

# THE ARMENIAN Mirror-Spectator

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## US Takes Armenia To Task over Non-Combat Mission To Syria

WASHINGTON and YEREVAN (Combined Sources) – After a terse reaction by the United States regarding a mission deployed by Armenia to Syria, Armenia's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday, February 13, emphasized the humanitarian nature of the mission and sought to downplay the concerns expressed by the US State Department.

Armenia announced this month it had sent a team including de-mining experts, medical personnel and security officers who will work carry out humanitarian activities in the northern city of Aleppo, which had a large ethnic Armenian population before the



Armenia's Defense Minister David Tonoyan, left, with Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu

war. (See related editorial on page 18.)

The US State Department in a statement released by the US Embassy in Armenia said, "We recognize the desire of other nations to respond to the humanitarian situation in Syria, and we share the concerns about protecting religious minorities in the Middle East. However, we do not support any engagement with Syrian military forces, whether that engagement is to provide assistance to civilians or is military in nature."

"Nor do we support any cooperation between Armenia and Russia for this mission. Russia has partnered with the Assad regime to slaughter civilians and trigger a humanitarian catastrophe. Russia continues to protect the Assad regime and its atrocities on a global stage," the statement added.

The US embassy provided a copy of the statement to Eurasianet but declined further comment.

Armenian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Anna Naghdalian said that the US and Armenia, for years, have responded to the humanitarian tragedy that has plagued Syria and the ensuing refugee crisis that has displaced millions in the wake of the war there.

see SYRIA, page 3



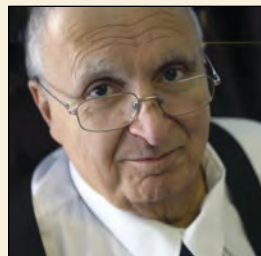
The Keverian family with 2018 scholarship recipient Emilee Guzman, graduate of Everett High School. A second Scholarship was awarded in absentia to Rachael Minassian, Junior at Providence College pursuing a Degree in Political Science

## Speaker Keverian Public Service Scholarship Created to Empower Next Generation

BOSTON – George Keverian was a man who dedicated his entire life to public service. He was kind, honest, smart, and above all, put others first before himself.

He was in tune with his heritage and was proud to be Armenian. The Keverian family, joined by Alfred Lattanzi, wanted to find a way to keep his legacy alive and use his life lessons to inspire the next generation of young leaders. They have created the Honorable Speaker George Keverian Public Service Scholarship to do just that.

Jack Keverian reflected on his brother: "George and I were raised by a mother and father who had escaped the Armenian Genocide and immigrated to our great country. They struggled to make ends meet during the Great Depression. George and I were touched by their sacrifices. I am sure that the struggles faced by our family is the force that motivated George to provide service to others. This is so well revealed by see SCHOLARSHIP, page 15



The late Speaker George Keverian

## Memoirs of an Armenian in Germany

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach  
Special to the Mirror-Spectator



Lisa and Ara Berkian

WIESBADEN, Germany – Lisa Berkian-Abrahamian has always lived with books; she has worked as a librarian, a newspaper editor, translator and author. Born in Armenia, she came to Germany in 1992 to live with her husband, Ara J. Berkian, and after his untimely death in 1994, remained here, carrying on his work and her own. In September 2014 she published a book in Armenian on her husband, which is not only a complete appreciation of Berkian as doctor, engineer, architect and writer, but also contains important material and letters from his archives, pertaining to German-Armenian relations.

see MEMOIRS, page 6



**Louise Manoogian Simone, longtime Armenian General Benevolent Union Leader and Benefactor, Died On Monday, February 18.**

See obituary on Page 9.



**Dr. Mihran Agbabian, Community Activist, Co-Founder of American University of Armenia, Dies**

See obituary on Page 8.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Egypt Implicitly Recognizes Armenian Genocide

CAIRO (Egypt Today) – In his speech at the 2019 Munich Security Conference on February 18, President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi stated that Egypt had hosted Armenians following the genocide against them 100 years ago by the Ottoman Empire.

"In Egypt, we have 5 million refugees [registered and unregistered], who do not live in camps. They have been treated as we dealt with Armenians [refugees] 100 years ago, when Egypt hosted them after the genocide," Sisi said.

### Sen. Menendez Meets With Foreign Minister

MUNICH (Armenpress) – Foreign Minister of Armenia Zohrab Mnatsakanyan and member of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Robert Menendez exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues, highlighted the protection of ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East during their meeting in Munich on February 15.

The two discussed a number of issues of Armenian-US cooperation, highlighting the role of the US-Armenian community.

Mnatsakanyan presented the recent political developments in Armenia and the reform implementation process, emphasizing that the priority of the government is ensuring economic development based on technology and innovations.

### Layoffs for Armenian Government Employees

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – Some 150-200 employees will be dismissed as a result of the merging of various ministries, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan stated on February 12, at the National Assembly. Pashinyan's remarks came at a question of one of MPs asking about the adverse implications of the proposed plan for consolidation.

Pashinyan said as a result of merging some ministries, the new ministries cannot afford redundant departments and staff.

"Since the employees working in those positions are highly qualified, they will not face difficulties in finding new jobs. Other employees will not be dismissed at this point and will be trained to get skills to be competitive in the job market," he said.

Pashinyan next said the number of employees expected to be laid off is around 150-200.

The Ministry of Culture has merged with the Ministry of Education and Sciences as a department, while the Ministry of Agriculture will be unified with the Ministry of Economic Development and Investments. The Diaspora Ministry will be passed on to an ambassador-at-large for relations with Diaspora.

## INSIDE

### Trading with Armenia

Page 7

#### INDEX

Arts and Living . . . . .	14
Armenia . . . . .	2,3
Community News. . . . .	7
Editorial . . . . .	18
International . . . . .	4-6





## ARMENIA

## News From Armenia

## Weightlifting Championships Conclude

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) – The 2019 Armenian Men's Weightlifting Championship concluded on Friday, February 15, with athletes competing in the 96-kilogram and 102-kilogram weight classes. As the National Olympic Committee reported, Samvel Gasparyan, competing in the 109-kilogram weight class, was named the winner of the competition with the double-event of 356 kilograms.

The race for the title of champion was tense among weightlifters competing in the 102 kg weight category. Gor Minasyan was out of competition, scoring 428 kilograms in the double event. Ruben Alexanyan came in second, while world champion Simon Martirosyan took the bronze medal with 421 kilograms total weight.

## OSCE Chair to Visit Armenia, Azerbaijan in March

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – The Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office Miroslav Lajcak will visit Armenia and Azerbaijan in March.

Lajcak plans to discuss issues concerning the Karabakh conflict settlement during the visits, he said at a joint news conference with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

"I am planning to visit Yerevan and Baku, in the first half of March, to discuss these issues. I have an invitation from Armenia and Azerbaijan," he said.

He noted that Slovakia is fully supporting the mediation efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

Lajcak noted that a new situation exists in Armenia after the elections, with a government with strong mandate, and that certain expectations exist with it.

"Our goal is to support the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to use this new situation," he said.

In turn, Lavrov emphasized that the Minsk Group Co-Chairing countries – Russia, France and the US, are closely cooperating with the OSCE.

"Given the fact that the Armenian government has been formed quite recently, certainly, it will take some time in order to be clear to what extent and intensity the settlement process will be able to be developed at this stage," Lavrov said.

## FBI Official Helps Investigative Body

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Investigative Committee chief Hayk Grigoryan met this week with Matthew Boyden of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Investigative Committee said in a news release.

"During this brief period of time of activities of the Investigative Committee we have already felt the unconditional support of the US partners, an individual demonstration of which is the duly legal assistance of the FBI in concrete criminal cases investigated by the Investigative Committee, including a case of embezzlement of hundreds of thousands of dollars of state funds," Grigoryan said.

Grigoryan also attached importance to a training program organized by the FBI earlier in 2017, which led to the creation of a direct e-communication platform between the legal assistance department of the US Department of Justice and the Investigative Committee's international inquires department. He also attached importance to visits of Armenian investigators to the FBI headquarters at the invitation of the American side, during which agreements were reached on conducting training of Armenian investigators in the US, which is already in stage of implementation.

Boyden thanked the Armenian officials for the reception and congratulated Grigoryan on assuming office.

"I highly appreciate all the achievements you mentioned that we have had during our joint activity. I am sure that the developed relations will have deeper roots," he said.

## Former President's Brother, Under Investigation, 'Donates' \$18 Million to Government

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – A controversial brother of Armenia's former President Serzh Sargsyan has been formally charged with fraud, his lawyer said on Tuesday, February 19.

The lawyer, Mihran Poghosian said that the accusation stems from over a dozen drawings by the 20th century

session. A Yerevan court freed him on bail in September.

During his brother's 2008-2018 rule, Aleksandr Sargsyan, who is better known to the public as "Sashik," earned notoriety for his flamboyant behavior and insults addressed to critics of Armenia's former government. The 62-year-old is thought to have made a fortune in the past two decades. He held a parliament seat from 2003 to 2011.

Sargsyan's \$30-million Armenian bank account was frozen this summer as part of a separate inquiry con-



Aleksandr Sargsyan

ducted by the NSS. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan publicly demanded in September that he "return the money to the state budget."

The ex-president's brother rejected Pashinyan's demand as illegal. He said that the authorities have not come up with any proof that the sum was earned illegally. Still, he made clear that he will be ready to donate some of it to the state if his and his family members' assets are unblocked.

Citing an unnamed government source, Civilnet.am reported earlier on Tuesday that Sargsyan has transferred \$18.5 million to the state. His lawyer refused to confirm or refute the report.

Also facing prosecution is Serzh Sargsyan's second brother, Levon. He and his daughter were charged with "illegal enrichment" after tax inspectors discovered in June that they hold mil-

lions of dollars in undeclared deposits at an Armenian bank. Levon Sargsyan reportedly left the country around the same time.

Serzh Sargsyan stepped down in April 2018 amid Pashinyan-led mass protests sparked by his attempt to extend his rule by becoming prime minister. He has not publicly commented on the embarrassing charges brought against his relatives. But some of his associates have alleged political motives behind the high-profile criminal cases.

Edmon Marukyan, the leader of the opposition Bright Armenia Party (LHK) which had also challenged Sargsyan, expressed concern at what he described as a lack of transparency in the prosecution of individuals linked to the former regime. In particular, he wondered why "Shashik" reportedly made the hefty payment to the state without a court ruling.

"Don't get me wrong, I welcome the fact that he returned [the money,]" Marukyan told reporters. "I just want us to understand what kind of a process it resulted from."

## Sargsyan 'Questioned In 2008 Probe'

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Former President Serzh Sargsyan has reportedly been questioned by Armenian-law-enforcement authorities as a witness in their ongoing investigation into the 2008 post-election violence in Yerevan.

According to the Haykakan Zhamanak daily and Hetq.am, the interrogation took place on Friday, February 1, and lasted for about six hours. Both media outlets also said Sargsyan will be summoned for further questioning.

The Special Investigative Service (SIS), which is conducting the probe, did not deny or confirm the reports on Monday. Haykakan Zhamanak is run by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's wife, Anna Hakobyan.

The SIS has charged Sargsyan's predecessor Robert Kocharyan and three retired army generals with overthrowing the constitutional order in the wake of a disputed presidential election held in February 2008. The vote formalized the handover of power from Kocharyan to Sargsyan, his preferred successor.

The main opposition presidential candidate, Levon Ter-Petrosian, rejected the election results as fraudulent, staging nonstop demonstrations that were broken up on March 1-2, 2008. Eight protesters and two policemen were killed.

The SIS blamed the Ter-Petrosian-led opposition for the bloodshed until last spring's "velvet revolution" which brought Pashinyan to power. But it now says that Kocharyan used army units against the protesters in order to enforce the vote results.

Kocharyan was again arrested in December. Sargsyan's Republican Party condemned the arrest, saying that Pashinyan is exacting "personal revenge" against the man who ruled the county from 1998-2008.

## Former Defense Chief Calls For Kocharyan's Release

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Former Defense Minister Seyran Ohanyan urged Armenian authorities on Friday to release former President Robert Kocharyan from custody pending investigation into the 2008 post-election violence in Yerevan.

In a 30-minute video address posted on Facebook, Ohanyan also reiterated his strong denial of coup charges that have also been leveled against him.

"I find totally wrong the treatment of the country's second President Robert Kocharyan, his being held in detention," he said. "A person who voluntarily and repeatedly showed up for all investigative actions does not deserve such treatment. Such people never dodge responsibility."

Ohanyan argued that Armenia's two other former presidents, Serzh Sargsyan and Levon Ter-Petrosian, have not been arrested nor prosecuted even though they too were involved in the events of February-March 2008 in one way or another.

"I think that the second president is in unequal conditions," he said. "They can free him and continue the investigation."

The Special Investigative Service (SIS) has charged Kocharyan, Ohanyan and two other retired generals, Mikael Harutiunyan and Yuri Khachaturov, with overthrowing the constitutional order in the wake of the February 2008 presidential election.

Harutiunyan, who now lives in Russia, served as defense minister while

Ohanyan was the chief of the Armenian army's General Staff at the time. The latter replaced Harutiunyan as defense minister in April 2008. None of the generals has been arrested so far.

The SIS claims that the four men illegally used the armed forces against Ter-Petrosian supporters who demonstrated in Yerevan against alleged electoral fraud. It says Kocharyan ordered troops into the Armenian capital before declaring a state of emergency late on March 1, 2008 amid violent clashes between security forces and protesters. Eight protesters and two police servicemen died as a result.

The coup charges are based on a secret directive which Harutiunyan issued to the military on February 23, 2008. SIS investigators say that the directive known as the Order No. 0038 led to the army's illegal involvement in the political process.

In his video message, Ohanyan again defended the legality of that order, saying that it was only meant to ensure that the army "maintains neutrality" in the dramatic post-election developments. He also said Kocharyan was not aware of its details.

Kocharyan's lawyers make similar arguments. They say that Ter-Petrosian, who was the main opposition candidate in the 2008 ballot, tried to get the Armenian military to back the protests and that two deputy defense ministers sided with Ter-Petrosian. They both were sacked in April 2008.





## ARMENIA

# US Takes Armenia to Task Over Non-Combat Mission to Syria

SYRIA, from page 1

“We reiterate that during the entire process of the Syrian conflict Armenian people worldwide has followed the fate of the civilian people, minorities, including the Armenian community in Syria with great concern,” Naghdalian said.

