also serving traditional harissa and featuring Armenian music for dancing. Holy Cross Armenian Catholic Church, 200 Lexington St., Belmont, 2 pm. Come and taste a variety of dolmas and vote for your favorite recipe. Two of the competing chefs will win cash prizes: \$200 first place and \$100 second place. Voting open to valid ticket holders and while supplies are available. Tickets \$25 at [Amarasonline.com](http://Amarasonline.com) or by calling 617-331-0426. To register for the contest call Arax at 617-733-7162.

**MARCH 4 — St. James Men’s Club Dinner Meeting** - social hour and mezza at 6:15 PM and dinner at 7:00 PM, St James Armenian Church Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center - Keljik Hall, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, Watertown, MA. The speaker will be Dick Flavin, poet laureate of the Boston Red Sox. He is the senior ambassador of the Boston Red Sox and voice of Fenway Park, serving as public address announcer for Red Sox day games. His television commentaries won seven New England Emmy Awards. He is a nationally known speaker and is a member of the Massachusetts Broadcasters Hall of Fame. Mezza and a Losh Kebab & Kheyma Dinner \$17/person. Ladies invited. For additional information call the St James Church office at 617-923-8860 or call Hapet Berberian at 781-367-6598

**MARCH 9 – Commemoration of the February 18th Against Soviet Rule and Commemoration of the Baku/Sumgait Pogroms.** Buffet Dinner and Program. Narrated Slide Presentation by Joe Dagdigian on “Unseen Armenia – Two Sides of the Border.” Rare images of Armenian Homeland on both sides of Armenia’s and Artsakh’s borders, as well as the patriotic Armenians who inhabit these lands. Jaffarian Hall, St. Gregory Armenian Church, 158 Main St., No. Andover, MA. 6:00 pm. Adults - \$15; Students - \$5. For information and reservations, please contact [armenj@comcast.net](mailto:armenj@comcast.net) or call 978-256-2538. Sponsored by the Lowell Aharonian Gomideh of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

**MARCH 31 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada Presents** the 2019 North American tour of the VEM Ensemble of the UCLA Herb

Albert School of Music, Danielle Segen, mezzo-soprano, Ji Eun Hwang, violin 1, Aiko Richter, violin 2, Morgan O’Shaughnessey, viola, Jason Pegis, cello. BOSTON Sunday, March 31, 1 p.m.cosponsored with Holy Trinity Armenian Church, 145 Brattle St., Cambridge. Free admission. Introductory remarks by Artistic Director Professor Movses Pogossian. Performing a world premiere of Tekeyan songs by the Los Angeles-based composer Artashes Kartalyan, commissioned by the Tekeyan Cultural Association, and masterworks by Komitas, Khachaturian, Mirzoyan, Hovhannes, and Schubert. For more information, email [tcadirector@aol.com](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com).

**APRIL 5 — Friday, City of Smile Boston Friends will host an evening to benefit children with cancer in Armenia.** Special guest Anna Hakobyan, the City of Smile Charitable Foundation’s Honorary Chair, wife of Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, at the Westin Waltham Hotel for her inaugural visit to Boston. The City of Smile Charitable Foundation is based in Armenia providing financial support to children with cancer. In addition, the foundation is dedicated to training doctors to provide the best cancer care in treating oncological and hematological diseases. To learn more about the City of Smile Charitable Foundation, visit [www.cityofsmile.org](http://www.cityofsmile.org). Tickets-\$150 each. For reservations, contact [Postaljian@hotmail.com](mailto:Postaljian@hotmail.com) 617/921-8962 or [Manuk0102@gmail.com](mailto:Manuk0102@gmail.com) 781/883-4470. Deadline to RSVP is March 22. Tickets will not be sold at the door. Cocktail Reception/Cash Bar - 6:30pm, Dinner and Program - 7:30 p.m.

**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.

**OCTOBER 19 — The Vosbikians are coming to the Merrimack Valley.** The Armenian Friends of America proudly present their Annual HYE KEF 5 Dance, featuring The Vosbikians. The DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Andover, MA. Tickets Purchased before 9/13/19 will include the Great Venue, Outstanding Buffet, The Vosbikian Band and 5 Free Raffle Tickets Adults \$75.00 & Students 21 & under \$65 Specially priced AFA Rooms available through 9/17/19. For Tickets and more information, Contact: Lu Sirmaian 978-683-9121 or Sharke’ Der Apkarian at 978-808-0598 Visit [www.ArmeniaFriendsofAmerica.org](http://www.ArmeniaFriendsofAmerica.org)

**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.

MICHIGAN

**FEBRUARY 27 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association and the AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School** jointly sponsor a lecture and discussion featuring Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, international law expert, and regular contributor to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator. Talk titled “Self-Determination of Nagorno Karabakh: Armenians Under International Law.” Kalfayan is the former deputy secretary general of the International Federation for Human Rights and still plays an active role in the organization. Since 2003, he has been a consulting legal expert for the Council of Europe’s Directorate General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law. Opening remarks by moderator Prof. Ronald G. Suny of the University of Michigan. 7 p.m. AGBU Alex and Marie Manoogian School Hall, 22001 Northwestern Hwy, Southfield. Program will be on

*continued on next page*





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Marianne Auricote: 'I Grew Up with Armenia in My Heart'

AURICOSTE, from page 13

## Babayan-Carbonelle, Armenian grandmother?

Arminia was a very oriental woman, tender and joyous, very in love with her husband and two children. A housewife, she painted beautiful still lifes and many portraits of her family. The famous French artist Eugène Carrière was her teacher and my grandmother was his favorite pupil.

I gave a few paintings of hers to the museum, but we fastidiously keep a large part of her work. I have a project to offer the Museum of Literature and Art of Yerevan portraits of my great-grandparents. I hope someday to bring them myself, to Yerevan - a gift that Arminia would surely approve.

She met my grandfather on the boat that brought him from Russia to Paris. My grandfather was then a naval doctor. A great passion was born between them during this crossing. Then each one followed his destiny and for a year they wrote to one another from one end of the world to the other. They met at Meudon. My grandfather left the navy. They married and settled in this suburb where they lived happily until their death, passing away at the same year in a deep old age. Their story is like a tale. I never felt the slightest tension between them.

Arminia loved her home, caring for her husband, children and later grandchildren. She had adopted France as her second home, that of her husband and family. She kept happy memories of Armenia, but she was less patriotic than her sister Marguerite. However she had the Eastern soul and the art of telling stories with a lot of humor and verve. As a child, I listened to her passionately. I still remember all the wonderful stories she rocked me all my childhood. It is she, without a doubt that made me dream a lot about Armenia.

**I remember after your visit to Armenia in 2007, you wrote to me: "The return to Paris is difficult. I am still in Armenia and I revisit each of the great moments of this extraordinary journey. Armenia struck me deeply. This trip, will prepare the future. I will come back soon with, I hope, some words of Armenian, our language." How is it possible that, only one-quarter Armenian, you are so touched by your grandmother's legacy?**

That's how I grew up, with Armenia in my

heart, that feeling never left me. I always felt that I belonged to this people, to its history, that Armenian blood ran in my veins. I always knew that I was rich in a past that was passed on to me by my family. When I really met Armenia in 2007, I had confirmation of everything that had inhabited me since childhood. Certainly, I grew up in France, I do not speak Armenian, but my heritage is Armenian, my roots. It's a very deep feeling, very entrenched.

In 2007, you presented in Paris a poetic performance entitled "Deep Songs of Armenia", in which you recited the Armenian poets translated into French - from Mesrop Mashtots to our contemporaries. For this performance you even presented yourself under the name of your grandmother: Marianne Auricoste-Babayan. Tell us about this project, please.

In 2007, the year of "Armenia My friend" celebrated by France, when I created my show "Deep Songs of Armenia" with two Armenian musicians, I made contact with the Armenian community, and I was very happy, very excited by the idea of visiting this country that I had dreamed so much. It was a great year for me. I felt at home in the villages, in the mountains, with the inhabitants. The only sadness: I did not speak the language. A pain of not being able to really have exchanges with this people. This trip was legendary. I had long hoped for it. It was like a dream, that very powerful feeling of finding my roots and my family. This was also a chance to cross this country with native Armenians who also found their roots and who told me the tragic life of their family. During this trip, there was a lot of laughter and tears. But we were all proud to belong to this great people.

**I was impressed to hear from you that you were the companion of the French poet Guillevic, who called you Armenia. Had he any interest in Armenian culture or perhaps you have transmitted it to him?**

When little, I grew up and evolved in a milieu of artists, painters, sculptors, musicians. At school, I felt different from other children. I did not like school and school society. My natural environment was very far from other children in my class. I felt like a stranger in this school. Our house in Meudon had a special atmosphere. We were very free. My sister and I and grew up in the

middle of adults - all artists, interesting and fun.

In addition I was very lonely and already I liked to invent stories that I told myself. I loved books and poetry. I recited poems that I did not understand but I liked to put words in my mouth and say them aloud in the paths of the other house, in Beauce where I went alone to walk.

And one day, I was fifteen or sixteen, I decided my destiny: actress. At seventeen, I went to the Charles Dullin School to learn my acting profession. I stayed there several years and I had the chance to study with famous actors. It was the time when Jean Vilar directed the theater of Chaillot and the teaching was formidable and exalting. Later, I played important roles in different companies in the provinces and in Paris. And one day, I met the poet Guillevic, a meeting that changed my life. I lived for fifteen years alongside Guillevic. I left the theater to devote myself to poetry. I traveled across France and abroad with poetry recitals, alone or accompanied by musicians. I created poetry shows that I proposed and performed in the provinces and suburbs of Paris. And since then I have not stopped reciting poems in different places. I also started writing and published several books. Along with my work as a reciter and poet, I conducted many writing workshops for children and adults.

I also worked a lot on dance and martial arts that I associated with my writing workshops. My "Guillevic" years were decisive years. I learned a lot from him. I admired the poet, I loved the man. We were very close, very much accomplices. I talked a lot to Guillevic from Armenia, from my family and quite naturally he called me Arminia by the name of my grandmother and I was very happy. It was

like reviving my grandmother. I like this name and it suited me. It suited us both. I was that other Arminia, a little Armenian baptized by the man I loved.

**Do you have a new project related to Armenia and Armenian culture?**

And now let's talk about a project that I've been working on for some time, that of writing about my Armenian family, my memories, my childhood, all that Armenianness that inhabits me. I feel the urgency to leave



traces, to ask words of gratitude to honor this family to which I owe so much, that I loved so much and who constituted me, who gave me my strength and my love of life. This Armenian energy, with which my family was so well endowed. The faith and joy of the Caucasus, the dancing and songs of our mountains, and the sense of the sacred that kept this people standing against all odds...