“The Armenian public has expressed deep concern and compassion toward the suffering of the civilian population and the destruction of the country. This is a country that had a key contribution to the survival of the Armenian people who escaped the Genocide,” added Naghdalian, who explained that Armenia’s Consul General in Aleppo has worked non-stop during the Syrian crisis.

“Armenia has granted asylum to more than 22,000 Syrian refugees and has provided four airlifts of humanitarian aid to the Syrian people. Following the establishment of relative calm and security Armenia plans to continue its humanitarian mission, including providing doctors and specialists for humanitarian de-mining aimed at supporting the improvement of the living conditions of the war-stricken civilian population of Aleppo,” said Naghdalian.

“The Armenian mission is exclusively humanitarian nature, and is guided by the international humanitarian laws and will coordinate its activities with the institutions and international partners offering humanitarian aid on site,” emphasized Naghdalian.

“We share the concerns of the international community about the situation of the ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East and highlight the continuity of humanitarian aid provided to Syria,” she added.

Washington is increasingly assertive in its criticism of Armenia’s ties with Russia and Iran, but it’s not clear whether it has the clout to do anything about Yerevan’s allies.

Sam Heller, a senior analyst at the International Crisis Group who works on the Syria conflict. “The US has been going to great lengths to enforce the political and economic isolation of the Syrian government internationally,” Heller told Eurasianet. “Hence the harsh reaction to Armenia’s new commitment in Syria, which, no matter how minor or innocuous, the US considers unwelcome.”

Stronski noted that Russia has for many years been trying to get its military allies to con-

Turkey, and Russian guards patrol the Turkish border. At the same time, Pashinyan’s new government is filled with pro-Western figures and he has courted increased Western assistance. Shortly after taking power Pashinyan visited Brussels for a NATO summit and said he expected “more concrete and greater assistance” from the West as a result of Armenia’s democratic changes. Advocates of closer US-Armenia ties have also pushed for an upgrade in relations following Pashinyan’s rise to power.

Armenian support and participation in broader Russian operations in Syria is a message to Moscow as much, if not more than to Yerevan,” he said.

“It is also a message to Iran, and can be seen as a muscular move to assert a renewed US commitment to contain, combat and curtail Iranian interests, and to counter any Iranian perception of an American weakness of resolve from the Trump administration’s announcement to withdraw from the Syrian theater,”



The Armenian non-combat team in Yerevan before leaving for Syria

## Armenian Mission

Armenia deployed the 83-man mission on February 8. But the deployment is nevertheless clearly an attempt to shore up relations with Moscow, which have been strained since the new government came into power.

Russia – which transported the Armenian soldiers to Syria and will provide them logistical support while there – publicly thanked Armenia for the gesture. “You were the first to respond to our call for providing assistance to the Syrian people,” Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu told his Armenian counterpart, David Tonoyan.

“US-Russia and EU-Russia tensions over Syria are real and this looks like Armenia is backing Russia’s effort to prop up a dictator who used chemical weapons on his own people,” said Paul Stronski, a senior fellow in the Russia and Eurasia Program of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a Washington, DC, think tank. “So, the optics of this Armenian decision are bad. In fact, they are particularly bad on this side of the Atlantic,” he told Eurasianet.

Even as the Trump administration displays mixed signals about the US’s own involvement in the Syria conflict, Washington remains strongly opposed to the Assad government and sees Armenia’s deployment in that context, said

tribute in some way to its mission in Syria, but without success until now. The fact that Armenia has become the first to succumb to Russian pressure has raised concern in Washington, he said.

“We here in DC understand Armenia’s dependence on Russia for its security. And, we knew this was coming. We also know that Armenia has interests in Syria because of the Armenian community there. But we’ve also known that former president Serzh Sargsyan was under similar pressure for the past two to three years, as were Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. So, this certainly suggests that Pashinyan is less able to push back on Russia than his predecessor or even the Kazakh or Kyrgyz presidents,” Stronski said.

Still, he said this was likely to be a short-term spat. “Armenia will recover from this. There is a lot of good will towards the new Armenian government here with hopes that Pashinyan will be able to address long-standing social, governance and corruption problems in Armenia,” he said. “But the deployment was certainly an unforced error in the country’s relationship with the US and not the way to garner positive attention towards the country from Americans.”

Russia is a longtime security ally of Armenia: Moscow provides discounted military hardware to Yerevan, the Russian military maintains a large military base on Armenia’s border with

## Trump Pressure

But the new Armenian government is confronting geopolitical barriers to partnership that will be difficult to overcome – particularly in Washington. In the past the US has tended to be forgiving of Yerevan’s ties with Moscow, as well as with Iran. The Trump administration, however, has taken a strongly hawkish position against Iran, and across Washington Russia is increasingly being seen as an enemy, narrowing Armenia’s room for geopolitical maneuver.

The American criticism of Armenia’s support of Russia and the Syrian government follows a visit by US National Security Adviser John Bolton to Yerevan in the fall, when he suggested that Armenia should close off its border with Iran – a key outlet for the isolated country – to support US sanctions against Tehran.

At the time, Pashinyan pushed back against Bolton’s comments, saying “John Bolton, or anyone for that matter, cannot speak on my behalf.”

“Although the lack of a more measured and diplomatic response is less of a surprise given the posture of the Trump administration, it is significant,” said Richard Giragosian, a Yerevan-based analyst and director of the Regional Studies Center. “This strong stance against

Giragosian said.

At the same time, Washington has relatively few levers to push in Armenia, where Russia and Iran are far more important partners than the US And heavy-handed criticism could backfire, said Anahit Shirinyan, a Yerevan-based analyst for the think tank Chatham House.

Russia has given Assad crucial military and diplomatic backing throughout the nearly eight-year war in Syria, which began with a government crackdown on protesters in March 2011. The conflict has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions.

Russia is to provide logistical support to the Armenian mission, which Yerevan said would be carried out “exclusively outside the zone of combat operations.”

On February 12, however, Armenian Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan said that “if it’s necessary to participate in hostilities as well, the Republic of Armenia will do that within the letter of the law.”

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan seemed to cast doubt on that, saying on February 13 that he was unaware of the defense minister’s remark and that there were no plans for Armenian personnel to take part in any combat operations.

(RFE/RL and Eurasia.net contributed to this report.)

# Security Service Details Fraud Case Against Kocharyan’s Son

YEREVAN (RFE/RL) – Armenia’s National Security Service (NSS) on Tuesday, February 19, reported details of its fraud charges brought against former President Robert Kocharyan’s son Sedrak, saying that he had evaded nearly \$2 million in taxes.

Sedrak Kocharyan revealed on Monday that he had been charged with tax evasion and money laundering. He rejected the accusations as “fabricated,” saying that they are part of the Armenian authorities’ persecution of his arrested father and broader family.

In a statement, the NSS said that the criminal case stems from \$5.3 million which had been donated to the younger Kocharyan by an unnamed “third person.” It claimed that he used a complex fraudulent scheme to illegally avoid paying about 917 million drams (\$1.9 million) in income taxes

which should have been levied from that sum.

The NSS statement added that through one of his companies Sedrak Kocharyan legalized the “revenue obtained by criminal means” by adding it to his \$5.7-million bank account. That money was then spent on the purchase of a three-star hotel in downtown Yerevan, it said.

The statement said that the director of that company, Aleksan Vorskanyan, has also been charged with tax evasion and had pleaded guilty to the accusation.

The NSS stressed that its investigation is not yet over. “Large-scale investigative actions are being taken to ascertain the legality of the acquisition by Sedrak Kocharyan and members of his family of numerous properties and other assets,” it said.

The NSS director, Artur Vanetsyan, said in

September that his agency is scrutinizing what he described as hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of assets belonging to former President Kocharyan and his relatives.

Sedrak Kocharyan was subsequently questioned as a witness in that corruption probe. He will risk heavy fines and up to 12 years in prison if found guilty of tax fraud and money laundering.

Robert Kocharyan was arrested in December on charges stemming the 2008 post-election violence in Yerevan. He denies them as politically motivated.

The 64-year-old ex-president, who ruled the country from 1998-2008, has also denied enriching himself or his family while in office. He has only admitted that his two sons are engaged in entrepreneurial activity.



Sedrak Kocharyan









## INTERNATIONAL

# AGBU Convenes 90th General Assembly in Paris

PARIS — On February 9, Armenians from all over the world gathered in Paris to participate in AGBU's 90th General Assembly at Les Jardins de Saint Dominique. Convened biennially to discuss the organization's state of affairs, the event unites AGBU members in considering contemporary realities facing the Armenian world, celebrating AGBU's accomplishments and establishing the guiding principles of the coming years.

An institutional tradition that has carried AGBU through more than a century globally, the General Assembly serves to strengthen the message of the organization, welcome new membership and celebrate accomplished leadership. Because of recent developments in contemporary Armenian history, the assembly focused on how recognizing, empowering and mobilizing potential in AGBU communities is vital for sustainable political, social and economic development in Armenia and across the world.

"We must remain relevant and serve as champions of Armenian interests. We should be in a constant state of evolution," AGBU President Berge Setrakian said, addressing the Assembly. "We must ask ourselves at all times: Are we speaking to the timely concerns of every generation? Are we addressing global issues? And most of all, can we amplify our voice as a united people, giving credence to the concept of being 'a small republic that is a global nation?'"

During the General Assembly four new board members were elected: Haig Ariyan of New York, Nadia Gortzounian of France, Vartkess Knadjan of Belgium and Ari Libarikian of New York.

Ariyan is the president and CEO of Alex Brown and serves as head of Raymond James Global Wealth Solutions. He had previously worked at Dean Witter Reynolds, where he launched his career in financial services. Ariyan is a member of the board of trustees of the Diocese of the Armenian Church and has served as chairman of the Armenian Church Endowment Fund's investment committee. He is also a member of the board of trustees of St. Nersess Seminary and sits on the board of the Dadourian Foundation.

Gortzounian enjoyed a 28-year career in the pharmaceutical industry at Merck & Co. in France and she has spent her last 15 years with Merck as business unit director for primary care products. Appointed president of AGBU France in October 2015 and president of AGBU Europe in 2016, she has spearheaded the development of strategic objectives for the region. Long involved in the Armenian community in France,



AGBU Council of Trustees Chairman Vatche Manoukian presents Patrick Devedjian, prominent attorney and champion of public service and genocide recognition, with the Boghos Nubar Award.

Strauss. Serving as president of AGBU Belgium from 1992 to 2005, he has also been closely involved with Armenia since 1993, when he first started working with the Shoghakan Diamond Factory. Knadjan is the co-founder of the Armenian Jewelers' Association and established the Armenian Jewelers' Foundation to raise funds for research on the history of Armenian jewelers, traders and stone merchants. He is a partner in Lori Diamond Factory in Nor Keghi, Armenia.

Libarikian is a senior partner with McKinsey & Company in New York and the leader of the Digital McKinsey Northeast location, focused on helping a broad set of clients across sectors develop and drive digital strategies, and leverage operations and technology to drive business value. Prior to joining McKinsey, he held various positions at Nortel Networks and Bell Labs focused on developing and testing next-generation telecommunications technologies. He currently serves on the board of the Children's Aid Society in New York.

The AGBU Council of Trustees also saw change in leadership as Vatche Manoukian, prominent philanthropist and businessman, was announced as chairman. He will serve alongside President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian, Eric Esraïlian, Sam

At the Assembly, French politician Patrick Devedjian was honored with the Boghos Nubar Award, the highest honor AGBU bestows upon community members who elevate others and work tirelessly in service of society. From lawyer to minister, parliamentarian to mayor, and now president of the Hauts de Seine General Council, Devedjian was recognized for his prominent career as an attorney, ceaselessly championing human rights throughout his 35 years of public service. "The son of an Armenian father who survived the Genocide himself, Patrick has created an impressive

and Herminé Duzian from France were all recognized by executive leadership in front of an audience of peers, celebrated for their valiant efforts in serving and maintaining the spirit of AGBU. Khabelaian was distinguished for her impassioned service as head secretary of the Syria Central Committee and Educational Committee, overseeing the Health Care Committee, the Editorial Board of the Hayatsk publication, and the Emergency Relief Body in Syria. Regarded as the "armeniapedia" of the AGBU Brazil chapter and a vital figure in organizing their Armenian volunteer kitchen, Nalbandian was celebrated as one of the longest serving members on their board and an exemplar of service. Chair of AGBU Melbourne since 2003, Tchorbadjian was recognized for establishing a presence in and building networks across her city, all while being instrumental in raising funds and mobilizing her community members to build a brand-new facility. With almost three decades of service, Duzian, the AGBU Diaspora Youth Programs Chief Coordinator in Armenia and Europe, was honored for her boundless efforts in engaging youth and connecting new generations to their identity.

Along with community leaders and active citizens in the Armenian world, the AGBU Buenos Aires Chapter, the AGBU Young Professionals of Greater New York and the AGBU Young Professionals of Northern California were also recognized with awards, celebrating their innumerable contributions to community life among their constituents. Serving a thriving and dynamic community of Armenians in Argentina, the AGBU Buenos Aires chapter was recognized for its dedication to excellence and outreach to their local community. Particularly notable was their Armenian Restaurant initiative. Both a fundraising operation and a meaningful social gathering, the restaurant is renowned in Buenos Aires and the money made by the youth staff goes towards their annual



Award recipients (from left to right) Ruben Kedikian of AGBU Buenos Aires, David Ojakian of AGBU YP Northern California, Monica Nalbandian of AGBU Brazil, Herminé Duzian of AGBU France, Tamar Khabelaian of AGBU Syria, William Nazarian of AGBU YP Greater New York and Maral Tchorbadjian from AGBU Melbourne with managing director of the AGBU Central Office Anita Anserian (second from right).



Newly-elected AGBU Central Board Members (from left to right) Haig Ariyan, Nadia Gortzounian and Vartkess Knadjan. (Not pictured: Ari Libarikian)

Gortzounian is the treasurer and general secretary of CCAF (Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations in France), and a member of the board of the Bullukian Foundation in Lyon.