## C A L E N D A R

### from previous page

eve of anniversary of the Baku and Sumgait pogroms. Very Rev. Aren Jebejian of St. John's Armenian Church, will offer a memorial prayer for the souls of the victims. Free. Reception to follow.

**MARCH 27 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada Presents** the 2019 North American tour of the VEM Ensemble of the UCLA Herb Albert School of Music, Danielle Segen, mezzo-soprano, Ji Eun Hwang, violin 1, Aiko Richter, violin 2, Morgan O'Shaughnessey, viola, Jason Pegis, cello. Wednesday, March 27, 8 p.m. Cosponsored with Music Guild of St. John Armenian Church Recreation Center, 22001 Northwestern Hwy, Southfield. Free admission. Introductory remarks by Artistic Director Professor Movses Pogossian. Performing a world premiere of Tekeyan songs by the Los Angeles-based composer Artashes Kartalyan, commissioned by the Tekeyan Cultural Association, and masterworks by Komitas, Khachaturian, Mirzoyan, Hovhannes, and Schubert. For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com.

### NEW JERSEY

**May 18 - SAVE THE DATE!** St. Nersess Armenian Seminary invites you to A Celebration of Gratitude & Hope, honoring Archbishop Khajag Barsamian and Bishop-elect Very Rev. 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

### CANADA

**MARCH 29 — The Tekeyan Cultural Association of the United States and Canada Presents the 2019 North American tour of the VEM Ensemble** of the UCLA Herb Albert School of Music, Danielle Segen, mezzo-soprano, Ji Eun Hwang, violin 1, Aiko Richter, violin 2, Morgan O'Shaughnessey, viola, Jason Pegis, cello. Wednesday, March 27, 8 p.m. Friday, 7:30 p.m., Tekeyan Center. 825 Manoogian, Saint-Laurent, Canada. For tickets call 514 747-6680. With reception. Introductory remarks by Artistic Director Professor Movses Pogossian. Performing a world premiere of Tekeyan songs by the Los Angeles-based composer Artashes Kartalyan, commissioned by the Tekeyan Cultural Association, and masterworks by Komitas, Khachaturian, Mirzoyan, Hovhannes, and Schubert. For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com.

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





COMMENTARY

# Mirror Spectator



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COMMENTARY

## Going Cold Turkey

By Edmond Y. Azadian

Turkey's challenge to regional and global powers has experienced a recent respite. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Islamist government had pushed its luck too far, particularly playing the patron saint of the Sunni Islamic world. With continuous changes in the landscape of the Middle East, Turkey's bullying posture finally hit a snag. Relations deteriorated with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Israel, therefore Erdogan's government turned to other fronts to score some foreign policy gains.

When Turkey shot down a Russian military aircraft on its border with Syria in 2015, Moscow retaliated boldly and almost crippled Turkey's tourism industry. Today, however, Russian-Turkish relations are on an upswing. Within the last 12 months, trade between the two countries has risen to \$25 billion a year, a 25-percent increase – and it is well on its way to reach the targeted goal of \$100 billion a year.

And though Turkey is a NATO member, it has agreed to buy Russian S-400 defense missiles, despite US threats.

And just a few days ago, Moscow declared a visa liberalization policy for citizens of Turkey.

In the Syrian war theater, Turkey has both competing and complementary political interests with Russia and Iran. Ankara's agreement with the US on Idlib has not been consummated yet and Ankara is looking for settlements with Moscow and Iran during the forthcoming Sochi summit. Russia has been touting and resurrecting the Adana agreement, signed in 1999 between Syria and Turkey, committing both parties to curb any Kurdish activity on either side of the border. This would serve well as an alternative venue to Ankara's bid for a security zone on the Syrian border, stretching from Jarablus to the Iraqi border. To entice Turkey to settle for that agreement, Russia and Iran have also pledged to join that pact.

Ankara had been gauging the temperature on the Armenian-Azeri border, where alarm bells went off recently when Turkey decided to set up a military base in the

had questioned whether the mission had a truly humanitarian or military nature and he even had advised Pashinyan against the group's deployment in Syria.

Armenia's participation will not affect the military balance in Syria, but Pashinyan's defiance of Bolton's warnings has earned brownie points for Armenia in the Kremlin.

Yerevan is at a standoff with Belarus over the appointment of the secretary general of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) military alliance and Moscow has been tilting towards Armenia, a positive sign in the improving relations between Armenia and Russia.

Turkey has its occupation forces in Cyprus, stalling all progress over the ongoing talks. But despite that stalemate, the Greek socialist Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras decided to make an official visit to Turkey in February. Only a few weeks ago, a Turkish general was threatening to destroy Greece in four hours in their dispute on some Aegean islands which had been ceded to Greece by the Lausanne Treaty of 1923. That treaty defines the border between Greece and Turkey and in a way signifies the birth certificate of modern Turkey.

In Greece, the previous conservative government as well as the current socialist government, have conducted erratic and opportunistic policies vis-à-vis Turkey, sometimes threatening it with actions beyond their power to deliver and then switching gears to a conciliatory mood.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' agenda on his recent visit to Turkey lacks clarity. Even his public statements have failed to shed light on that mission. Speaking with the official Anadolu news agency in Ankara, he said, "Conditions must be created in Greek-Turkish relations for historic steps to take place."

He also said that his relationship with Mr. Erdogan has been "challenged in very difficult moments, but it allowed us to consolidate channels of communication on many levels, to overcome obstacles and to be able, today, to speak of a positive agenda."

Mr. Tsipras visited the Greek Orthodox Seminary on Heybeli Island, which had been closed by the Turkish government in 1971, along with the Armenian Seminary of Sourp Khatch. The Greek Orthodox community was heart-



Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhichevan. Pundits in Armenia were surprised by the sudden lull in cross-border incidents with Azerbaijan. Questions had been raised whether that was the result of the brief chat between Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and President Ilham Aliyev in an elevator in Astana where both were attending a meeting. Speculations also refer to the change in Turkey's relations with its neighbors.

The above developments also coincide with Erdogan's decision to return three more confiscated properties to the Armenian community.

As a conciliatory gesture, Armenia has also injected itself in the Syrian imbroglio with its contingent of non-military personnel leaving for a humanitarian mission under Russian command. US National Security Advisor John Bolton earlier

ened by the symbolic visit hoping that the government may allow its opening. But when Mr. Erdogan visited Greece, he had conditioned the opening of the Greek seminary on the building of a mosque in Athens. He had also stunned his Greek hosts when he proposed to revise the Lausanne Treaty, probably to secure the return of some Aegean islands on the Turkish littoral to Ankara.

Despite President Erdogan's populist style, Turkey is conducting a highly refined policy in the region. Armenia is counting on Erdogan being a cartoonish figure, but we have to realize that he is standing on the experience of six hundred years of ruling a colonial empire. We need to recognize and understand the true power of our foe and deal accordingly.





## COMMENTARY



## My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## Turkey's Support of Terrorists in Syria Exposed in Secret Wiretaps

Turkish journalist Abdullah Bozkurt exposed in *The Investigative Journal* of the Stockholm Center for Freedom that “hundreds of secret wiretap records obtained from confidential sources in the Turkish capital of Ankara reveal how the Islamist government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has enabled – and even facilitated – the movement of foreign and Turkish militants across the Turkish border into Syria to fight alongside jihadists in the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS or Daesh).”

These secret documents revealed by Bozkurt “indicate that an implicit agreement existed between ISIS and Turkish security officials that allowed traffickers to operate freely on both sides of the porous 511-mile (822-kilometer) Turkish-Syrian border without repercussions from the Erdogan government. The agreement also permitted ISIS to run logistical lines across the border and to transport wounded fighters back into Turkey for medical treatment.”

At the helm of this sinister ISIS smuggling operation is a 36-year-old Saudi born Turk, Ilhami Bali, with the code name Abu Bakr. He facilitated and orchestrated “the movement of large numbers of foreign and local militants back and forth along the Turkish-Syrian border. ... Bali [also] moved goods across the border for ISIS, ranging from shoes and clothing to handcuffs, drone parts, binoculars, tents, a spotlight projector and even a boat. Additionally, the wiretaps show the Turkish government knew the names and locations of 33 Turkish nationals who pledged to work as drivers in ISIS’s smuggling network,” Bozkurt reported.

According to indictments filed by Turkish prosecutors, “Bali is accused of being the mastermind behind three deadly 2015 terrorist attacks in Turkey’s capital city, Ankara, that claimed the lives of 142 people. A year later, a criminal court issued another warrant for Bali’s arrest for his alleged role in a suicide bomb attack – the deadliest in Turkey’s history – on October 10, 2015 in Ankara. The explosion killed 105 civilians, including the two suicide bombers, as ISIS militants targeted NGOs and the supporters of left-wing and pro-Kurdish parties, who were holding a peace rally outside the city’s main train station weeks ahead of the November 1, 2015 snap elections,” Bozkurt revealed. Although the Turkish authorities knew Bali’s exact location and Turkish courts issued several arrest warrants against him, the Erdogan government had let him roam freely between Turkey and Syria.

The wiretap records also indicated that ISIS had a hot line between the terrorists in Syria and Turkey. Bali monitored the phone calls and organized the transfer of militants from Turkey to Syria. In one wiretap, a Georgian militant named Lasha Nadrashvili told Bali that four jihadists were awaiting pickup at a shopping mall in Gaziantep, one-hour drive from the Syrian border. Bali notified the jihadists the designated meeting place where he would pick them up and help them cross the border. In another wiretap, a Russian jihadist Oleksandr Pushchuk told Bali that 11 jihadists in Gaziantep were waiting to be picked up.

Bali was also heard on a wiretap giving a report to ISIS on the number of jihadists he had helped smuggle into Syria. “On average, in a single day at one crossing point, ISIS smuggles anywhere from 50 to more than 100 militants across the Turkish-Syrian border according to wiretaps, bringing yearly conservative estimates to well over 15,000 smuggled individuals,” Bozkurt wrote.

Another important service Bali provided for jihadists was their medical treatment at M.I.S. Danismanlik hospital in Ankara. One wiretap revealed a conversation between Bali and M.I.S. Danismanlik’s owner Savas Dogru regarding a \$62,000 payment for treating 16 ISIS militants. In another conversation, Dogru complained about unpaid bills of \$150,000 for surgeries to ISIS terrorists smuggled from Syria.

The wiretaps also implicated MIT (Turkish National

Intelligence Organization) for helping jihadists evade the local police. Hakan Fidan, the head of MIT, is a close confidante of President Erdogan. In 2014, MIT officers were caught at the border smuggling truck-loads of weapons for jihadists in Syria. The Turkish government quickly released the MIT officers and charged with treason the reporter who disclosed the smuggled weapons.

In a recorded conversation between Bali and a Turkish soldier, Bali was told that he would get whatever he needed. The two agreed to ensure that there was no confrontation between ISIS and Turkish security guards.