Knadjan is the chief executive of Backes &

Simonian, Sinan Sinanian and AGBU President Berge Setrakian, as ex-officio member. Former members of the Council of Trustees Sarkis Demirdjian, Louise Manoogian Simone, Richard Manoogian, Nazar Nazarian and Karnig Yacoubian became Emeritus Trustees.

career throughout his years of public service but has never abandoned the mantle of defending the voiceless," began Setrakian, "His work honors the legacy of the victims of the Armenian Genocide, and the strength of both the survivors and the freedom fighters of the Armenian cause." His unrelenting pursuit of justice in relation to the recognition of the Armenian Genocide led to the passage of a 2016 extension of the current French holocaust law, making the denial or trivialisation of all events classed as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or slavery punishable crimes. Celebrated as a universal role model and global Armenian citizen for his advocacy, Devedjian was honored for how he has paved the way for a generation of Armenian leadership in public service.

Several community leaders were also presented with high honors throughout the Assembly. Tamar Khabelaian from Syria, Monica Nalbandian from Brazil, Maral Tchorbadjian from Australia

trip to Armenia; to this day, over 900 young Armenians from Buenos Aires have visited the homeland because of this unique initiative. AGBU Buenos Aires Chair Ruben Kedikian accepted the award on behalf of the chapter.

Both YP Greater New York and YP Northern California were celebrated for over two decades of galvanizing the newest generation of leadership in the Armenian world with their dynamic spirit of service and activism. YPGNY Chair William Nazarian and YPNC Chair David Ojakian were present to accept the awards on behalf of their groups. From coordinating unique fundraising opportunities to programming original educational forums, these YP groups distinguished themselves as communities that can be mobilized when nurtured. To continue to facilitate this growth and participation worldwide, all YP groups were officially recognized as permanent entities of AGBU at the General Assembly, with language reflecting their new status in the by-laws.





INTERNATIONAL

# Memoirs of an Armenian in Germany

MEMOIRS, from page 1

In October 2016, she published her Armenian translation of the book in German by her husband, *Between the Rhine and the Arax: 900 Years of German-Armenian Relations* (Coauthor Enno Meyer) <https://mirrorspectator.com/2016/10/20/friendship-between-the-rhine-and-the-arax/>.

That year, the presentation of the book was a sensation, and well-known Armenian personalities, scientists, writers, journalists, as well as the Armenian Minister of Culture and the German Ambassador were in attendance.

Now a new book of hers has appeared, in Armenian, titled *Verhuschi masunqner* (*What Remains from Recollections*), which is a reflection on her activities over the past quarter century in Germany. It is a personal story, an autobiography, but also the story of an extended family whose history goes back centuries.

“Memories, recollections,” she told me, “are like a quiet shadow, that accompanies each of us, we engage in a dialogue with them, often out of the silence comes a cry, we see ‘voices’ from them and experience how they ‘smell and taste.’ The vision of these voices, childhood flavors and images are enduring and well preserved. Now I would like to experience them again and tell the tale from this book of life.”

### An Ancient Past

Accordingly, the first part of her book presents her birthplace and the people who lived there. She evokes the tastes, smells and voices from her childhood, and then reaches back in time to present her ancestors, parents, her siblings and her husband, before coming to herself.

She was born in 1949 in Gegharot, a small village northwest of Yerevan, just 18 kilometers from Spitak. The ancestral home was in a vast area which archeologists have been digging over the past years, unearthing remains of a civilization that dates back to the 3rd-2nd millennia B.C. In that era, these were holy sites, and the gravestones and ceramics brought to life date from the Bronze age. In 1998 a group of archaeologists in an Armenian-American team, under the direction of



Lisa Berkian-Abrahamian

archaeologist Dr. Ruben Badalyan and the US scientist Adam Smith, supervised the diggings there for three months. In 1828 after the Russian-Persian war, her ancestors moved to there, to Keshishkend and together with other families founded a new village there, known as Gegharot since 1936. Others later joined these families and the village grew.

The place where she was born was small and the local school, which went up only to the 8th grade, was limited in what it could offer. She remembers with fondness her literature teacher Mr. Vardanyan, who encouraged her to pursue study in this area. To attend 9th grade she had to go to Vanadzor, and 10th grade was in Alagyaz. There were no teachers or courses in foreign languages, so instead of literature she nourished her fascination with books by training to become a librarian. She studied at the Pedagogical Institute in Yerevan and the Baku party college, in Azerbaijan. Upon completing her education, she worked as the director of the Gegharot library, and entered journalism. She became the department head of the Aragadz newspaper, then editor in chief, as well as department head of the propaganda department of the Armenian Communist Party District Committee in Aragadz.

### Encounters with Personalities

The second part of her book contains accounts of meetings she had along the way, encounters with famous personalities, among them writers and artists, like William Saroyan and Maryam Aslamazyan. Among the many other personalities she met and who appear in her book are the poet Hovaness Shiraz, Sarkissian Karekin I, who was then the Catholicos of all Armenians, actor Sos Sargsyan, writer Hrachya Matewosyan, academician Varazdat Haroutunyan and world class violinist Sergey Khachatryan.

“There were famous personalities in my recollections,” she

recalls. “The encounters with them were not only like holidays, but they gave me spiritual inspiration. It seems as if they occurred only yesterday, not a year or decade ago. They are not only pages in a diary but deeply rooted images, fond memories that I wanted to look through.”

In her book she relates the stories of how she met these figures. William Saroyan for example. It was in 1978, during celebrations to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the end of the Russian-Persian war, which freed Armenia. There was a festive atmosphere at the central event organized in Yerevan, which the famous Armenian writer from America



Cover of the book *Between the Rhine and the Arax: 900 Years of German-Armenian Relations*

was attending. By pure chance, Lisa Berkian found herself seated next to him and without thinking twice, she asked him for an autograph. “Are you Armenian?” he asked in amazement, incredulous because she had such light blond hair. When she said she was, he wanted to know her name, where she came from, where Gegharot was, and what kind of work she did there. When he learned that she was the editor in chief of Aragadz, he was quite surprised.

One day she received a phone call from a local party representative who told her that the artist Maryam Aslamazyan was planning a visit to Aragadz to do some portraits, and needed someone to show her around. She readily agreed to



Ara J. Berkian

accompany the painter on various meetings and invited her to visit her family, who were known for their hospitality. In turn, she later visited Aslamazyan in Moscow and in both places had the opportunity to see some of the portraits she had done depicting individuals from different ethnic communities, among them,

Armenians and Yezidis. Lisa herself became the subject of one portrait.

The most decisive encounter was with the man who would become her husband. This came about thanks to the family tradition of an open house, offering warm hospitality to visitors. One day in 1989, a year after the devastating earthquake, she received a call from a friend of hers, Valentin, who was a committee chairman in the party and worked as a guide. He was accompanying a group of people who had

come from abroad to provide humanitarian aid to the earthquake victims, in Gyumri, Vanadzor and Spitak. They were looking for a cafe or restaurant, somewhere to stop for a coffee break, but in those days, in that area there was nothing to be found. Valentin asked if they might stop by Lisa’s home. She at the time was chairing a support committee for Karabakh. Of course her friend Valentin could bring the foreign visitors to her home. One of the members of the group that arrived was Ara J. Berkian, and it was love at first sight. Berkian returned the following year for a visit, they corresponded for years, and in 1991 she accepted an invitation to



Cover of the book *What Remains from Recollections*

visit him in Germany, travelling there together with Valentin’s wife. Berkian had studied at the American University of Beirut and gone to Germany to complete his graduate work at Darmstadt. In 1992 they married and she has lived in Wiesbaden ever since.

How could she know that her destiny would take her to Germany? To Wiesbaden? Her father and some colleagues have said that her punctuality and discipline were typically German, so it must have been God or destiny that led her to this country. In her book she recounts the main episodes of her years here, how she managed, after the death of her husband, her “only anchor” in Germany, to remain standing on her own in this foreign land, and to keep on going, learning German, working at a job again, and making it possible to help her siblings and needy people in Gegharot. From 1997 to 2015 she was employed at the Wiesbaden city library, also as a specialist for media and information technology, until her retirement.

The book includes some of her own articles as well as an interview and articles about her. In recent years she has turned to writing, and has published these three volumes. Throughout these 27 years of her life, “with springtime and summer,” she said, “fall and winter, sadness, loneliness, there have been shining days” as well as longing for return to the homeland. She always thought about returning, and her husband had promised her that they would return after three years. But he passed away before that and her return has been delayed ever since.

And yet, with her newest book, Lisa Berkian-Abrahamian has in a certain sense returned; she has brought back the memories of her own life, and reconstructed the history of her ancestors, thus providing the background for her own literary achievements. A brief comment appears on the book cover flap, written by the person who first inspired her love for literature. It reads: “Lisa Abrahamian is a good storyteller. A talent that not everyone possesses. A great merit. Her tale rejoices in the tender appreciation of nature. The book is furnished with an epic poem, and the reader will read it with interest. The people and things in the book are as interesting as they are in real life. Some pages I read (actually very many) were alluring, like those love stories I used to read in my youth. The language of such pages, especially those dealing with Lisa’s ideas, is sparkling and rich. I am happy that I had such a pupil in my teaching days,” Xatchatur Vardanyan, Professor.



# Community News

## Dr. Ara Sanjian to Speak on 'Armenia's Road To and Since the Velvet Revolution'

FRESNO – Dr. Ara Sanjian, director of the Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan, Dearborn, will give a presentation on “Armenia’s Road to and Since the ‘Velvet Revolution’” at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 7, in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, Room 191 on the Fresno State campus.

In his presentation, Sanjian will give a brief review of the long-term and more immediate causes which led to the success of the “Velvet Revolution” in Armenia in April-May last year. He will then describe the rise of Nikol Pashinyan from a young and controversial journalist in the mid-1990s to a politician with immense power and even a cult-figure status in 2018. Thereafter, Sanjian will analyze the group profile of the new and young political elite, assembled around Pashinyan, which now controls both the executive and legislative branches of government in Armenia. Finally, he will list the major challenges of the Pashinyan administration in domestic and foreign policy and portray the basic features of this administration’s actual and potential critics in the Armenian world.



Dr. Ara Sanjian

Sanjian is associate professor of Armenian and Modern Middle Eastern History and director of the Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. He completed his PhD in modern history of the Middle East at the School of Oriental and African Studies, the University of London. From 1996 to 2005 he was the chairman of the Department of Armenian Studies, History and Political Science at Haigazian University in Beirut. In fall 2003, he was the Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at California State University, Fresno.

He joined the University of Michigan-Dearborn in January 2006. His research interests focus on the post-World War I history of Armenia, Turkey and the Arab states of Western Asia. He is the author of *Turkey and Her Arab Neighbors, 1953-1958: A Study in the Origins and Failure of the Baghdad Pact* (2001), as well as two monographs and a number of scholarly articles and book chapters, published in English, Armenian, Russian and French.

The lecture is free and open to the public. A free parking code can be obtained by contacting the Armenian Studies Program.

For more information about the lecture contact the Armenian Studies Program or visit [www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies](http://www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies).



State Sen. Anthony J. Portantino

## Portantino Introduces Bill to Reestablish the California - Armenia Trade Office

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – On February 14, state Sen. Anthony J. Portantino (D - La Canada Flintridge) introduced SB 302 to reestablish the California-Armenia Trade Office. In 2005, the original trade office was established through legislation authored by former state Sen. Jack Scott, the Schwarzenegger Administration later terminated it in 2008. Portantino and co-authors Sen. Scott Wilk, Sen. Henry Stern, Sen. Scott Wiener, Sen. Melissa Hurtado and Assemblymember Autumn Burke and Assemblymember Evan Low hope to build a vibrant business relationship between California and Armenia. Several of these co-authors attended the September Tech Trade trip to Armenia.

Through this legislation, Portantino hopes to capitalize on the trade trip’s positive momentum with establishing the trade office. California is home to one of the largest Armenian populations outside of Armenia. The 25th Senate District represented by Portantino has the largest Armenian population of any state legislative district in the country.

“There is so much excitement and optimism in Armenia under the leadership of Prime Minister Pashinyan and in California under Governor Newsom that we should capitalize on the moment and formalize a positive economic relationship with Yerevan. I was a young politician sitting in the audience when the Jack Scott Bill was signed and I am very pleased to be in a position to help bring it back,” commented Portantino.



Glendale Mayor Zareh Sinanyan

Consul General Dr. Armen Baibourtian and Glendale Mayor Zareh Sinanyan joined Portantino in Sacramento to introduce SB 302. Baibourtian made his first trip to the State Capitol while serving his second term as consul general representing Armenia in Glendale.

“This is truly an important development for both California and Armenia. We have long-wanted to reestablish the trade office and are very grateful to Senator Portantino and his colleagues for authoring this promising proposal. I know it will be well-received by the Armenian Community in California and business and political leaders in Yerevan,” added Baibourtian.

In September, Portantino, Stern, Sinanyan and the Armenian National Committee of America completed a tech trade trip to Yerevan and Gyumri. The trip was Portantino’s second trip to Armenia. Attending Senators and Assemblymembers were introduced to the many facets of the Armenia tech and education communities in Armenia’s two largest cities. The goal of the trip was to strengthen economic ties between California and Armenia. During his first term in the Senate, Portantino established the Senate Select Committee on California, Armenia and Artsakh Mutual Trade, Art and Cultural Exchange. Establishing the trade office is a natural extension of these efforts.

see PORTANTINO, page 13

## Abuse Victim Advocates Call Catholic Church Defrocking of Cardinal McCarrick 'Damage Control'

By Lisa Kashinsky

BOSTON (*Boston Herald*) – Former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick has been defrocked after the Vatican found him guilty of sex abuse, but attorney Mitchell Garabedian, a longtime critic of the Catholic Church’s handling of decades of misconduct, says the latest crackdown is just “damage control.”

“The Catholic Church is trying to deceptively convince the public that they’ve fixed the problem when they are the problem,” said Garabedian, an advocate for victims of sexual abuse by priests. “Take away the robes and religion, and the priests are just criminals who either sexually abused children or who covered up the sexual abuse of children.”

Zach Hiner, executive director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, said McCarrick’s dismissal shows clergy preying on minors goes far beyond low-level priests.

“This problem exists at every level of the church. It’s not just bad priests here or there, it’s something that is systemic from the base-level staff to the highest level,” Hiner said.

McCarrick’s defrocking made the 88-year-old former archbishop of Washington, DC, the highest-ranking clergyman and first cardinal to be punished by dismissal. Pope Francis last July removed McCarrick as a cardinal after a US church investigation found credible an allegation that McCarrick fondled a teenage altar boy in the 1970s, reports state.

Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, said McCarrick’s dismissal “is a clear signal that abuse will not be tolerated. No bishop, no matter how influential, is above the law of the church.”

Cardinal Seán P. O’Malley, archbishop of Boston, said the dismissal “is important in administering justice for the crimes and sins committed” by McCarrick, though it “cannot in and of itself provide healing for those so terribly harmed by the former archbishop’s scandalous violations of his ministry.”

O’Malley and DiNardo will attend a clerical sexual abuse summit February 21-24 as the church remains embroiled in scandal. The Vatican’s ambassador to France is reportedly under investigation for sexual assault, and dioceses across the US continue to release names of hundreds of priests who they say are credibly accused of sexual abuse.

Hiner said it’s “helpful for victims when they begin to see some punishment for people who may have hurt them,” but that it “doesn’t make it OK that church officials continue to minimize the depth of this crisis.”

Garabedian said the ongoing revelations are “damaging the reputation of the Catholic Church.”

“The Catholic Church cannot police itself when it comes to protecting the safety and welfare of children,” Garabedian said. “It is not possible that there’s so much sexual abuse that could have taken place without priests in high positions of power not knowing about it.”



Attorney Mitchell Garabedian





## OBITUARY

# Dr. Mihran Agbabian, Community Activist, Co-Founder of American University of Armenia, Dies at Age 96

LOS ANGELES — A founding member of the American University of Armenia, where he was President Emeritus, and life-long community activist and educator, Dr. Mihran Agbabian, died on Tuesday, February 12, in Los Angeles.

Agbabian was born in Cyprus in 1923 and he grew up in Aleppo, Syria, before moving to Beirut, Lebanon to study at the American University of Beirut. He received a bachelor's degree in physics (1944) and bachelor's degree in engineering (1947), and he came to the United States in 1947 to continue his education at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) where he received his master's degree. He completed his studies at the University of California at Berkeley where he received his PhD in civil engineering in 1951.

After working as a structural engineer at several engineering companies, he co-founded the engineering consulting company, Agbabian Associates, in 1963.

In 1984, Dr. Agbabian was appointed as the Fred Champion Professor of Engineering at the University of Southern California. He served as chairman of the Civil Engineering Department and director of the Environmental Engineering program from 1984 to 1992.

He was the founding president of the American University of Armenia in Yerevan

National Academy of Sciences (1990), and the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences (1995).

He received the University of California at Berkeley Distinguished Engineering Alumnus Citation and the Caltech Distinguished Alumnus Award.

He received an Honorary Doctor of Science degree from Yerevan State University and was Honorary Member of the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute and its past president, and he was a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

In 1955 he received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor from the National Ethnic Coalition Organization of New York for outstanding contributions as an immigrant.

Agbabian received the Movses Khorenatzi Medal (2001) from the President of the Republic of Armenia for exceptional achievement in educational development. The Armenian Church recognized Dr. Agbabian with the Sahag-Mesrob Medal from Catholicos Karekin I, the St. Mesrob Medal from Catholicos Aram I, and the St. Vartan Medal from Catholicos John Bedros XVIII.

Agbabian served the Armenian community in a number of organizations. He was member of the Central Board of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, a founding member of the Armenian Film Foundation, vice president of the Armenian Missionary Association of America, vice-chairman of the Board of Haigazian College, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Armenian Assembly of America, and General Chairman of the First Congress of the Armenian Engineers and Scientists of America.

He was also a former board co-chair and long-time member of the Armenian Assembly of America.

"Dr. Mihran Agbabian's spirit, character, and great sense of humor was inspiring to all who were fortunate to know him. His generosity, dedication, and commitment to the Armenian Assembly and preservation of our Armenian heritage knew no bounds. He was a humanitarian whose contributions touched the lives of so many people. Dr. Agbabian was a gem, admired and respected by all. The Armenian people benefited greatly from his interest and generosity as did the Assembly, and we are deeply grateful. His passing is a tremendous loss," stated Assembly Co-Chairs Anthony Barsamian and Van Krikorian and Assembly President Carolyn Mugar.

"It was always such a pleasure to hear his ideas and comprehensive thinking. I loved working with him," Mugar added.

Dr. Agbabian and his wife Elizabeth were members of the Assembly since its formative years. Dr. Agbabian participated in the Airlie House conference that established the Assembly in 1972. He was co-chairman of the Assembly from 1982-1983, served on the Board of Directors from 1979-1986, and was an Executive Committee Member in 1980. Mrs. Elizabeth Agbabian served on the Assembly's Board of Directors from 1992-1999. In addi-



Vahe Ghookassian, Alina Abedian Ghookassian, Michael Agbabian, Dr. Mihran Agbabian, Elizabeth Agbabian, Valina Agbabian, and Bryan Agbabian at the Armenian Assembly's 2017 Newport Beach Gala honoring the 40th anniversary of the Summer Internship Program

tion, longtime community leaders, Dr. and Mrs. Agbabian, hosted many special events in Los Angeles that contributed to the expansion of the Assembly's membership base and support in southern California.

Their sons, Bryan and Michael, participated in the Terjenian-Thomas Assembly Internship Program in Washington, D.C. in 1981 and 1990 respectively. Michael was a keynote speaker at the Assembly's 2017 Newport Beach Gala honoring the 40th anniversary of the Summer Internship Program. Valina Agbabian currently serves as the Assembly's State Chair, and is based in San Francisco.

The Agbabian family is also supportive of many groundbreaking initiatives in California, including the opening of the Republic of Armenia's Consulate General in Los Angeles, and have long been guiding stewards in the Armenian Evangelical Church.

President of Armenia Armen Sarkissian sent a condolence letter on Agbabian's death.

"With a deep sorrow I have learnt about the death of Professor, foreign member of the

National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, Founding President of the American University of Armenia (AUA), AUA Honorary Chairman Mihran Agbabian. Mihran Agbabian was one of the greatest sons of our people who was always with the homeland with his activities.

"Being one of the best specialists in the field of engineering seismology and seismic resistance construction, he visited Armenia shortly after the Spitak earthquake and provided professional support to the native specialists.

"The American University of Armenia, one of the best universities in the region, has been created in 1991 by the initiative of Agbabian and a group of dedicated specialists. Mihran Agbabian chaired the University until 1997 and later became its Honorary Chairman.

"Understanding quite well that education is going to be the key of Armenia's future, Mihran Agbabian greatly contributed to developing that field in our country with his activities.

I offer sincere condolences to his family, relatives and share their grief," the president's letter noted.



Dr. Mihran Agbabian and his wife, Elizabeth

which started its operation on September 23, 1991, the same day when Armenia declared its independence. The university, known as AUA, is affiliated with the University of California system and is sponsored by the Armenian General Benevolent Union.

After serving AUA in the capacity of founding president, he retired in 1997, and he was appointed by the Board of Trustees as President Emeritus, working on special assignments for the growth of the university.

Dr. Agbabian was married to Elizabeth Apkarian who worked with him serving their community. They have three sons, Paul (married to Kate Nyberg); Bryan (married to Valina Ghookassian); and Michael; as well as three granddaughters, Sabrina, Erika, Lori, and a grandson, Arman.

He was elected Member of the US National Academy of Engineering (1982), the Armenian



Dr. Mihran Agbabian (far right) with prominent leaders of the Armenian Assembly in 1986.

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## OBITUARY

# Louise Manoogian Simone, Longtime Armenian General Benevolent Union Leader and Benefactor, Dies

NEW YORK — Louise Manoogian Simone died at the age of 85 on February 18. She had dedicated her life to civic leadership, philanthropy and was first and foremost passionate about the promotion of Armenian culture and heritage.

Most who knew her will remember her as an intelligent, outspoken and witty woman who strived for excellence in herself and others.

She was born in Detroit to Alex and Marie Manoogian. Her father, Alex, an Armenian immigrant who had left Turkey after the Armenian Genocide, developed the Delta company single-handed faucet and went on to become one of America's leading industrialists as the founder of Masco corporation. Upon achieving business success, he used his resources to work tirelessly for the benefit of the Armenian people worldwide.

Louise inherited her parents' passion for Armenians, which led her to follow in her father's footsteps and serve on the board of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU),

the world's largest non-profit organization dedicated to upholding Armenian heritage through educational, cultural and humanitarian projects. In 1982, she made her first trip to Armenia, then still a Soviet republic. She quickly fell in love with the country and its people and over the next few years, returned frequently, bringing others with her.

Her brother, Richard Manoogian, joined her in supporting a number of projects in Armenia.

In 1988, after a devastating earthquake hit Armenia, she was on the first US cargo plane delivering relief supplies and rescue teams to the disaster area. She spearheaded the disaster relief on behalf of the AGBU. An iconic picture of her standing in the ruins near the epicenter of the quake is remembered by many affected by the disaster.

In 1989 she was elected the international president of the AGBU and began directing operations in 31 countries and 74 cities. She opened an office in Yerevan and when Armenia became an independent country, she, through



Louise Manoogian Simone in Armenia

the AGBU and her own resources, focused efforts on rebuilding a newly-independent homeland.

She was a charter board member and major benefactor of the American University of Armenia in Yerevan.

After a million miles traveling the world to oversee operations and projects, in 2002 she retired as president of the AGBU. However, she continued her charitable efforts through the Manoogian Simone Foundation, working with, among others, the Armenian Apostolic Church, reconstructing and maintaining hospitals,

schools and children's and cultural centers and historical monuments.

She was also a significant supporter of the arts and many artists.

She was a great benefactor to American universities, museums and cultural institutions, including the University of Michigan, Wayne State University and the Detroit Institute of Arts.

She received many honors throughout her life, among them the Ellis Island Medal of Honor.

She leaves a daughter, Christine, and two sons, David and Mark.



Louise Manoogian Simone in Armenia in 1988

## Virginia (Kashmanian) Keljikian Fashion Forward Seamstress, 107

CHEVY CHASE, Md. — Virginia (Kashmanian) Keljikian died after a short illness on Thursday, February 14, in Chevy Chase, Md. at the age of 107. Virginia was born in Providence, Rhode Island on March 24, 1911 to the late Nighohos Kashmanian and Vartoohy Esaian. She was a longtime resident of New York, NY, Watertown, MA, and Chevy Chase.

For the past 19 years, she lived in her apartment in Chevy Chase, Maryland with her sisters, Zarie and then Dorothy.

Virginia was the beloved wife of the late Paul Keljikian. She was the aunt of Dale Chakarian Turza (Peter Henry); grandaunt of Kristin Chakarian Turza, MD (Chris Campbell), Lauren Chakarian Turza, MD and Allison Chakarian Turza Bajger PhD (Dan); great-grandaunt of Chase, Haley and Parker Turza Campbell, Lester Kyle and Olivia Dale Greer, and Henry Albert Bajger. She is survived by her grand nieces, Deborah Quick Zavaleta (Raul) and their children, Raquel, Jordan, Dylan and Tristan Zavaleta, and Pamela Quick Reeder (David) and their children, Jonathan and Erica Reeder, as well as her grandnephew, Joel Mazmanian (Jill) and their children, Jacie and Jordan and cousins, Helen Krikorian (Deeran, deceased) and their sons, Mark Krikorian (Amelie) and their children, Alex, Ben and Theo and David Krikorian (Kristien) and their children, Sebastian, Katia and Ara, and Annette Krikorian Arnott (Peter) and their son, David Arnott. She was preceded in death by her three sisters, Margaret Mazmanian (Joseph, deceased), and Dorothy Chakarian Hartmann (Albert Chakarian, deceased and Karl Hartmann, deceased), and Zarie Keosian (George, deceased) and by her niece, Doris Mazmanian Quick (William, deceased) and her nephew, Edward Mazmanian (Carole Mazmanian Chooljian). She is also survived by her grandnephew, John Wolohojian (Anita) and their children, her grandniece, Rose Wolohojian Chacran, and by many loving relatives and friends.

Born and raised in Providence, RI, Virginia was a prominent fixture for many years in the retail world, having worked at Gladdings and Cherry and Webb in Providence, and in high-end fashion houses in New York City. She was always fashionable and well put together right

up to the end of her life.

After she and Paul married in 1945, they settled into life in New York City, where they both worked and took full advantage of what the city offered. They moved to Watertown in 1961 to be closer to family.

Upon Paul's death, Virginia moved in 2000 with her widowed sister, Zarie, to Chevy Chase, to be close to her goddaughter and niece, Dale, whom she considered to be like a daughter. A few years later her sister, Dorothy, and her husband, Karl, also moved to Maryland. A world



class seamstress by trade, Virginia was an avid reader and fabulous Armenian cook and baker.

The key to her astonishing longevity was always seeing the bright side of things and eating her favorite food, ice cream.

A funeral service will be held at St. James Armenian Apostolic Church in Watertown, Massachusetts at 11 a.m. on Saturday, February 23. Interment will follow at Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be sent to St. James Armenian Apostolic Church, 465 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472. Arrangements were made by the Aram Bedrosian Funeral Home, Watertown.



### Michigan Donors to the Tekeyan Cultural Association's Sponsor a Teacher Program

Last week the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* published a list of donors to its annual Sponsor a Teacher program. Several names in the Michigan list were inadvertently left out.

Here is the complete list of the Michigan donors.)

Mike and Maral Arzoumanian, Southfield, MI \$1,000

Detroit Armenian Women's Club \$500

Elizabeth Aprahamian, Northville MI \$500

Mr. and Mrs. Howard Atesian, Bloomfield Hills MI \$1,000

Sarah Dergazarian, Midland MI \$400

James G. Derian, Oxford MI \$100

Mihran and Gayle Hoplamazian, West Bloomfield, MI \$250

Diana Lee Khachaturian, Farmington Hills MI \$500

Knights of Vartan, Farmington Hills MI \$250

CM Kojanian, Bloomfield Hills, MI \$250

Edward and Yvonne Korkoian, Farmington Hills, MI \$250

Alex and Marie Manoogian Foundation, Taylor, MI \$1,000

Kathryn Ossian, Pleasant Ridge MI \$100

Osep and Nadya Sarafian, Northville, MI \$250

Peter Sarkisian, Esq. (Ajemian Foundation) \$2,500

Emma Sogoian, Bloomfield Hills, MI \$160

Polytherm Testing Lab, Clawson MI \$200

Dr. & Mrs. Gary Zamanigian, Bloomfield Hills MI \$200





## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Nerouj Empowering Youth to Achieve Goals

By Taleen Babayan

LOS ANGELES — Forging a bridge to connect students with professionals and encourage mentorships is a vital undertaking for the Western Diocese and among its chief priorities. Through its innovative Nerouj program, the Armenian youth of the Los Angeles community are empowered through education, support and guidance as they build instrumental relationships that will navigate them in their professional and personal lives.