Surprisingly, then-Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu announced on television that the government could not arrest suicide bombers until they acted, even though Turkey had advance warning and the list of names of potential suicide bombers. These suicide bombings in fact boosted Erdogan’s ruling party’s ratings in advance of the November 2015 Turkish parliamentary elections!

Bozkurt went on to state that there are serious questions regarding “cases involving ISIS, al-Qaeda and other armed jihadist groups [who] are being investigated, prosecuted, and tried in Turkey. The astonishingly low number of convictions in ISIS cases illustrates how the government is unwilling to successfully prosecute ISIS cases.”

Bozkurt correctly pointed out that Erdogan’s government uses draconian measures to arrest innocent journalists, human rights activists, academics and political opponents, but is very lenient on real terrorists: “The fact that, in many cases, detained ISIS and al-Qaeda members have been let go with a mere slap on the wrist can only be explained by the political cover and protection provided by the government.”

In my opinion, the European countries and the United States have to take strong measures to curtail Erdogan’s support of terrorists in Syria. It is strange that Turkey as a NATO member is aiding and arming terrorists who have been committing murders in several other NATO countries. This cannot be allowed to continue. Pres. Trump’s announced pull-out of American forces from Syria under the pretext that the Turkish military will continue the fight against ISIS is a dangerous decision which will give Turkey a free hand to strengthen the terrorists in Syria and elsewhere!

# The Kurdish Awakening

## Unity, Betrayal, and the Future of the Middle East

By Henri J. Barkey

We’ve been fighting for a long time in Syria,” said US President Donald Trump in the last days of 2018. “Now it’s time for our troops to come back home.” The president’s surprise call for a rapid withdrawal of the nearly 2,000 US troops stationed in Syria drew widespread criticism from members of the US foreign policy establishment. But it came as an even greater shock to the United States’ main partner in the fight against the Islamic State (or ISIS), the Syrian Kurds. For weeks prior to the announcement, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had been threatening to invade areas of northern Syria controlled by Kurdish militants. The only thing stopping him was the presence of US troops. Removing them would leave the Kurds deeply exposed. “If [the Americans] will leave,” warned one Syrian Kurd, “we will curse them as traitors.”

Details about the US withdrawal from Syria remain sketchy. But whatever Washington ultimately decides to do, Trump’s announcement marked a cruel turn for Kurds across the Middle East. Back in mid-2017, the Kurds had been enjoying a renaissance. Syrian Kurds, allied with the world’s only superpower, had played the central role in largely defeating ISIS on the battlefield and had seized the group’s capital, Raqqa. The People’s Protection Units (YPG), a Syrian Kurdish militia, controlled large swaths of Syrian territory and looked set to become a significant actor in negotiations to end the country’s civil war. Turkish Kurds, although besieged at home, were basking in the glow of the accomplishments of their Syrian counterparts, with whom they are closely aligned. And in Iraq, the body that rules the country’s Kurdish region – the Kurdistan Regional Government, or KRG – was at the height of its powers, preparing for a September 2017 referendum on independence.

By the end of 2018, many of the Kurds’ dreams appeared to be in tatters. After the overwhelming majority of Iraqi Kurds voted for independence in the KRG’s referendum, the Iraqi government, backed by Iran and Turkey, invaded Iraqi Kurdistan and conquered some 40 percent of its territory. Overnight, the KRG lost not only nearly half of its land but much of its international influence, too. The Turkish Kurds, despite gaining seats in parliament in the June 2018 elections, had endured relentless assaults from Erdogan and his government throughout the year, including a renewed military campaign against the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), a left-wing

separatist group. In Syria, Turkey invaded the Kurdish-controlled town of Afrin in March 2018, displacing the YPG and some 200,000 local Kurds. Then, in December, the Syrian Kurds learned that their American protectors might soon abandon them altogether.

These setbacks, however, belie a larger trend – one that will shape the Middle East in the years ahead. Across the region, Kurds are gaining self-confidence, pushing for long-denied rights, and, most important, collaborating with one another across national boundaries and throughout the diaspora. To a greater extent than at any previous point in history, Kurds in the four traditionally distinct parts of Kurdistan – in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey – are starting down the road of becoming a single Kurdish nation. Significant barriers to unity remain, including linguistic divisions and the presence of at least two strong states, Iran and Turkey, with an overriding interest in thwarting any form of pan-Kurdism. Yet recent events have initiated a process of Kurdish nation building that will, in the long run, prove difficult to contain. Even if there is never a single, unified, independent Kurdistan, the Kurdish national awakening has begun. The Middle East’s states may fear the Kurdish awakening, but it is beyond their power to stop it.

### The Lost Cause

Around 30 million Kurds currently live in Greater Kurdistan, a contiguous region stretching across southeastern Turkey, northwestern Iran, northern Iraq, and northeastern Syria. Kurdish tribes interacted with the Arab, Persian, and Turkic empires over the centuries, sometimes cooperating with them and sometimes rebelling against them. Modern Kurdish nationalism has its roots in the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. The 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, signed between the Allies and the defeated Ottomans, called for an independence referendum in the Kurdish-majority areas of modern-day Turkey. Yet following Turkey’s war of independence, the new Turkish government renegotiated with the Allies. This resulted in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which guaranteed Turkish sovereignty over what could have potentially been an independent Kurdistan.