During its most recent panel, Climb Higher Heights, more than 100 high school and college students were exposed to qualified specialists who touched upon the relevant topics of career development, professionalism and spirituality on Sunday, February 10, at the Western Diocese in Burbank, under the auspices of Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America.

The panelists, including Harout Keuroghlian, owner and CEO of JohnHart Realty; Natalie Qasabian, independent film producer; Nerses Aposhian, director of content at JohnHart Realty and co-host of “The Founder Hour” podcast; R-Mean, rapper and pharmacist; and Armenui Amy Ashvanyan, California Superior Court Judge, elaborated on their experiences in their respective fields in a thought-provoking discussion led by adept moderator Salpi Ghazarian, director of the University of Southern California (USC) Institute of Armenian Studies.

As generations churn and assimilation becomes more of a concern, the ability to bring the youth together matters more than ever. The success of Nerouj in its short history is a testament to the prescient vision of Derderian, who devised the program when he observed gaps and missed opportunities by community leaders to usher in the new generation.

“Through this mission, we send a clear message that the due respect and trust should be given to the youth, our young leaders, because they have the intellectual motivation and self-confidence to become successful and bring the community to a new level,” said Derderian. “We have to invite them so they will come.”

An abundant number of bright-eyed youth answered his call and have benefited ever since from the initiative. Nerouj, a compound word that has its roots in the Armenian words nerkin (within) and ouj (strength), is a positive force in the Los Angeles Armenian community that advocates relationship building and mentorship while also placing high value on inner spirituality and morality.

“There is both a need and a desire in our community for young professionals to meet and establish connections,” said Chair Silvana Vartanian, who leads the 20-member committee. “Nerouj has been a positive impact on the youth because they can see the vast variety of individual talents and career paths the new generation of Armenians have taken.”

In recognition of Nerouj’s influential strides, California State Sen. Anthony Portantino made a special appearance at the Climb Higher Heights panel, remarking that it was an “honor” to be in attendance at the Western Diocese.

“Any organization that tries to connect young people with mentors and helps young people succeed has my support,” said Portantino, who acknowledged the third anniversary of the program with a special certificate on behalf of the State of California. “Nerouj provides opportunities to the youth for enrichment as they pursue their dreams,” he added.

As a way for the panelists to introduce themselves and also demonstrate how to present oneself when the opportunity arises, Ghazarian asked that they each make a one-minute elevator pitch about their work. Key takeaways from the responses included dedication, sacrifice, setting goals, avoiding excuses and working hard.

For many of the panel members, whose professions ranged from real estate to entertainment to law to the arts, their motivation stems from the fulfillment they derive from their



The Nerouj panel

careers.

“I was born and raised in an oppressive Soviet regime so I always wanted to change the world,” said Amy, who noted that she regularly sought guidance from her mentors. “I discovered that my way of helping people was through public service.”

For Qasabian, her dreams materialized when she picked up a camera at the age of 10 and started making short films. “At a young age I discovered I enjoyed entertaining those around me,” she said.

A catalyst in the workplace, Keuroghlian said he pushes those around him to always aim higher. “I want to make every single person who comes into my world the wealthiest they can be, whether in terms of emotional or financial success,” he said.

Touching upon the theme of an evolving world, Aposhian spoke of finding his niche in the digital age.

“I want to impact people and be the leader who guides and motivates his team,” he said.

R-Mean, who earned a doctorate in pharmacy but turned to his passion of rapping full-time, said he appreciates waking up each day and pursuing music.

“Anyone who has a creative side can understand how rewarding it is to the point of it becoming an obsession,” he said, while highlighting the importance of continuing education in order to reach the pinnacle of success.

“Never stop learning,” said R-Mean. “Keep learning in whatever field you are in and stay ahead of the curve.”

Speaking on the evident changes in society, the panelists said they have noticed that their counterparts are more aware of their surroundings.

“Social responsibility is bigger than ever,” said Qasabian. “The world is more in tune with what is going on.”

The trend that has been most clear to Amy is diversity in the workforce, “a very positive change” that now represents more women and minorities.

The panelists also spoke of practical skills such as planning and improvising in the office as well as adapting to different professional environments and technological changes.

“Technology gives us such an advantage,” said Keuroghlian. “Instead of being afraid of it, people need to learn it so they can welcome the opportunity to disrupt the industry.”

Turning the conversation to their cultural heritage, Ghazarian inquired how being Armenian has affected the panelists in their work and how they partake in advancing the homeland.

“What are you doing to empower Armenia, Artsakh and its people?” she asked. “How do you make it real and not just symbolic?”

In response, Ashvanyan said she pursues her work for the next generation so “they have human rights and can understand laws and procedures.”

“Each one of us contributes what we can to make this world a better place,” she said. “I grew up in a society where I wasn’t allowed to ask questions so I want to help others express

themselves.”

Discussing individual power and how to maneuver it into a collective entity, Ghazarian posed the question of how the panelists tackle the basic social needs of the community.

“It’s important to have the knowledge and know what is going on,” said Aposhian. “It is the responsibility of those in the community to inform business leaders, filmmakers, musicians and tell them to take part and be helpful.”

Pertaining to the concept of “Armenianness” and how it affects their daily work, Natalie said that it is time to change the way society thinks of Armenians and that more should be done to attract attention.

“It’s about us making noise and people recognizing us,” she said.

“Hip hop is the voice of struggle and I wanted to tell the story of my people,” said R-Mean. A song of his, Open Wounds, started a movement to prevent social injustice and he parlayed it into a popular non-profit venture alongside his music career.

At the conclusion of the panel, Vartanian thanked Derderian and expressed gratitude for his support of Nerouj’s mission. “He has shown us that the doors of the Diocese are open not only for practicing our faith but planning and structuring a better future for the Armenian community.”

Derderian remarked that it was an “enlightening and educational” panel and explored the meaning of the organization’s name.

“Nerouj means inner strength,” said  
*continued on next page*



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## COMMUNITY NEWS



From left, Salpi Ghazarian, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Harout Keuroghlian, Natalie Qasabian, Nerses Aposhian, R-Mean, Hon. Amy Ashvanian

from previous page

Derderian, who emphasized to the participants the significance of being mindful of their inner selves. "Understanding who you are sets the tone for the path of your life."

He urged the individuals in attendance to have a vision and passion for their futures and to learn from both the structured nature of school but to also educate themselves through others.

"The mentor and the mentee are born together and they journey together," said Archbishop Derderian, who recounted the organic manner in which he and the late Catholicos of All Armenians Vazken I, established a mentor and mentee rapport.

He thanked Vartanian, the committee members, the panelists, the moderator and the audience members, whose presence he highlighted. The attendees, in turn, gained useful insight as they widened their horizons.

"As a passionate youth committed in empowering my inner spirit with wisdom, this year's guest panelists were not only successful in giving me the tools to witness a new perspective about life, but they also shed a light on the importance

of the Armenian youth community and its connection to our motherland, Armenia," said Delilah Shahbazian, a fashion marketing student at Woodbury University and a Nerouj committee member.

Participants connected with the thoughts and opinions of the panel members, such as Meg Chakerian, who reflected on Keuroghlian's sentiments of the phrase "fake it until you make it," in which he expressed that people should exert more effort so they can put their best, and most truthful, foot forward.

"This quote and his perspective stood out to me because it made me realize there is no need to fake something," said Meg, a UCLA graduate with a bachelor's degree in biology, who is preparing to apply to medical school. "By working harder, it is possible to achieve all of your goals."

Through the Nerouj platform, students in high school, college and those in transition have the chance to network with professionals in a myriad of fields, such as business, finance, entrepreneurship, law, entertainment, communications, medicine, academia, psychology and

fashion. Stepping into the world of both Armenian and non-Armenian circles, participants are invigorated through social events, symposiums and panels such as the New Connect program. The organization also bolsters its network through collaborations with others including AGBU Young Professionals, Armenian National Committee of America Professional Network, Armenian Professional Society, and Birthright Armenia. These groups consistently work together on noteworthy projects that benefit the homeland, such as raising funds for the HALO Trust, which supports demining efforts in Artsakh as well as collecting clothing and blankets with the Armenian Relief Society to distribute to the homeless

spectives and views," she said.

Nerouj fosters a strong and nurturing environment for its participants, who have a consistent place to turn to when seeking professional guidance, all within the aura of the Western Diocese, which serves as a serene setting for many of its events, while embracing the Armenian youth.

"I had a great time meeting people and learning powerful information," said Jack Janoian, a student at Burbank High School.

The panel, and the greater scope of Nerouj, serves as an inspiring outlet for students to establish professional connections while remaining involved in their culture through the lens of the Armenian Church, which recognizes the



California State Senator Anthony Portantino

Armenians in Los Angeles.

Sarelle Janoian, a college student studying public health, acknowledged the unique aspects and objectives of Nerouj's programming.

"Nerouj has opened new doors for individuals into the community and it has allowed the youth to have the opportunity to socially connect with all kinds of professionals and to receive fresh per-

influence of the next generation.

"Rarely do you see a gathering where the vast majority in attendance are the youth and this is exactly what we want to see in the life of the Los Angeles Armenian community," said Derderian. "The drops create rivers and oceans."

For more information and upcoming events visit nerouj.com, email info@nerouj.com.



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Aiko Richter  
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Viola

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DETROIT • Wed. March 27 8:00 pm  
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Recreation Center  
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Free admission, Reception to follow

MONTREAL • Fri. March 29 8:30 pm  
Tekeyan Center  
825 Manoeogian St.  
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For tickets call 514 747-6680  
Reception to follow

BOSTON • Sun. March 31 1:00 pm  
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Armenian Church  
145 Brattle St.  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
Free admission

GLENDALÉ • April 27 7:30 pm  
Tekeyan Cultural Association  
Los Angeles Chapter  
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Bookstore, 415 E. Broadway  
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or itsmyseat.com/abrilbooks

PASADENA • May 19 6:00 pm  
Tekeyan Cultural Association  
Pasadena-Glendale Chapter  
TCA Beshgeturlan Center  
1901 N. Allen Avenue  
Altadena, Calif.

For more information, email tcadirector@aol.com





COMMUNITY NEWS

# Armenian-American Veterans of Greater Boston Host Holiday Meal for Frontline Troops

BOSTON and BERD, Armenia — On January 28, Armenia’s Army Day holiday, the Armenian-American Veterans of Greater Boston (formerly AMVETS POST 41 of Watertown, MA), hosted a holiday meal for 350 frontline troops serving on Armenia’s Northeastern international border with Azerbaijan.

“WE DO NOT FORGET THE SACRIFICE OUR YOUNG MEN ARE MAKING IN PROTECTING THE FRONTIERS OF OUR FLEDGLING NATION AND ARE PROUD TO HONOR THEM ON THEIR ANNUAL ARMY DAY HOLIDAY”

desserts. As in the past year, the regional base commander of the armed forces expressed his gratitude to the Armenian American Veterans for their thoughtfulness, which he said warmed the hearts and souls of his troops in realizing that Armenians living so far away from the conflict care about them.

This program was initiated by George Haroutunian, commander of the veterans’ group and Jack Medzorian, trustee and a founder of the veterans’ organization. Both are also past Commanders of the Knights of Vartan Ararat Lodge#1 of Boston, MA. They commented, “we do not forget the sacrifice our young men are making in protecting the frontiers of our fledgling nation and are proud to honor them on their annual Army day holiday”

–Jack Medzorian

This meal was organized by the good graces of Rev. Aram Mirzoyan pastor of the Shamshadeen frontier villages for a second year in a row, coordinated by the Fund for Armenian Relief field office in the frontier town of Berd, the center of the 16 frontier village cluster called Shamshadeen. While the Armenian-American veterans funded the meal, all the arrangements, including procurement, of a huge 250-kilogram cow, slaughtering, cooking, and delivery to the frontline troops were organized by Mirzoyan. A delicious beef barbecue was prepared along with all the fixings, including soft drinks, and



The meal for the soldiers

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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  
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## COMMUNITY NEWS

# Colin Kaepernick Settles Collusion Case against NFL

By Jake Russell

LOS ANGELES (*Washington Post*) — On Friday, February 15, the collusion case between the NFL and former teammates Colin Kaepernick and Eric Reid was settled, the two sides announced.

The news followed a Associated Press report on Thursday that Kaepernick was approached by the Alliance of American Football but the 31-year-old quarterback was looking for \$20 million to play in the nascent league.

Both reports left many to question whether Kaepernick was going to get another shot in the NFL or even wanted to play football at all.

Mark Geragos, Kaepernick's attorney, answered the latter in a CNN interview Saturday, stating his client "absolutely wants to play. He wants to compete at the highest level. This is a competitive young man."

Geragos did not go into detail about the resolved collusion case but predicted three teams could be interested in signing Kaepernick, including the Carolina Panthers and New England Patriots.

"I'm going to make a bold prediction that one of three teams picks him up," Geragos said.



Attorney Mark Geragos, right, and Colin Kaepernick

"If Cam Newton is out, then the natural place to be is to play with Eric [Reid] in Carolina. I mean, can you imagine?"

Kaepernick and Reid were San Francisco 49ers teammates from 2013 to 2016. On Monday, Reid signed a three-year extension worth more than \$22 million with the Panthers.

"I will tell you, besides the Panthers, it would not surprise me if [Patriots owner] Bob Kraft makes a move," Geragos said at the end of his interview. "That would not surprise me. And it would not surprise me if his former coach . . . also makes a move."

Geragos never named the third team. Few of Kaepernick's former coaches make sense,

though he could be referring to one of Kraft's ex-employees: Seattle Seahawks Coach Pete Carroll, who coached the Patriots under Kraft from 1997 to 1999. Earlier in the interview, Geragos mentioned the Seahawks, saying "Seattle was probably the only place that talked to him" after Kaepernick left the 49ers in the 2017 offseason.

The Seahawks reportedly worked out Kaepernick in May 2017 and canceled an April 2018 workout over uncertainty as to whether he would stop kneeling during the national anthem.

Signing Kaepernick would make a lot of sense for the Panthers, given that the team's offense is centered around athletic quarterback Cam Newton. Newton underwent arthroscopic shoulder surgery in January and while Carolina is hopeful he'll be ready by the 2019 season opener, Kaepernick would provide security in case Newton falls behind schedule in his recovery.