Kurdish demands for independence, however, did not go away. Throughout the twentieth century, Kurdish revolts, often backed by rival states, erupted in nearly every country that had a significant Kurdish population. Turkey put down Kurdish rebellions in 1925, 1930, and 1937. Then, in the mid-1980s, the PKK launched an armed insurgency in Turkey that

has continued off and on until the present day. In Iran in 1946, Kurds backed by the Soviet Union established the first genuine Kurdish government, the independent Republic of Mahabad, which lasted for one year before collapsing after Moscow withdrew its support. Iraqi Kurds have also frequently revolted against their central government. Supported by the shah of Iran, they fought two wars against Baghdad during the 1960s and 1970s, only to be defeated in 1975 after the shah struck a deal with the Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein, abandoning the Kurds to their fate.

This agitation has meant that for each of the four states with a large Kurdish minority, suppressing Kurdish nationalism has been a paramount policy objective. The new Turkish state under President Kemal Ataturk banned the use of the Kurdish language in 1924 and over time introduced draconian rule in Kurdish areas, burning villages, displacing people, and confiscating their property. (Although US intelligence was always confident that Turkey could handle any challenge posed by the Kurds, a 1971 CIA report conceded that Turkish policies, especially those preventing the use of the Kurdish language, were at the root of Kurdish unrest.) Iran similarly banned Kurdish dialects in the 1930s. In Syria, the central government not only prohibited the teaching and learning of Kurdish but also placed restrictions on Kurdish landownership. And beginning in the 1960s, Damascus revoked the citizenship of tens of thousands of Syrian Kurds, rendering them stateless. All across the Middle East, Kurdish areas were economically neglected and marginalized.

In the face of this repression, the Kurds have succeeded in preserving and even strengthening their identity across generations. As the Kurdish scholar Hamit Bozarslan has observed, Kurds have been treated as a minority by the governments of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, but they do not see themselves as one. They are a majority in their homeland, Kurdistan, which only through an accident of geopolitical history has been rendered an appendage of other states. And it is the Middle East’s modern state system that has, historically, been the main obstacle to Kurdish national aspirations. A prescient 1960 intelligence report by the CIA argued that the Kurds of Iran and Iraq had all the necessary elements for autonomy – military strength, leadership, and the possibility of material support from an outside power, the Soviet Union. “Only the relative stability of parent governments,” the report noted, “stands in the way of active Kurdish separatism.”

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# The Kurdish Awakening: Unity, Betrayal, and the Future of the Middle East

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For most of the 20th century, the only possible path to Kurdish autonomy (or independence, for that matter) ran through state failure. And in effect, this is exactly what has transpired over the past two decades. If the Kurds today have a glimmer of hope in Iraq and Syria, it is because of the collapse of authority in Baghdad and Damascus. In particular, the actions of the United States — its support of the Kurds following the Persian Gulf War, its 2003 overthrow of Saddam and subsequent occupation of Iraq, and its more recent efforts to combat ISIS in Syria — have created the conditions for the revival of Kurdish political aspirations. Washington, unintentionally and in service of its own strategic needs, has midwived Kurdish nationalism.

American military and political engagement with the Kurds began in earnest with the 1990–91 Gulf War. After the Iraqi army was evicted from Kuwait, it turned its guns on the Kurds and Shiites who had responded to US President George H. W. Bush's call to rise up against Baghdad.

Faced with the possibility of a humanitarian crisis, the United States, with support from France and the United Kingdom, declared a no-fly zone over the Kurdish regions of northern Iraq. Protected by the no-fly zone, the Iraqi Kurds were able to carve out regional autonomy, founding the KRG in 1992. Iraqi Kurdistan became a bastion of pro-American sentiment in the country, especially after the United States' invasion in 2003, promoting further US-Kurdish cooperation. Kurdish forces allied with US troops in the initial war against Saddam, and in the ensuing years, Iraqi Kurdistan provided an anchor of stability as the rest of the country descended into civil war.

The founding of the KRG provided an important psychological boost to the Kurds, not just in Iraq but across the rest of the Middle East, too. It demonstrated that Kurds could govern themselves and secure international recognition. It also began to reshape Kurdish relations with other states. Although Turkey has traditionally disapproved of Kurdish demands for autonomy, the Turkish government under Erdogan chose not to confront the KRG but to build political and economic links with it instead. The landlocked Iraqi Kurds needed a channel for diplomacy and commerce — especially oil exports — and Ankara was happy to provide one. In 2010, Turkey opened a consulate in the KRG's capital, Erbil. Then, in 2012, the KRG and Turkey signed a deal to construct an oil pipeline from Iraqi Kurdistan to the Mediterranean. By 2018, some 400,000 barrels of KRG oil were reaching the Turkish port of Ceyhan every day. Ankara has provided an economic lifeline to the KRG, granting it the breathing room to consolidate itself in Iraq. For a time, Erdogan also profited domestically, as Turkish Kurds close to the KRG's president, Masoud Barzani, began voting for Erdogan's party in Turkish elections. Confident of his Kurdish bona fides, in 2009, Erdogan launched a domestic peace process with the PKK.

Yet soon, another US action was to unintentionally change the Kurds' position in the Middle East. In 2014, the Obama administration began a bombing campaign to prevent Kobani, a Syrian Kurdish town on the Turkish border, from falling to ISIS. At the time, ISIS had just swept through northern Iraq and Syria, capturing large stretches of territory, including Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul. Washington's decision to protect Kobani elicited frenzied objections from Erdogan, since the United States would be directly supporting the YPG, which had close ties with the PKK in Turkey. The US partnership with the YPG was a battlefield success, and the Kurds' eventual victory at Kobani became a turning point in the fight against ISIS. But this very success began to ring alarm bells in Ankara.