Kaepernick joining the Patriots, meanwhile, would make for interesting story lines, given the friendship President Donald Trump has with Kraft, Coach Bill Belichick and quarterback Tom Brady. Trump lambasted NFL players for kneeling during the anthem, saying in 2017 that owners should cut players who protest.

## Portantino Introduces Bill to Reestablish the California-Armenia Trade Office

PORTANTINO, from page 7

"Our community in California is igniting a renewed optimism toward the Armenian economy, something Senator Portantino witnesses first-hand. We are lucky to have him championing and fostering this formalization effort. Now, the responsibility falls upon all of us to ensure its success. I am confident that the trade offices will lead to mutual economic and social benefit," commented Mayor Sinanyan.

SB 302 seeks to establish the trade office under the umbrella of Go Biz, the official eco-



Consul General Dr. Armen Baibourtian

nomic development arm of the Governor's Office. The legislation calls for the trade office to be funded by private funding. Before funds can be raised, the office needs formal designation and creation. Today, that effort took its first giant step.

"We are excited to be part of this effort. The wonderful entrepreneurial spirit of Armenian Americans has a new avenue to pursue success. It is truly exciting times in California and in Armenia," Concluded Wilk.



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# Arts & Living

## Dr. Vahe Tachjian To Speak on Houshamadyan Project at Fresno State

FRESNO – “How We Lived: The Houshamadyan Project” will be the topic of a presentation by Dr. Vahe Tachjian, director of the Berlin-based Houshamadyan Project. The talk will take place at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, March 11, in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, Room 191 on the Fresno State campus.

The lecture is part of the Spring 2019 Armenian Studies Program Lecture Series at Fresno State.

Houshamadyan was born from a simple and powerful idea: we should bring back to life the cities, towns and village in which Armenians lived in the Ottoman Empire by reconstructing our inheritance – the rich memory of the lives of our ancestors.

Houshamadyan is a non-profit organization founded in Berlin in 2010. The website [www.houshamadyan.org](http://www.houshamadyan.org) appears in three languages: Armenian, English and Turkish.

Alongside written articles, the Houshamadyan website uses a great variety of multi-media tools, such as musical recordings of historic value, oral history testimonies, old photographs, pictures, old film



Kharpert wedding

footage, maps, podcasts and so on. Every month, three or four new articles and new materials are added to the constantly growing website. More than 170 articles and family collections are already published.

Tachjian earned his PhD in history and civilization at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. His main publications are: *La France en Cilicie et en Haute-Mésopotamie*, Paris, 2004; *Les Arméniens, 1917-1939: La quête d'un refuge*, Paris, 2007 (co-editor); *O t t o m a n*

*Armenians: Life, Culture, Society*, Vol 1, Berlin, 2014 (editor) and *Daily life in the Abyss: Genocide Diaries, 1915-1918*, New York/Oxford, 2017.

The lecture is free and open to the public. A free parking code can be obtained by contacting the Armenian Studies Program.

For more information about the lecture contact the Armenian Studies Program at [www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies](http://www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies).



Elizabeth L. Winship

## Elizabeth L. Winship

### World Traveler Who Often Calls Armenia 'Home'

YEREVAN/BEIJING – Born in Cleveland, Ohio, Elizabeth L. Winship grew up in New Jersey. She studied at Indiana University and in Poland, Russia, Hungary, Austria and Italy. With over 15 years international work experience, Winship has taught high school and middle school students in China, Poland and America. In

**By Artsvi Bakhchinyan**

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

Armenia and the Republic of Georgia Elizabeth conducted in-service training programs that imparted new, student-centered methodologies to teachers. She also led a US government-funded curriculum design program for vocational schools in the Republic of Georgia. Her own teaching practice has been informed by professional development courses in Socratic Seminars, Harkness, and Facing History and Ourselves. She builds group collaboration among students with highly interactive classroom work that promotes critical thinking and active student discussions and debate. With a background in music and performance, Elizabeth often incorporates music, singing, film and drama into her lesson plans. Having led experiential learning trips for Dalton students within Beijing and to London, Moscow and St. Petersburg, for the coming year she anticipates a Shakespeare-themed trip to England and a multi-disciplinary study visit to Tbilisi, the capital city of Georgia. As she approaches her fourth year of teaching at Dalton Academy, she continues to seek innovative ways to build student confidence and foster a supportive atmosphere that can ease and facilitate high levels of class participation and learning...

**Dear Elizabeth, although in your life you run public and educational activities, my impression is that the arts and culture were always a part of you, especially music and photography.**

Music has always played an important role in my life. If I could start all over again, perhaps I would follow the path of a career in music. My love and understanding of photography came to me later in life. Fate brought me to the South Caucasus, where I had the privilege to meet some incredibly talented photographers. My love for art began with frequent visits to major museums in New York City (deep gratitude to my parents for this). It further grew and blossomed when I studied for a few months in Russia. I will never forget how the art historian who guided me through the Tretyakov collections in Moscow opened new worlds of understanding for me. And then... the enormous, almost overwhelming sensations I had, walking through the Hermitage and the Pushkin Museums. I experienced this again, in Yerevan, the first time I entered the Saryan Museum.

**While in Armenia you were actively interested in contemporary art and even somehow involved in it - I remember your action in one of NPAK's events back in 1998. Do you think the modern art scene is really modern in Armenia or there is nothing new or special?**

Expressions of art, no matter in what century, are so powerful and moving. It's just an incredible mode of communication! When I lived/worked in Yerevan in the mid-1990s, I had the amazing good fortune to meet artists who would not let anything stop their creativity. But they faced all kinds of challenges, such as getting the materials they needed, finding ways to share their works, and keeping in contact with artists and people of the arts, in other countries. Information flow, sharing ideas, getting a platform to display/perform one's art... There were always

see TRAVELER, page 15

## AMAA and Lark Musical Society Offer 'Promise of Hope' with Music Of Brahms

**By Joyce Abdulian**

LOS ANGELES – On Saturday, March 2, at 7 p.m., the Lark Musical Society, under the auspices of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), will present “Promise of Hope,” a concert with three works by Johannes Brahms. In its now traditional annual Easter production, the AMAA and Lark Musical Society present Brahms’ *Schicksalslied* (Song of Fate); *Alto Rhapsody* and *A German Requiem*.

Brahms is widely considered one of the 19th century’s greatest composers, and one of the leading musicians of the Romantic Era. Brahms completed *A German Requiem* in 1868. The composition is based on Biblical texts, and often cited as one of the most important pieces of choral music created in the 19th century.

Conductor Vatsche Barsoumian will lead the distinguished performers: Susanne Waters, soprano; Garineh Avakian, mezzo-soprano; Edward Levy, baritone; and Lark Mastersingers accompanied by the Lark Orchestra. A pre-concert lecture by Doris Melkoinian will be at 6 p.m.

Inspired by the Brahms masterpieces, Barsoumian shares his personal ethos: “As brass hits brass and fire engulfs fire in the Middle East, and as man’s inhumanity to man once again unfolds in abundance, we are again reminded of how trivial is all earthly glory, and how pitiful is man in his pursuit of withering earthly pleasures. All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord abides forever.” I Peter 1:24-25

He added, “No production of this magnitude could solely be sustained by the sale of tickets. This program is realized by the loving and generous support of our habitual supporters who value the treasure of sacred music and to whom we simply say thank you.”

Dr. Nazareth Darakjian, president of the AMAA, shares: “Two events in the life of Johannes Brahms influenced him deeply and may have provided the motivation for him to write the *German Requiem*. These two events were the death of Robert Schuman, a close friend of Brahms, and the death of Brahms’s mother a few years later.

“The German requiem is different from the Latin requiem in the sense that it is not a mass and as such does not serve as part of the liturgy in any church. The ‘German’ requiem is not a prayer for the dead, it is written for the living, to console, comfort and give hope of what we can expect in the afterlife. The text is based on scripture and each movement ends on a mood of optimism – the promise of eternal life that is the anchor of our faith in the living Lord, Jesus Christ.”

The Ambassador Auditorium, at 131 St. John Avenue, Pasadena, with its elegant theater and ample parking, will enhance the experience of the evening’s inspiring performance.

For information call the Lark Musical Society.

The AMAA will dedicate the “Promise of Hope” Concert to the memory of the late Dr. Mhram Agababian.





## ARTS &amp; LIVING

# Elizabeth L. Winship: World Traveler Who Often Calls Armenia 'Home'

TRAVELER, from page 14

the impediments, both financial and political.... As it is, everywhere in the world. I am not an expert on modern art, so I can't say if the scene in Armenia is truly "modern." Since I left Armenia I know the Cafesjian Foundation has made a tremendous contribution, in terms of helping Armenians learn about the world of art. Surely this has been helpful. There are other groups/organizations as well, doing their damndest to promote art and artists. Modern artists take their inspirations from so many sources, internal and external. If they can travel, or if they have access to the world via the internet, or books... this can feed their creativity.... Connections, sharing.... these are vital for any modern art "scene" anywhere.

**You lived and worked in various countries – the US, Poland, Russia, Armenia, China... Knowing different cultures and languages, how you characterize your Armenian experience?**

I also studied and worked in Hungary! At the risk of annoying some people, or ruffling a few feathers... I can say that I found some traits between Hungarians and Armenians that are quite similar. Both are landlocked countries, with small populations that have experienced quite a bit of trauma, through history, and they are countries that face challenges of out-migration, both are fairly mono-ethnic, mono-religious.....So, having lived/worked in Hungary, when I first got to Armenia in the early 1990s, I could compare my first impressions with those I'd had, in Budapest. The people of both countries are very proud; they have extremely tough egos. They know that they are the best. I suppose sociologists or anthropologists can explain this by pointing to the geography and demographics and the trauma of both of these countries. There is an impressive, and much to be respected, emphasis on education. All of these are strengths that allow a people to survive and thrive, even in the worst of times. Well, but I see this, and experience this, through the prism of American eyes, and

from the perspective of a child of the American Protestant culture. So, many aspects of life and culture in both Armenia and Hungary have always struck me as difficult to embrace. Because I was used to living in a multicultural society I often found myself longing to be in the company of people from other cultures and backgrounds. (Now that I'm in my fourth year in China... I can tell you, I feel the same way here!) Because I was raised Protestant, there is always a voice in my head that says: "Be modest! Do not sing praises of yourself!" And so, immersed in a society such as Armenia, or Hungary, or China, where people take a really strong position on their place in the world, their accomplishments, their talents, and so on.... I just have to keep reminding myself that this is normal, and necessary, in these places, even if it does not feel comfortable or normal for me.

**What do you like and dislike most in Armenia?**

Well, I may have answered this, partially, above. For an outsider, an outsider raised Protestant in a multicultural society, life in Armenia can feel very uncomfortable sometimes. One comes across attitudes of arrogance, and victimhood that can make a person cringe. But one has to keep a perspective and remember what the Armenian nation has experienced, these past 100 or more years. It can be difficult, for me, to hear Armenians express negative opinions or views about "others" who are living in their midst, or who are passing through, as tourists. I know, of course, that this happens often in mono-ethnic societies where there is just not much contact or interaction among different kinds of people. Still... it's hard to take. Also, the system of patriarchy, the attitudes of men toward women.... all of this feels medieval and I often felt I was living in a feudalistic society. Yet, one must remember that these are social phenomena that challenge us, humans, all over the world.... not just in Armenia. In Yerevan I met amazing broad-minded people who had the most generous hearts and souls.

I'm told by younger friends in Yerevan, that the generation coming up now shows great promise, in terms of treating one another with respect, and recognizing the need for healthier relationships between all people, regardless of gender. What did I like? On an individual level, person to person, I experienced deep, deep hospitality and affection from so many Armenians. How I enjoyed those long conversations, with much laughter, and sharing of sorrows, listening and hearing, and understanding. By comparison, I guess I could make a grand generalization and say that I have not experienced such deep connections with people in America. The notion of "friend" and "friendship" somehow is not as deep there.

**Your daughter lives in Armenia. How is life for a half-American girl in Armenia?**

I hope she does not read this interview! She will probably disagree with half (or all) of what I say. At age 15, after living in Yerevan these past 4 1/2 years, she is still developing her sense of identity. Most of the time she proclaims, proudly, that she is Armenian (and not American). I have heard her voice concerns that some kids or even teachers do not treat her fairly, as they don't consider her an Armenian. I'm not there, so I can't say for sure if this is a form of bullying. She has earned outstanding grades, even in Armenian language, and history. She speaks three languages fluently. She goes to TUMO, and loves it. I hope, with time, she will "remember" that she also has American roots, and that she can draw the best from both sides of her family. It is very difficult for me to be separated from her, but I am happy that she has this time to live with her father, her auntie and her babulia (granny in Russian) in Yerevan. Each year she and I travel outside of Armenia. I believe it's important for her to experience other countries, other cultures. We spent 3 wonderful weeks in Tbilisi, last summer, a week in Beijing and a week in Paris. It's not tourism. It's building character and broadening her horizons. Now we are making plans for the summer of 2019.

**Now you work in China - have you any Armenian connections there?**

My closest connections in Beijing are with a few Armenians at the embassy, one Uzbek family from Tashkent, and a handful of Nepali and Indian engineers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences. I am also in contact with a few Armenians who are students at the universities in Beijing. Everyone is terribly busy, with work, with their studies... so, when we have time to share a meal together, it's wonderful. All of us struggle with an insurmountable problem - a lack of grape leaves for making dolma!

**Taking into account your knowledge and connections in Armenia, do you plan any Armenian activity in China?**

In a small way, I made a contribution recently, for the Day of Remembrance (Genocide) in April. Some months before, I made the acquaintance of an Armenian fellow, who is from Moscow. I discovered that he is a talented duduk player, so, I introduced him to the ambassador and then this young man played the duduk during the Genocide commemoration ceremony at the embassy. In a similar fashion... I struck up a friendship with an American musician who, it turns out, studied with a famous Armenian violin teacher at Yale University. He also performed, during the ceremony.

I am a member of a wine-tasting group. It's my dream to organize an evening of Armenian wine tasting. This is not going to be easy, however, because it's impossible to find/buy good Armenian wine in Beijing. I'm not sure I can bring, say, 10 bottles of my favorite Armenian wines, in a suitcase, to Beijing... ha ha. Maybe the ambassador can help me with this.

At the school where I teach, I designed an 18-week history seminar on the countries of the former Soviet Union. We devote three weeks to the study of the South Caucasus, so, you can be sure that I do my best to impart as much knowledge as I can, to my Chinese students, about Armenia. I will teach this course again, next autumn.

## Speaker Keverian Public Service Scholarship Created to Empower Next Generation

SCHOLARSHIP, from page 1

this simple but powerful quote from his valedictorian speech given to the graduating Class of 1948 at Everett High School: "Service should not be rendered as a favor conferred, or as a debt, but as a simple natural devotion to our fellow man."

George Keverian was blessed with a sharp wit and yet he was a humble man. He was sometimes asked: "Who is smarter, you or your brother?" George would answer: "I am street smart while my brother is book smart."

The mission of the scholarship is "To preserve the memory of Speaker George Keverian by supporting the work of individuals who strive to create positive change by helping individuals reach their potential, communities achieve their goals, and society advance the principles of democracy."

It is the late speaker's family's hope that the next generation of Armenian-Americans will continue forward by giving back to the community in a positive way and empower the organizations they participate in to do good in our society and within the Armenian community.

Speaker Keverian's grandniece, Niari Keverian, said, "My uncle was an incredible man. He always put others before himself. He would take the time to speak with anyone and help you if you wanted to be helped. He believed in education and he would say, 'it doesn't matter what school you go to; it's what you make of it.' That is why this scholarship is so fitting as a way to keep his legacy alive. Our hope is that his story and his life's work will inspire the next generation of students to continue to do great work themselves. By creating this scholarship, we hope to find students that represent who he was as a human being and hope that they pay it forward for generations to come. That is how we hope to keep my uncle's legacy alive."

This is the second year the scholarship is

being offered to two recipients. The two grants are administered separately through Everett High School and through the Armenian Student's Association (ASA). The scholarship provides support for those who have provided a public service or who aspire to provide a public service and/or advance the principles of democracy. The amount of the scholarship is \$5,000, and the deadline for applicants this year is March 15. The recipient will be selected in early April and will be awarded at the Armenian Genocide Commemoration event at the State House that Speaker George Keverian initiated taking place the morning of Friday, April 12, in the House Chambers.

Brian Assadourian, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Armenian Students Association, declared: "We are thrilled to have been asked by the Keverian family to help find a deserving student for the Honorable Speaker George Keverian Public Service Scholarship. I would encourage all who have in some way been touched by the inspirational life that he led, to help spread the word so that we may bestow this honor at the upcoming Armenian Genocide Commemoration event in Boston."

To be eligible for the George Keverian Public Service Scholarship Legacy Scholarship through ASA you must meet the following criteria: 1. Be of Armenian descent; 2. Be a high school graduate who is enrolled full-time at an accredited undergraduate college/university, has completed at least one semester in an accredited undergraduate college/university, or an undergraduate who is enrolled full-time at an accredited postgraduate college/university in the US by April 2019; 3. Must be a US citizen or must possess appropriate visa status in order to study in the US; 4. Have the ability to showcase the characteristics and traits of Speaker George Keverian; 5. Be in need of financial aid.



Kenneth Keverian, nephew of the former Speaker and IBM Senior Vice President of Corporate Strategy, presents the Honorable Speaker George Keverian Public Service Scholarship on April 20, 2018 at the Armenian Genocide commemoration at the Massachusetts State House to Emilee Guzman, graduate of Everett High School now attending Salem State University and pursuing a degree in Nursing.

This scholarship will be given to an Armenian-American student who can reflect in his/her ASA application how he/she has given back to others.

Applicants may apply to the scholarship by visiting <http://www.asainc.org/national/scholarships.shtml>. All requirements of a completed application are due by March 15. Late applications will not be considered.

For more information on this scholarship, visit the website [www.georgekeverianscholarship.org](http://www.georgekeverianscholarship.org) or email [gkeverianscholarship@gmail.com](mailto:gkeverianscholarship@gmail.com)





ARTS & LIVING

C A L E N D A R

CALIFORNIA

**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 April 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 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

*continued on next page*





ARTS & LIVING

New Mexico Artist Richard Tashjian to Hold Exhibit

SANTA FE, N.M. – The Art Exchange Gallery of Santa Fe is representing a unique collection of paintings by artist Richard H. Tashjian, done in the early 1980s and 1990s as a result of his trips to Armenia.

He says that he feels fortunate that having his opportunity to paint on location during those years. He said that he often feels the mountains of New Mexico echo the landscapes of Armenia.

Tashjian is a native of Watertown, Ma. He and his wife relocated to Santa Fe.

He graduated from the Museum of Fine Arts



"The Jemez Mountains, N.M.," acrylic, 1997



"The Aragats Mountains," Armenia, 1983

School in Boston and later had a successful career in commercial art.

His collections of paintings are in various permanent collections, including in the Museum of Modern Art and the National Gallery of Armenia, both in Yerevan, the Hovhanness Aivazovsky Museum in Crimea, the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown, the University of Massachusetts and the University of Los Alamos in New Mexico.

The Art Exchange Gallery is located at 60 E. San Francisco St., Suite 106, in Santa Fe.

For information about the paintings, email Jeff Tabor at [jeff.tabor@comcast.net](mailto:jeff.tabor@comcast.net).

# Recipe Corner

by Christine Vartanian Datian

## Vegetable Casserole

- INGREDIENTS**
- 1 large onion, sliced
  - 3 cloves garlic, minced
  - 2 large carrots (or 1 1/2 cups of baby carrots), peeled and diced into pieces
  - 2 medium zucchini, sliced in rounds
  - 2 medium yellow squash, sliced in rounds
  - 1 each medium yellow and red bell pepper, diced or sliced into rings
  - 1/2 pound asparagus, cut on the diagonal into bite-sized
  - 1/2 pound fresh cut green beans, broccoli florets or cauliflower
  - 1/2 pound fresh mushrooms, sliced
  - 2 medium tomatoes, sliced
  - 1/2 cup tomato sauce (optional)
  - 1/4 cup chopped parsley
  - 1 1/2 cups fresh bread crumbs or cracker crumbs
  - 1/2 stick unsalted melted butter, to taste
  - Salt, pepper, dried or fresh chopped basil
  - 1 cup grated Parmesan or Mozzarella cheese (or shredded Gruyere or Swiss cheese)
  - Unsalted butter or olive oil

- PREPARATION**
- Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees.
  - Combine the bread or cracker crumbs and melted butter until crumbly; set aside.
  - Sauté the onions and garlic in butter (or olive oil) until onions are translucent; set aside.
  - Combine the onion and garlic mixture with the carrots, zucchini, squash, bell pepper, asparagus, green beans, mushrooms, tomato sauce, parsley, and spices and pour into a prepared 2-quart casserole dish; toss a few times.
  - Top with the sliced tomatoes and bread crumb mixture, cover, and bake for 35 minutes or until golden brown.
  - Uncover, add the cheese for the last 10 minutes, and bake until bubbly.
  - Garnish with parsley, cilantro, sliced avocado, fried onions, or chopped fresh mint.
  - Serves 6.

\*1/4 cup sherry or dry white wine may be added to this recipe. Two cups of diced fresh spinach 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/>



CALENDAR

from previous page

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](mailto: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

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/38005546FA735928>

**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](mailto:tcadirector@aol.com).**

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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

# Armenia’s Humanitarian Mission Receives Inhumane Rebuke

By Edmond Y. Azadian

The war in Syria is in its eighth year and peace remains elusive despite the fact that ISIS forces have been all but destroyed. For the warring factions, the 500,000 dead and eight million refugees do not seem reasons enough to stop the carnage through proxy fighters while a peace settlement is being negotiated between the parties involved.

Syria is not just any country for Armenians; it is the country that a century ago took in 500,000 Armenians who had barely survived the Genocide as well as deportations from Cilicia. The shameful betrayal of the French left hundreds of thousands of Armenians who had returned to Cilicia with the promise of a home rule under a French protectorate, vulnerable and in danger of slaughter. Therefore, Syria is not a country whose plight we can face with indifference.

Armenians settled in the major cities of Aleppo and Damascus, as well as rural areas, enjoyed security and respect for their identities and their faith. They thrived in that country through their schools, churches, cultural and youth centers and the community became a net exporter of teachers, priests, intellectuals and artists to other diasporan communities.

Before the Syrian war, the Armenian community there was 110,000 strong. Today, it has been reduced to less than half that size. Many have returned to rebuild their homes, their businesses, churches and cultural centers.

Throughout the eight-year civil war, the global Armenian diaspora raised funds to dispatch assistance to their brothers and sisters in that embattled country. The US Armenian community has been generous in its support for the needy Armenian families in Syria. Armenia, still a poor country, has contributed its share of relief through four plane-loads of supplies. It also has taken in 22,000 refugees from Syria, without receiving any assistance from international relief agencies to help in the resettlement. Similarly, many Syrian Armenians there have been able to attend universities for free and get help to start their own businesses in Armenia.

By contrast, Turkey was awarded billions of dollars for refugee settlement, despite the fact that it has used the refugees only as a political weapon, leaving them to live in subhuman conditions in refugee camps.

Armenians in Syria not only became collateral damage in the war, but were specifically targeted. Occupation of the historic Armenian region of Kessab was the job of Turkey’s surrogates as was the destruction of the Martyrs’ Monument in Der Zor, dedicated to the genocide that had brought so many Armenians to Syria.

The world Armenian community is duty-bound to support the resettlement and the healing of their fellow Armenians in Syria.

Armenia’s government this month deployed a humanitarian mission with 83 experts in demining and health care. The mission is not armed nor able to carry out combat. It will be working in areas where civilian life has returned to normalcy, including Aleppo, where Armenians remain concentrated.

Yet, that peaceful mission has been turned into a political football between the US and Armenia. Actually, it is between the US and Russia, with Armenia paying the price of being a minor player in a global minefield.

When the war was raging, Moscow had asked its strategic allies to contribute to combat efforts. Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan refused. President Serzh Sargsyan had warned Armenians in Syria to observe strict neutrality in order not to be identified with any side and also not to become a target for ISIS terrorists. But, now that the war has subsided, the new government in Armenia has taken a political gamble, perhaps without realizing that the mission may be politicized despite its humanitarian nature.

When Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with the White House National Security Advisor John Bolton in the fall, the mission was discussed and Armenian officials reassured the American diplomat that the mission was purely humanitarian. Therefore, it was believed that no further objections would be raised by the US.

Mr. Bolton had also asked Armenian government to shut down its border with Iran, in compliance with the US economic sanctions against that country. Mr. Bolton’s is not concerned that closing the Iranian border would be tantamount to suicide, given the fact that the only other border to the outside world is through Georgia, a neighbor that has colluded with Turkey and Azerbaijan to isolate Armenia. Mr. Bolton even did not bother to

force Turkey and Azerbaijan to lift the blockade in return for Armenia’s compliance with the US policy.

After official discussions with Bolton and after confirming the peaceful nature of the mission, the terse rebuke by the State Department, released through the US Embassy in Yerevan comes as a surprise. The statement says, “We recognize the desire of other nations to respond to the humanitarian situation in Syria, and we share their concerns about protecting religious minorities in the Middle East. However, we don’t support any engagement with Syrian military forces, whether that engagement is to provide assistance to civilians or is military in nature. Nor do we support any cooperation between Armenia and Russia for this mission. Russia has partnered with the Assad regime to slaughter civilians and trigger a humanitarian catastrophe. Russia continues to protect the Assad regime and its atrocities on the global stage.”

It is not our place to defend Assad or justify Russia’s actions, whatever the pliant media has done to demonize them. It suffices to note that even right-wing commentator Glenn Beck has expressed his revulsion about the level and the nature of atrocities perpetrated by the Turkey-Saudi Arabia surrogate, ISIS. Also, the politicians’ narrative will never leave out of their arsenal the accusation of the use of poison gas by the Damascus regime, even after the revelation of BBC corresponded that the story was a hoax or false flag operation.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry has reacted mildly to the US statement.

“The Armenian humanitarian mission to Syria is purely a relief mission guided by international humanitarian laws and coordinates its work with relief agencies and international partners present on the ground,” spokesman for the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Anna Naghdalyan replied.

In his turn, Ruben Rubinyan, chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Armenian Parliament has downplayed the issue stating, “Sending a team of specialists to Syria is very important for us because it is first of all aimed at ensuring the



physical security of our ethnic Armenian compatriots living there and second of all, the security of the people living in Syria. So, this was not a geopolitical, political or military move. It is purely humanitarian.”

The minister of defense of Cyprus, a member of the European Union, Savvas Angelides, who happened to be in Armenia on an official visit, has strongly supported Armenia’s mission.

Also, Armenia was never praised nor thanked for its repeated participation in peacekeeping missions under NATO in Kosovo and Afghanistan as well as under the UN in South Lebanon. It suffices that Sergey Shoygu, Russia’s minister of defense, thanking Armenia for dispatching the mission to serve under Russian command has turned the issue into a controversy in the US policy of containment of Russia.

Armenia is in no position to do anything more than what it has done thus far. It is incumbent upon American Armenians to raise their voices. It is a welcome move that the Trump administration is disengaging itself from the war in Syria and withdrawing its forces from the battlefield. That is recognition enough and a concession to the remaining parties to settle the Syrian conflict, meaning Russia, Iran and Turkey. Armenia’s role remains symbolic to make a major issue for the State Department.

The humanitarian mission is part and parcel of the relief assistance undertaken by the world Armenian community to help destitute Armenians there. Armenians must be able to muster enough political courage to stand up to the State Department’s reaction, which is out of proportion to the effort.

The State Department has to understand to allow some humanity in the humanitarian mission.

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EDITOR  
Alin K. Gregorian

ASSISTANT EDITOR  
Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR  
Marc Mgrditchian

**SENIOR EDITORIAL COLUMNIST:**  
Edmond Y. Azadian

**CONTRIBUTORS:**  
Florence Avakian, Dr. Haroutiun Arzoumanian, Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, Philip Ketchian, Kevork Keushkerian, Harut Sassounian, Hagop Vartivarian, Naomi Zeytoonian

**CORRESPONDENTS:**  
**Armenia** - Hagop Avedikian  
**Boston** - Nancy Kalajian  
**Los Angeles** - Taleen Babayan  
**Berlin** - Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

**Contributing Photographers:**  
Jirair Hovsepian

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E-Mail: **editor@mirrorspectator.com**

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755 Mt. Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472-1509





## COMMENTARY



My Turn

By Harut Sassounian

## America Has No Right to Tell Armenia Not to Send a Humanitarian Squad to Syria

The US government recently created a new and unnecessary controversy, this time with the Republic of Armenia.