For Erdogan, a US-YPG alliance represented a game changer for the region. What the Turkish president feared most was the emergence of a second KRG, this one in Syria. After all, the KRG itself was the product of a US intervention that led to a civil war and the breakdown of central authority in Baghdad, culminating in the creation of a federal system in Iraq, with the KRG as a constituent element. With Syria already consumed by civil war, Ankara believed that Washington was on the verge of repeating what

it had done in Iraq — that is, transforming Syria into a federal state in which the Kurds would gain the right to govern themselves. Erdogan could not assent to federal arrangements in two neighboring countries, much less to a Syrian-Kurdish one closely linked to the PKK. In 2014, Erdogan abandoned his negotiations with the PKK and began a policy of outright conflict with both the Turkish and the Syrian Kurds. He sought to delegitimize all Kurdish political activity by associating it with the PKK, arresting large numbers of Kurdish activists and politicians. Washington, unintentionally and in service of its own strategic needs, has midwived Kurdish nationalism.

But if the United States inadvertently disrupted Kurdish-Turkish relations, US policy in Iraq and Syria, taken as a whole, has earned the Kurds an unprecedented degree of international legitimacy. France, the United Kingdom, and the United States have all extended diplomatic recognition to the KRG, as well as providing it with economic and other forms of support. And the Syrian Kurds, previously ignored by the outside world, have been able to raise their global profile thanks to their role in the fight against ISIS. This recognition has come not only from Western powers. In a draft proposal for a new Syrian constitution, put forward in 2017 through the Astana peace process, Russia suggested two important concessions to the Kurds: dropping the word "Arab" from the name Syrian Arab Republic and creating a "culturally autonomous" region in the country's northeast, where children would be educated in both Arabic and Kurdish. These concessions were rejected by Damascus, and there is no guarantee that they will ever be granted. But their inclusion in the Russian proposal demonstrated that despite the Syrian Kurds' precarious position, outside powers are beginning to recognize them as an autonomous force to be reckoned with.

## Kurdish Renaissance

Kurds mobilized throughout the 20th century to win cultural autonomy and some degree of self-rule from central governments. For nearly 100 years, rebellions and resistance constituted the backdrop of ordinary Kurdish life. Now, this is changing, as Kurds have acquired governing experience — not just in the KRG but also in numerous municipalities in Syria and Turkey. This, in turn, has caused Kurdish identity to begin to coalesce across national boundaries.

So far, the Kurds' experience in power has been fraught with problems. The KRG, for instance, is on the path to becoming a petrostate, dependent on oil sales and beset by corruption, patronage, and the outsize power of its two leading political families, the Barzanis and the Talabanis. The political wing of the YPG, the Democratic Union Party, has succeeded in efficiently providing services in the areas of Syria that it controls, but it has also constructed a one-party proto-state. And in Turkey, although representatives of the left-wing, Kurdish-dominated Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) won 102 municipalities in the July 2016 elections, Erdogan has since removed 94 of them from office. He has vowed to act similarly after the next round of municipal elections this March. Future HDP success may even motivate Erdogan to have the party shut down by the Constitutional Court, as Turkey's generals did to the HDP's predecessors.

But even if Kurdish self-government has not been an unalloyed success, it has been a boon for Kurdish culture and language across the region. This is especially true in Iraqi Kurdistan, which boasts its own Kurdish-language institutions, including schools and media organizations. Despite challenges such as the existence of two distinct Kurdish dialects, which roughly correspond to the KRGs political divisions, the KRG has established a rich Kurdish cultural environment in the territory it controls. There are now hundreds of Kurdish television channels, websites, news agencies, and other cultural products, such as novels and movies. And in Syria, where for decades Damascus banned even private education in Kurdish, the Democratic Union Party has formally introduced Kurdish-language education in the areas under its control. After nearly a century of attempting to prevent the dissemination of Kurdish language and culture, central governments have now decisively lost that battle.

Iraq's Kurdish-language renaissance has in turn stimulated a renewal of Kurdish self-awareness in transnational social media and diaspora communities. The Kurdish diaspora is especially strong in Europe, to which over one million Kurds have immigrated over the past six decades — initially as guest workers and then as refugees fleeing repression. Free to organize and collaborate with other civil society groups, Europe's Kurds have raised public awareness of Kurdish issues and put pressure on national governments in Germany, France, and the Netherlands — as well as on the EU as a whole — to change their policies toward Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. In this, they have been aided by the rise of Kurdish-language social media.

The flourishing of Kurdish has extended even to Iran and Turkey, where the Kurds have relatively little power. During Erdogan's brief opening to the Kurds between 2009 and 2014, there was a proliferation of Kurdish-language institutes, publications, and private schools. The resulting euphoria did not last long; by the end of 2017, almost all of these had been eliminated by Ankara, which went as far as systematically taking down all signs in Kurdish, traffic signals as well as signs for schools and municipal buildings. But not everything has been lost. Some Turkish universities still allow students to study Kurdish, and the Turkish state has created a TV channel dedicated to official broadcasts in Kurdish. In Iran, meanwhile, the government has, since 2015, allowed optional high school and university Kurdish-language classes in the country's Kurdish-majority regions.