It all started when the Armenian government decided to send a non-combat humanitarian squad of 83 doctors, sappers, and other servicemen to Syria to provide assistance to the important, but dwindling Armenian community in Aleppo. Armenia had previously sent four airlifts of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people.

A Russian cargo plane flew the Armenian squad to Aleppo on February 8. Apparently, this small role played by Russia was enough to provoke the ire of the cold-warriors in Washington. On February 13, the US Embassy in Armenia released an announcement by the State Department criticizing the dispatch of the Armenian humanitarian squad to Syria.

“We do not support any engagement with Syrian military forces, whether that engagement is to provide assistance to civilians or is military in nature. Nor do we support any cooperation between Armenia and Russia for this mission,” stated the State Department.

This statement antagonized not only the Armenian government, but also the population of Armenia which the United States has been trying to win over in recent years. More

importantly, this provocative US statement irritated the large Armenian-American community.

The Armenian squad’s involvement in Syria was based on several factors:

1) Syria’s Arabs had played a critical role by providing a life-saving refuge to the remnants of the Armenian Genocide, including this writer’s grandparents. It is only fitting that the Armenian government and all Armenians reciprocate to Syria’s goodwill by coming to the rescue of the destitute local Armenians and Syrians in general.

2) The Armenian government has sent the humanitarian squad based on an inter-state agreement signed by Armenia and Syria in 2001. Therefore, this action is not only of a humanitarian nature, but also complies with requirements of international law.

3) The United States, on the other hand, has dispatched its Air Force and soldiers to Syria without the approval of the Syrian government, thus violating all relevant international laws. This illegal action is not committed by Armenia, but by the United States.

4) The Trump Administration and particularly hawkish National Security Advisor John Bolton have been striving to distance Armenia from Russia and draw it closer to the American sphere of influence. Regrettably, criticizing the Armenian government’s humanitarian aid to its compatriots in Syria does not endear the United States to Armenians. Just the opposite, it antagonizes Armenians worldwide. The US position simply reflects a poor knowledge of the realities in the Middle East by Trump officials. It makes no sense to try to compel Armenia to desist from sending a humanitarian squad to Syria, knowing full well that such pressure will be rejected, making the American government look weak and ineffective. US officials should have the wisdom to know when to exert their influence and when not to. In this particular case, pressuring Armenia was counter-productive; it only served to strengthen the influence of Russia. Fortunately, such a minor issue will not undermine the friendly relationship

between the United States and Armenia. Armenians understand that the US displeasure is more directed towards Russia and Iran than to Armenia itself. The US government is well aware that Armenian troops have participated in international peacekeeping missions, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo and Lebanon.

5) The United States government has lost its moral authority to lecture Armenians on any subject given the fact that successive US Presidents in recent decades have refused to utter the term Armenian Genocide under pressure from the despotic Turkish regime.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Anna Naghdalyan reacted to the State Department’s statement by declaring that “throughout the Syrian conflict the plight of civilians, minorities, including the sizable Syrian-Armenian community has consistently been a priority concern for the Armenian people worldwide. The Armenian public opinion strongly reflects deep compassion and concern for the sufferings of civilians and the devastation of the country. We speak about a country which has had an indispensable contribution for the survival of the Armenian nation in the wake of the Armenian Genocide.”

Naghdalyan also stated that the deployment of the humanitarian mission to Syria is intended to support the Armenian community in Aleppo. “It is a purely relief mission guided by International Humanitarian Law and [Armenia] coordinates its work with the relief agencies and international partners present on the ground.”

Going a step further, on February 12, Armenia’s Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan announced that the humanitarian mission did not exclude the possibility of deploying combat troops in Syria in the future. However, the Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan quickly rejected that possibility, stating that “we have no such plans.”

Americans, Russians, and everyone else should understand that the Armenian government will pursue its national interests regardless of the wishes of other nations. No amount of pressure will deter Armenians from their own objectives.

## LETTERS

## Pro and Con ‘Church Politics and Political Church’ Commentary

(Editor’s Note: The commentary by senior columnist Edmond Y. Azadian in the *Mirror-Spectator* issue of February 9 titled “Church Politics and Political Church,” received many comments, both supporting and opposing the positions. Below we publish two letters, one representing each camp.)

## Uncomfortable Truths about Church And Politics

To the Editor:

Retelling stories from the past can sometimes be uncomfortable. Especially if they are true but disturbing today.

Some people have displayed this reaction after reading a column by Edmond Azadian in the February 9 issue of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, “Church Politics and Political Church.” Azadian, who is a knowledgeable writer on Armenian issues, made the unforgivable mention of the assassination of Archbishop Ghevond Tourian in 1933 in New York, or the violent takeover of the Catholicosate of Cilicia in 1956 by ARF (Dashnag) activists.

Such stories disturb some current readers because they recall unpleasant truths about today’s tranquility in the church. But how tranquil is it really in our churches today in America? Is it acceptable that we have two opposing diocese and two alternative bishops today splitting our communities into separate camps and loyalties? These critics of Azadian say we should look forward and not mention unhappy stories from the past. But looking back can be instructive on how we move forward today.

For example, people say we should have a united church in America, not a division that creates walls between us and squanders millions of dollars. But ask yourself, why don’t we have a united church in America?

It goes back to the very history these people wish to forget or not mention. Politics, or more correctly political party influence in the church explains both the past and the present. Who can deny that the Prelacy and the Catholicosate of Cilicia in Antelias, Lebanon is not controlled by the ARF today? This is a fact that cannot be avoided. I, for one, can testify from personal experience in my years of participation in the Prelacy church. Incidentally there is no parallel today in the Diocese although there was surely political influence in the past.

So, the past is relevant and needs to be faced in order to move forward. If we truly believe that a united church in America is desirable and necessary, then it is time that something be done about it. I know for a fact that only two years ago representatives of the Diocese reached out to the Prelacy offering to restart discussions on how to reunite the church in America. Unfortunately, this overture was rebuffed and rejected by the Prelacy.

Does this not show that there is no desire to even discuss this issue? Where is the leadership of the clergy and laity now?

Answer this question and you will understand why it is so uncomfortable for some to mention Tourian’s murder or the takeover of Cilicia so many years ago. The past may be uncomfortable but it reverberates even today in our minds and hearts.

To critics of Azadian- if you really believe in a united church then stand up and demand that the two sides do something about it. Otherwise all your words amount to only noise and empty chatter.

— Michael Haratunian

## Mud Slinging Is Not the Answer

To the Editor:

This editorial appeared in the most recent issue of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* and was authored by Mr. Edmond Azadian. At first glance the first half of the column reads like a Cold War-era script that fueled the division of the community. I apologize but I can let this commentary go without a response. Mr. Azadian is well known for his obedience to Holy Echmiadzin and his disdain for the Great House of Cilicia. Dredging up old wounds with caustic language not only shows how out of touch this editorial is, it does not serve the interests of the Armenian community.

The premise of the article is simply absurd. Comparing the ills of our church in the Middle Ages to the dark days in the American Diocese to the formation of the Prelacy in 1955-57 to the approach of the Pashinyan government is illogical. The common thread? Same theme. Support Echmiadzin at all costs? Even at the expense of the credibility of the church? We can leave that for another time.

What motivated me to respond was the “convenient” omissions and ridiculous attacks on the Cilicia See. First let me say that all Armenians, all humans should be saddened the events of 1933. Regardless of your view of the core issues, no one can condone the murder of an archbishop. Period.

I do agree that there have been various “external” influences in the church over time. Yes the ARF has significant influence in the Cilicia See. Is it any different than the influence the AGBU has had in Echmiadzin at various times? Insiders in both organizations would counter that their “influence” has strengthened the institutions and added value. Debate it all you want but it is clear that it is human to seek power and we, Armenians, are not immune to that.

I take particular issue with his attacks on the Cilicia See. The Cilicia See, the seat of the Catholicos of All Armenians for centuries, has a glorious history in our church and should not be demeaned.

I grew up in one of the “dissident” churches in Indian Orchard, Mass. They were “unaffiliated” for 22-23 years after the division and in virtual abandonment. The point is that there were and are dedicated Armenians Christians in all these churches...whether Prelacy or Diocese. The sooner we end this senseless name calling, the stronger our community will be.

I have been affiliated with both Prelacy and Diocesan churches. I love the Armenian Church no matter where it is and under what “administration.” We all abhor the division but belittling some is no way to behave in 2019.

The elevation of Catholicos Zareh included one bishop from a sister church in communion with the Apostolic church. Not bad for basically being boycotted by the rest of the church. I take offense to labeling Catholicos Khoren of blessed memory as “notorious.” What is the basis and purpose of that cheap shot? Again this editorial read like a reprint from the 1950’s.

At a time when our churches are suffering from assimilation and at times lack focus on the important issues, we need to rally together as one people. Our faith teaches us to forgive. Those times were difficult. Attacking conscientious people with not so subtle rehash....adds no value. Mr. Azadian, with due respect, this is not what our community needs. We should have much higher expectations.

—Stepan Piligian



# Cypriot Defense Minister Visits Armenia

YEREVAN (Armenpress) – Minister of Defense of Cyprus Savvas Angelides arrived in Armenia on February 12 for a three-day visit last week.

During his visit, he went to the Rehabilitation Center of the Fatherland’s Defender, a military rehabilitation facility in Yerevan.

“The Cypriot minister was impressed, he assured that they will actively cooperate with [us],” Yerevan State Medical University Rector Armen Muradyan said on Facebook. The center is located on the premises of the YSMU hospital complex.

Deputy Defense Minister of Armenia Gabriel Balayan accompanied the Cypriot delegation during the visit.

Angelides and his delegation visited the Tsitsernakaberd Armenian Genocide Memorial and Museum on February 13.

The Cypriot defense minister paid tribute to the victims of the Armenian genocide, toured the museum and signed the honorary guest book, the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute said.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received Angelidis. Welcoming Angelidis to Armenia, Pashinyan noted that the Armenian govern-



Cyprus Defense Minister Savvas Angelides

ment is eager to develop multifaceted cooperation with Cyprus, including the political, economic and defense spheres. Nikol Pashinyan stressed the importance of active cooperation between the defense departments of Armenia and Cyprus and the implementation of joint programs.

Thankful for the warm welcome, Angelidis said his country is also interested in the continued development of friendly relations with Armenia. He added that he had held effective discussions with Armenian colleagues, which helped outline the main areas and programs of cooperation for 2019.

The parties discussed cooperation in the military industry, including the possibility of finding technological solutions to joint projects, taking measures to implement specific projects, and implementing various programs in the field of military training. Issues of international and regional security, as well as opportunities for cooperation in a multilateral format with the participation of Armenia and Cyprus were reviewed during the meeting.

Pashinyan thanked Cyprus for its position on the Armenian Genocide and the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The head of the Armenian government stressed the importance of organizing mutual visits at the highest level between the two countries, noting that they might promote cooperation in various areas.

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# Rightwing Turkish Politician Calls for Expulsion of Armenian Migrants

By Ayla Jean Yackley

A far-right Turkish politician wants his government to expel tens of thousands of Armenian nationals residing in Turkey in retaliation against France for declaring a remembrance day for victims of the World War I-era genocide of Armenians.

President Emmanuel Macron said this week France would mark April 24 as a “national day of commemoration of the Armenian genocide.” Turkey’s government, which denies the killings amounted to a genocide, has vigorously condemned the decision.

Researchers estimate between 10,000 and 30,000 Armenian nationals are in Turkey, many of whom have overstayed tourist visas after finding work there. They often face greater scrutiny when foreign governments pressure Turkey to formally recognize the genocide.

“There are 100,000 Armenians here who came from Armenia and are illegally filling their stomachs. I’m saying we should expel them. Why are we letting them stay? While they lobby against Turkey, we continue to feed them,” Mustafa Destici, who leads the small Great Unity Party (BBP), said at a campaign rally on February 7.

It was not clear where Destici came up with a figure of 100,000 nor what “lobbying” efforts Armenian labor migrants living in Turkey could have conducted to persuade Macron. It is not the first time Destici has used the number, or threatened to expel Armenian citizens from Turkey; he made a similar demand in 2015. In 2017, he called on Russia to abandon its military alliance with Armenia.

Destici’s hardline party only receives a few hundred thousand votes in Turkish elections but retains an outsized influence at a time of heightened nationalism in Turkey. In June, the BBP joined President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s electoral alliance, along with a larger right-wing group, in parliamentary and presidential polls, earning one seat in parliament.

Erdogan has in the past suggested kicking out undocumented Armenian nationals in response to moves by other nations to recog-

nize the genocide. In 2015, he said Turkey could “deport” them if it wished, evoking the Ottoman Empire’s deportation of hundreds of thousands of Armenians to the Syrian desert during World War I.

But Erdogan has also taken unprecedented steps toward acknowledging the pain of the descendants of the killings. Each April 24, he offers his condolences to the 60,000 or so Turkish citizens of Armenian descent who remain in Turkey.

The day after his original statement, Destici issued another statement clarifying that he had no quibble with Turkey’s Armenian citizens, for whom he had “endless respect,” he said.

Ibrahim Kalin, Erdogan’s spokesman, said in a statement this week he “violently condemned” France’s decision to commemorate April 24, saying the allegations of genocide lack a legal basis. France legally recognized the killings as genocide in 2001, and another two dozen nations have done so as well.

Turkey argues that both Turks and Armenians died during internecine warfare amid the chaos of World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. However, most Western scholars agree that around 1.5 million Armenians perished in a systematic genocide that began in 1915.

Destici’s remarks were unlikely to spur any concrete action, but illustrate rising nationalist sentiment during a severe economic downturn in Turkey, which also hosts four million Syrian and Iraqi refugees, as well as hundreds of thousands of migrants from Africa, the Middle East and beyond.

Armenians make up a tiny proportion of migrants in Turkey. Many are low-skilled workers and female, forced to look for work outside of Armenia, where the per-capita income is \$4,200 compared to \$10,500 across the border in Turkey.


Turkey has no diplomatic relations with Armenia, cutting ties in 1993 in protest of the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave.

(Ayla Jean Yackley is a journalist based in Istanbul. This column originally appeared on Eurasianet’s website on February 8.)


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