## Making a Nation

The increasing fluidity of physical boundaries between Kurds, the creation of Kurdish-run governments such as the KRG, the emergence of strong diaspora communities (especially in Europe), and the rise of Kurdish-language social media and cultural products — all have combined to strengthen pan-Kurdish identity. Today, Kurds from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and the diaspora are all engaged in a common conversation. They do not speak in unison, but the days of Kurd-on-Kurd political violence, which flared up in Iraq during the 1990s, are gone, in large part because the Kurdish public will not tolerate it. The Kurds have acquired all the attributes of a nation, except sovereignty.

This newfound unity is reflected in the emergence of pan-Kurdish military units. Turkish Kurds have fought with the YPG in Syria, just as Syrian and Turkish Kurds have been integrated into the armed forces of the KRG. Diaspora Kurds have also volunteered to fight, particularly with the YPG. The PKK commands armed forces in Iraq, Turkey, and Syria and in 2004 created an affiliate in Iran. The erosion of intra-Kurdish boundaries was greatly accelerated by ISIS' advance through Iraq and Syria in the summer of 2014, which imperiled Kurds in both countries and fostered pan-ethnic solidarity. Faced with a genuine existential peril, the Kurds put their own fractious politics aside and appeared as one. And the more that they do so, the more they will begin to reshape the politics of the Middle East.

In both Iraq and Syria, the fragility of central governments provides Kurds with an opportunity for self-rule that is still unthinkable in Iran and Turkey. This process is much further along in Iraq, where the KRG's autonomy is protected by the constitution. Yet the KRG is still vulnerable, as Baghdad's reaction to the disastrous 2017 independence referendum demonstrated. In Syria, the Kurds may have an opportunity to reach a deal with the Assad regime that would grant them a degree of regional autonomy. Such a result is far from guaranteed, however, and a US withdrawal from the country could leave the Syrian Kurds at the mercy of Damascus and Ankara. Even so, any Syrian or Turkish campaign to eliminate the YPG, however bloody, would engender a backlash among Kurds across the Middle East. Nothing builds national consciousness like a David taking on a Goliath.

In Turkey, the Kurds have made a great deal of progress over the past decade, despite the recent deterioration in their relations with the central government. Erdogan's efforts to sabotage the HDP's electoral chances — imprisoning candidates, imposing media blackouts, and harassing Kurdish voters — have not prevented the party

from entering the Turkish parliament in three successive elections. (Many HDP politicians, including the party's leader, Selahattin Demirtas, are even now languishing in jail.) The new Turkish constitution, passed by referendum in April 2017, has transformed Turkey into a presidential system and neutered its parliament, so the HDP's influence, despite its significant number of deputies, is greatly limited.

Nonetheless, the fact that the party came in third in the June 2018 elections, behind only the ruling party and the main opposition party, is an indication that the Kurdish issue has been institutionalized in Turkish politics. The HDP's success will encourage the mobilization of Kurdish civil society and, eventually, the development of Kurdish ties with others in the Turkish opposition. And the proliferation of Kurdish organizations in Europe may help to move European attitudes toward Turkey in a more pro-Kurdish direction. It is the Turkish Kurds who, although divided between a military wing (the PKK) and a political wing (the HDP), are in the best position to assume a leadership role for Kurds across the region. This is because they, unlike the other Kurdish communities, are part of a country embedded in Western institutions. Even if Turkey's practices diverge from Western norms, Turkish Kurds have benefited from exposure to the values and principles associated with the West.

The case of the Iranian Kurds is the most opaque, given Tehran's strained relations with the outside world and the secretive nature of the regime itself. Yet events in other parts of Kurdistan are influencing developments in Iran's Kurdish regions. Iran has always pursued a multipronged policy toward the Kurds. Domestically, it has repressed them, including through the liberal use of capital punishment against activists. At the same time, it has forged ties with the KRG in a successful effort to control Iranian Kurdish groups residing in Iraqi Kurdistan. Yet as Iran finds itself overstretched in the region, its leaders worried about regime stability and the country's worsening economy, the central government may come to see the Kurds as an even greater threat. Iranian Kurds have had little experience with self-rule, having lived for decades under a government that interferes in all aspects of daily life. But Iran, like Syria, is a brittle state. Change will start at the center. The more pan-Kurdish identity and confidence grow, the more likely it is that Iranian Kurds will be prepared for instability in Tehran.

Finally, the United States remains the single most important actor when it comes to determining the future of the Kurds, particularly in Iraq and Syria. Trump may be ending the US partnership with the YPG, but the Syrian Kurds have nonetheless benefited from the relationship, as they were previously considered by outside powers to be the least important Kurdish population in the region. Now they are on the map: hours after Trump announced the United States' withdrawal from Syria, a spokesperson for the French foreign ministry claimed that France would "ensure the security" of the Syrian Kurds. Yet Washington's move will force the Syrian Kurds to negotiate with Damascus earlier than they had planned to, and from a position of relative weakness. A full US withdrawal, moreover, could cause a destabilizing scramble among regional powers in Syria, with disastrous results for the Kurds.

Concerned about these repercussions, US officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton, have warned Turkey not to intervene against the Kurds in northern Syria. Having stumbled into the Middle East's perpetual Kurdish conundrum, the United States is finding it hard to extricate itself.

Whatever happens in the near future, however, there can be no going back to the status quo that obtained only a few decades ago, before the United States' interventions in the region set the Kurds on a fundamentally new path. Despite frequent setbacks, continued repression, and over a century without a homeland, the Kurds are finally emerging as a unified people. A Kurdish state may be a long way off, but if one ever does emerge, there will be a nation there to populate it.

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